



The Drink Tank 260

That is a Ditmar cover. It is immediately obvious that it's a Ditmar cover. I'm sorry, I should say the Ditmar Awards Winning Fan Artist Ditmar aka Dick Jennsen. It still seems weird that someone who has an Award named after him should win the award that's named after him! He's certainly deserving and I'm hoping we see him on a Hugo ballot in the near. He's awesome!

Taral Wayne and I had an eMail exchange before the last issue. He had trepidation about putting an article into The Drink Tank because it's not exactly the most commented-on fanzine in the world. In fact, I don't get much correspondence from folks for the zine, which is probably entirely my fault for loving to do the actual doing of the zine meaning that I'm always doing them and putting them out all the time. Mea Culpa.

Then the article that Taral wrote dropped and File 770 picked it up and that led to a whirlwind of commentary on the article.

And yet, there were only two comments sent to me on the zine.

I must remember to go back and ask if anyone actually read the article in The Drink Tank or if they were commenting on the commentary. It was an interesting debate. I still tend to think that Pros should turn down nominations, or they should have done some actual writing for fanzines and not just their own blogs, but apparently, I'm in the minority on that one.

And don't even get me started on the whole Best Fanzine thing!

The one thing that the whole debate on File770.com made me think was that I seriously doubt that the most incredible thing I've ever had to run in the Letter Column will get nearly

as much attention. There's a masterpiece in this issue, which perhaps I marred with my own commentary, and it could be that few people will notice. I doubt that it'll get its own remarks in File770, but it's amazing and I'm glad it's there.

I seriously thought about just running it without any of my reactions, but I thought that it's a LoC, an amazing LoC (perhaps the biggest Lloyd Penney-style LoC ever!), but I should probably treat it the same way as I do the other ones I get.

We're leading off with LoCs this issue, then I've got a piece that talks about how I might suck less than I think. That's probably not true, but I have evidence. I'm not the worst filmmaker in the world, as I at least somewhat assumed I might have assumed before last weekend.

I've also got another piece from Taral that I really like about a Cocktail Shaker. That guy's awesome!

I'm working a lot on the final stages of the exhibit, and thus there's probably going to be slightly less Drink Tanks than I'd like. The next stage, installing, means that I'll be downstairs, away from the computer, unable to regularly work on the Drink Tank. That's sad as it's one of the things I love doing the most.

I've also edited a new video for You-

Tube. I'm getting the hang of editing with iMovie and it's a lot of fun. We do a weekly craft night at the museum where my friend Aimee, who is working on dresses, let's me borrow her Mac-BookPro and make these little videos, which I really enjoy. If you wanna get a look at John 'The Rock' Coxon's visit to the BArea, go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T54hIflq_v0

Also, TV has started its new season. This excites me because that means new episodes of Glee, Community, Top Chef Just Desserts and especially Desperate Housewives.

Yes, I love DH. So much. I mean I can not get enough. It's just so deliciously entertaining and mind-chewingly whacky. The show's just fantastic and it's not even very good. It doesn't have to be, it's just plain fun.



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

Chris:

In 259, you invoke my name and suggest that I would be rumbling disagreement with you regarding issues of convention governance, but in fact I agree with you. Personally, I'm in favor of what I call "popular ratification," which would require that WSFS constitutional amendments passed by one Worldcon's business meeting be ratified not by the following year's business meeting, but by vote of the membership, in a vote conducted in parallel with site selection because voting would thus be open through the third day of Worldcon. This is similar to one of the ways of amending the California state constitution, whereby constitutional amendments originate in the legislature but must be ratified by the people. I think this would increase the "perceived legitimacy" of WSFS governance, since every member (including supporting) could participate in the ratification process. However, as this would require the WSFS Business Meeting to give up one of the tiny bits of power it already has, I don't see such a proposal getting through anytime soon.

I was more referring to the idea that everyone could attend the business meeting. I seem to remember us discussing popular ratification at sme BASFA meeting and we were both on the same page. Am I right that there's been a movement towards Popular Ratification that's going to be coming to a Business Meeting near you?

Elsewhere in the issue, Taral and you both complain about StarShipSofa's Hugo Award

in Best Fanzine, and Taral explicitly declares that all podcasts are dramatic presentations. But that's simply not true, unless you also consider (say) the nightly newscast or a radio talk show a dramatic presentation. Most of what I've heard in the issues of StarShipSofa that I've listened to are discussions of fandom or SF/F literature, with very little fictional or dramatic content. Declaring something to be a dramatic presentation simply because it's spoken rather than printed misses a point. And furthermore, remember that as electronic distribution started coming into vogue, there were people who declared with the same level of seriousness as your complaints about SSS that "ezines" weren't really fanzines, and consequently Cheryl Morgan's Hugo for Emerald City was illegitimate in some way since it wasn't a "real" fanzine (ink on paper with staples in it, distributed by government postal system). There are legitimate arguments for saying that works like SSS are so different in form that they shouldn't be considered fanzines at all, but dismissing spoken-word fanac as "they're all 'dramatic presentations'" is not one of them.

And see, if I were to put Podcasts into any category, and there's none that work for it as they are currently laid-out, but it should be like-vs-like and Dramatic Presentation comes much closer than Fanzine. Look at every other award, and with the possible exception of awards completely without categories like the Peabody, none have written media against presented media of any kind. Print Journalists compete with print, Spoken with Spoken and so on. The things are just so different that there's no way they should be competing. I am seriously thinking that

a 'Fannish Presentation' category is a good idea as it would cover Podcasts, things like presentations at cons, YouTube videos and the like that don't qualify for 'Dramatic Presentations'. Podcasts covering fiction, and there are a lot of them, would certainly stay in the Dramatic Presentation. The big problem is that whatever categories are created, and honestly even the ones that already exist, need very very strong definitions that allow for clear understanding of what belongs and does not belong in the category.

Kevin Standlee

Thanks, Kevin! Always good to hear from ya!



**And now, with a brief note on Issue #257:
Mark Plummer!**

Chris/James,

I'm sure many of your readers will see Liz'n'Nick's proposal for changes to the the best graphic story Hugo as the central debating point of DT#257, but I think there's another more burning question: just who is your new contributor James Back (p23)? Both of you have a reputation for finding contributors from outside the usual pool of fan writers and artists so I'm certainly used to seeing unfamiliar names in DT, but Mr Back particularly interests me because a not-too-deep textual analysis reveals that he has a positively Baconian way with a comma. I assume therefore that you must have edited it to read that way because the only other interpretations I can come up with are too implausible: that you have really found somebody else who has both a very similar name to and who writes just like James Bacon (and that's implausible shading into scary), or that 'Comics to Enjoy and Vote For 2010' was in fact written by our James and merely intended to appear, as it does, at the back of the fanzine.

--

Best etc.

--Mark

Mark Plummer

Croydon, UK

Well, it's a typo and you caught it, for which I thank you. I really should pay more attention. It's actually Mr. James Black.

Thanks, Mark.



And now, a treat. Claire Brialey, fresh off an extensive lay-off from LoCing, comes back with this, a masterpiece of LoCation!

Monday 20 September 2010

Dear Chris (and, in places, James),

Last month, shortly before I went on holiday, I wrote a letter of comment to a fanzine; and at that point I realised that my previous letter of comment to any fanzine had been dated very nearly a year before. If there is a spectrum that has Lloyd Penney at one end of it, I am probably at the other end.

Even worse, my records indicate that my last letter of comment to you was almost three years ago, which seems impossible even by my shocking standards of response. Still, there's an unintended neatness in the fact that the issue that made me realise I really must write to you was #245 (the 'Hitman spectacular'), and the last of the issues on which I commented was #145. I think, though, that I'm not going to attempt to catch up on all the issues in between.

You keep records of your LoCs? I'm obviously doing it wrong.

You might be thinking that *The Drink Tank* #245 was itself some time in the past, given that you've just published #259. And even given your rapid rate of publishing, you would be right. This may help to explain why it's been nearly three years since I wrote, because I've been actively conscious that I should send you a letter of comment since you handed me a paper copy of #245 at Eastercon. I've lost count of the weekends since on which I thought this would be the time I finally wrote to *The Drink Tank* – except that, hang on, Chris has just published another issue which I thus haven't read, but I'll catch up with that too just as soon as I've dealt with this other stuff... No, I'm not really trying to blame you for my lack of response. But I am still going to make that relatively long-ago #245 the marker for the start of these comments, because it retains the factor that made me determined to reply in the first place: not, I'm afraid, the specific subject matter, or the contributors, or the editing – but the fact that it was on paper.

Now, I've learned over the years to read fanzines onscreen, and I appreciate that those issues which you don't intend to have any sort

of paper format are often optimised for screen-reading. So it's not that which means I'm less likely to reply to electronic fanzines, for all that I believe that I read less attentively from a screen than a piece of paper. It's the contract. For all the effort that fanzine editors put into creating their individual issues, for all that for many of us getting a fanzine printed no longer involves any personal connection with the actual production or even the collation, if someone actually gives or sends me a printed publication then they've not only put time, money and effort into that final stage of distribution too but, crucially, they specifically wanted me to have a copy. And that means I have a part of the bargain to fulfil too.

I'm obviously not good at fulfilling my part of the you-sent-me-a-fanzine bargain, and I know how it feels at the other end of that relationship when other people aren't either. We all have our



reasons, and some of them may be good ones. I can at least partly fulfil the bargain, in many cases, by trading my own fanzines; but that's not the only way I want to do it, because then we're not necessarily having a conversation but rather just taking turns to speak. Wonderful though efanzines.com is as a repository and a resource, it doesn't reproach me in the way that the paper fanzine stacks do. As I recall you weren't too sure about whether to give me a paper copy of #245, and if it was because you were hoping to provoke response then I can see that you might have thought it a wasted investment. But this and the 'comics spectacular' that James was handing out at Aussiecon Four have eventually provoked comment on thirteen electronic issues as well – although I realise that, because of the time lag this implies for all of the issues except the three (three! And you sounded weary in #256, as though even you were slowing down) that you've published so far this month, everyone else is now talking about something entirely different; so in conversational terms I'm now the bore holding forth for several hours without pausing for breath.

As I recall, I think I thought y'all had already got a copy. I don't ever really think along the lines of giving out zines specifically to provoke a response. This must annoy James as I can see that he does do so, and Taral probably thinks along the same lines, but really, I just like getting things out there and done. If I create in a vacuum, so be it, the creation is the fun thing. To me, I give folks zines, or put them on the web, so they can read them, if they like. If that's where it ends, that's cool. To me, the greatest 'payment' I

can get for putting my zine out is having others put out their own. That's more than enough.

You might, of course, think instead that it was Taral's picture threat in #259 that made me do it.

He did manage to capture the terror in my beady little eyes...

So this is me, writing a letter of comment and in the 750 words of the first page not yet having engaged directly with the individual issues on which I'm meant to be commenting. I'll try not to make the letter longer than any of the individual issues although suspect I'm going to fail. Still, this might finally be the LOC which you decide to edit down or even not to print at all...

So, then, I will focus on #245 and indeed the other issues recently where you've involved James as a guest editor, which by my count covers #248 (on the Arthur C Clarke award), #252 (the Hugo novel shortlist), #255 (a return to trains – inevitably), and #257 (comics). Since you and James shared the billing for editing *The Drink Tank* on this year's Hugo ballot, I deduce that either you or the nominators or both place particular emphasis on the way you work together – and I think the fanzine does have a different flavour when it's a joint effort, even when covering some of the same topics that your solo issues also address. It may simply be that the jointly edited *Drink Tanks* take more of a genzine approach, with more external contributors. Perversely, though, it's your own personal contributions to some of those issues that I appreciated the most.

It's way more fun working with

people, it seems, and I think it shows in the actual issues.

Take the issue on the Clarke award, for instance – and let's just pause there for a moment. You both seem to have picked up an irritatingly common tendency to refer to this award as 'the Clarkes', although not consistently; in the context of this issue, where you were discussing a number of winners of the award over the years, you could almost get away with that plural sometimes. But in the second paragraph of your editorial, Chris, you wrote: 'It's interesting to think about the Clarkes. It's an award for a single novel. One work. Only one category, in one genre...' And yet did that *not* make you pause to, as you wrote yourself, think about that...?

That's actually a difference between US and UK speak, methinks. A continuing award is always referred to in the plural (ie. The Pritzgers) and a one-off is singular (ie. The X-Prize). That, and I just like plurals. I mean, things are more fun if there's more than one

How petty I must be to get irritated about little things like this, in the context of a fanzine containing such interesting subject matter. And yet that's my overall point. You had such interesting subject matter and yet, for me, detracted from it by not seeming to really think about, edit or even proof-read some of the original material and making rather a lot of silly mistakes – like y'know, misspelling the names of your contributors. (And, just for once, I don't mean me.) Sercon fanzines like this surely come with expectations of higher standards. But maybe it's only me that has a problem with these sorts of errors, and nearly everyone else

doesn't notice or doesn't mind or actively thinks it's not important; although I saw that Lloyd made a couple of similar points about this issue in his letter in #251 – to which you retorted 'Spelling errors? I don't believe in them. They're just natural spelling evolutionary steps.' Beware the difference between an evolutionary step and a dead-end...

It's also a part of the thing that I just can't see them. We did this thing in school where they gave us two pages with 50 mistakes on them and we had an hour to find them. The average student caught 35. I caught 16, mostly through cheating. I just don't see them, and to me, they don't matter.

You described my own approach to this in #246, along with an associated compliment which I won't repeat but don't think I deserve: 'She has big fancy ideas about what zines should do; these include things I cannot stomach, like proof-reading and making sure everything works.' (I made a couple of minor corrections in quoting that; I figured you probably won't mind...) What concerns me more, I suppose, is the possibility that most people don't have high expectations because 'it's only a fanzine'; I'd hate anyone to think that, or to be encouraged to think that fanzine fans don't rate what we do ourselves highly enough to take trouble with it. So I think you owe it not just to your contributors and your readers and yourselves but to your community to do the best you can; but I agree that it does still need to be fun, and I've seen you insisting several times in this run of issues that for you (and James, I presume) this sort of thing does not count as part of the fun.

And I can't think like that or I'd never do

another issue. There have been times when I've tried to get it right, labored over an issue looking at every word and trying to figure out what's right and so on, and these issues are always followed by long (by my standards) breaks. Its one of the reasons I haven't done a Claims Department in so long. It literally saps the fun from things so much that I don't want to do it again. It's a problem, and one that will keep me from success in pretty much every way.

On the other hand, I think the greatest thing a fanzine fan can do is to put stuff out there, no matter if it's good, bad or indifferent. I think folks owe it to the community to Do above all else.

So let's get to the fun and indeed the really important stuff, i.e. the books. The Clarke award is very much about the books, but as noted in James's write-up of the ceremony it is now partly sponsored by the Sci-Fi London film festival, and thus takes place on the first night of the festival – along with a number of film screenings, obviously enough. The Imperial Stormtroopers whose presence Lloyd also queried in his letter are mostly associated with the film festival; but there's a reasonable crossover among the audiences for the two events and that, along with the multiple cinema screens, can cause some confusion. One year we confidently followed some friends into the darkened cinema where the presentation had taken place the year before, only to find that we were about to interrupt the audience already enjoying the film that was actually showing there.

I loved your article about the Clarke

shortlists – not because I agreed with you; I think above all it indicated to me that we have very different approaches to what we like in SF, which might be a conversation or an article for another time – but because of the personal engagement with SF in general and with the award shortlists in particular that it showed. I'm one of those SF fans who finds lists fascinating, not least because it gives me many points of comparison and connection. But even as the writer of a list article, it probably wouldn't fascinate you if I responded with a year-by-year, book-by-book commentary. And there were so many interesting elements in even your brief descriptions of what you found in the books you read, which ones you hadn't and which you found you couldn't. And lists within lists as you went through each year, of course, each with their own potential for comparison, a few of which I just can't resist commenting on anyway.

As anyone who has read the issues where I pour over the films named to the National Film Registry or the issues where I recount my Favorite Albums of All-Time, or even the little printzine I do once in a while called L*I*S*P*, I am all about lists. That Clarke's article was such a blast to work on. I think I wrote it in a couple of hours at my desk, furiously typing and just going and going and going. It's sad that I won't be able to do the same article as we do another Clarke's issue.

I was interested that you thought in retrospect that the 1994 award (won by *Vurt*) was a weak shortlist; I thought at the time and still think quite the contrary. But I agree with you that the shortlist for the 1996 award was great. And despite everything, I also think I'd

agree with you about the excellence of four of your five favourite non-winners; maybe that in itself suggests they really are great books. (And maybe that slightly cryptic comment will encourage other list fans to look up that issue again.) Even after all this time I'm not going to be drawn on the detail of the awards presented in 1999 and 2000, when I was a judge; I'm happy to say that I still like both the winners, though!

My own personal Clarke reading project kicked off after the years I judged, when obviously I'd read the whole shortlist (twice) and, equally obviously, the vast majority of the submissions. I wanted to be able to have a considered opinion on the shortlist by the time of the presentation – and in most years since have been asked by the SF Foundation to be part of the panel for their 'Not the Clarke Award' programme item at Eastercon – so I've carried on reading the whole shortlist. The only year since where I've failed is for the award presented in 2005; I've yet to read *Cloud Atlas* (David Mitchell) or *Market Forces* (Richard Morgan) and really ought to catch up so I can make a clearer statement about my Clarke award reading progress. My intention remains to go back to

fill in my reading gaps from earlier years; but from the first 12 years of the award there are still 56 titles – i.e. most of them – which I've not yet read in full (or, in most cases, at all). And that's getting on for half a year's reading, so given how much else I want to read I suspect it's going to take me a while yet.

Yeah, there's a lot I have to read again, or for the first time. It's not fair that they keep writing new books when I haven't read the old ones yet!

On the other pieces in this issue, I've had too many conversations with James about the Clarke award to reiterate here my own views about his convictions; they might be as uninteresting to other people as they've clearly



been unconvincing to James... And since you obligingly reprinted my own review of *The Arthur C Clarke Award: A Critical Anthology*, I also needn't reiterate here all the points I usually make to people about how the award is judged, how the shortlists and the final results are thus usually arrived at, and what in my opinion the strengths and flaws of this approach, and this award overall, tend to be. I will, however, take the opportunity to point out to anyone who was wondering that this review of a 2006 book was first published in



2007 on *Strange Horizons*, and thus only covers the award up to that point.

One of the features of this issue that I found a bit strange – potentially even redundant – came through even more strongly in #252. Again, I enjoyed the more personal articles – more lists from you, again making me think that we really ought to talk more about science fiction because our views are so different it would be potentially more interesting than a conversation where we all agree, and a comparable but again different list of the books that excited James – as much as anything because you're both writing about science fiction and the experience of being a fan of it, with at least a bit of an overview about what engages you and why.

I've been thinking a lot about what I like in SF, and I think it's murkier now than several years ago when I could say that it was the Funkiness of a story that attracted me. Now, after tackling much more Hard SF and even a bit of Military SF, I think it comes down to

whether or not I want to dive in and live in that world. I think it's exactly the opposite to why I love Crime Fiction: which is I want to be dropped into a world which I would never want to personally encounter.

I suppose I can be drawn on these lists a bit more, since I don't have the personal connection to the Hugo fiction categories that I still feel to the Clarke award. There aren't many years where the winner of the Hugo novel award has made me outraged that a much, much better book on the shortlist lost out; it's often not my preferred choice that won, but the winner has still been credible in context. Occasional years, like 2003 (as you mentioned), stand out for me as a year when the overall voice of the Hugo-voting peepul has been considerably at variance with my own opinion; but more often I've been unimpressed by the shortlist as a whole because there are a number of eligible books which I thought considerably better than most things on the ballot but which didn't make it through

the nomination process.

Hugo shortlists are more based on personalities, as can be seen in the 2009 shortlist more than any other year, but there are books every now and again that make it through without the benefit of a well-read blog (Paolo Bacigalupi comes to mind).

The 2010 shortlist was really pretty strong (I thought when it was announced that I'd read or wanted to read everything on it, and I didn't regret reading any of them)

although I'd like to have seen Paul McAuley's *The Quiet War* on the list; and suddenly I find that we do have some tastes in common as well, since I'd also rated *Galileo's Dream* by Kim Stanley Robinson, *Ark* by Stephen Baxter and *Yellow Blue Tibia* by Adam Roberts as books from 2009 that people should read. Nonetheless, there were two books I preferred to any of those and to anything else on the actual shortlist, and so I was very happy with the result. When you wrote that it was a two-hour (sic) race between *The City & the City* and *The Windup Girl* you surely still wouldn't have reckoned on them tying for both first-place votes and the final count...

More like I couldn't choose which would get the lucky push behind it to win and in other places I'd said that I thought The City & The City would win. The tie, which I did mention on a couple of panels I did on the Hugos, was a dream that came true!

The bulk of the issue, though, consisted of reviews, and there you rather lost me. They



were good and interesting reviews, in the main, by people who are good at writing reviews and whose opinions are worth paying attention to; reviews which I will read when I want reviews. But this was a fanzine, and an online fanzine, presenting a set of reprints of recent reviews which were already available online – and in original formats which were actually easier to read than they were here. If you were producing a paper fanzine, you might assume that your readers weren't regular readers of online articles and thus identified the value of reprinting all the reviews in full. In the electronic format, if you'd chosen to present your own perceptions of the books and an overview of other opinions expressed – whether online or otherwise – and then linked to the online reviews for anyone who wanted to follow them up in more detail, it would have seemed a more focused and coherent way to handle the available material. This approach seemed like part fanzine and part blog without the advantages of either.

But it's your fanzine, and you're not usually limited by a printed page count, so I deduce that you preferred to be comprehensive. I know we have different views about what fanzines do and

who they're for – and perhaps, since I'd read all the novels in question, I wasn't your target audience in this case at least. I saw that John Purcell, in his letter in #254, commented that he hadn't yet read any of the books and that 'an issue like this helps to educate me as to which of these novels would be worth reading'; so obviously it did work for other people.

In general, I'd rather not do reprints, but it's hard to get folks to write to a short deadline, especially on topics like these and thus, we have this! I actually asked a bunch of people for reviews of the novels and none could do it either because they didn't have the time or, the one I really don't get, they thought no one would care what they had to say. I don't know how to combat that, largely because I really don't understand why anyone would have that thought. On the other hand, I'd never actually read any of these reviews. It seems to be a well-hidden secret that I don't actually read blogs with any regularity, or participate on mailing lists or listen to PodCasts or interact with anything on-line other than zines.

I haven't forgotten #245, that issue you gave me in person at Eastercon and which is why I'm here now at all. I read it a few days after the con, although in fact it wasn't even my own copy that I read (you were probably right, you see, that I'm a bad investment). And this time, I found that your main reprint article worked for me. I didn't know anything about *Hitman*, and I thus wouldn't have leapt to read this fanzine ahead of some of the others I'd acquired in the previous two weeks (from Corflu onwards); but I needed something to read while I waited for the friend

giving me a lift to come back from some errand he was running, and there it was in his car. And it proved to fulfil one of the criteria I have for good fanzine reading, in that it used someone's enthusiasm and knowledge about a subject to inform me about something I didn't even know I would be interested in. The two editorial articles told me that you both liked *Hitman*, and a few things about it which particularly appealed to you – but what I needed, as an uninformed reader, was what I got from the Greg Burgas article from 'Comics You Should Own'.

I'm afraid, though, that even James's enthusiasm is never going to interest me all that much in armoured vehicles; I guess he's allowed the indulgence of shoe-horning this piece about tanks into this issue, and some readers will doubtless find it an unexpected joy, but it's not for me – which is also the case with almost the whole of #255, since nothing is ever really going to make me interested in trains. Although I do agree with you, Chris, that trains provide great time for reading and writing, but here again we differ since I get this even more from planes, especially since the journeys I take by plane are usually longer and thus give me more time away from other demands. Of course, this only works if you also have the space and peace necessary for your own preferred travel pastimes; other people's behaviour on trains (and planes) can be the greatest obstruction to spending the time in the way you want, and I think that if I'd encountered Randy Smith's train party – especially when they were filking – I'd have moved very hastily to another carriage. As I shall do now to another issue, although I'll come back to your latest joint issue (#257) later.

I love trains and you should expect a third visit to the topic!

Before I go any further I really should also congratulate you on your 250th issue – comparatively long ago though it was – and indeed commend both you and Taral Wayne for reaching that milestone of the special ‘50th issue’ (#258) which marked his fiftieth contribution to your fanzine. I now have a theory about Taral’s fan writing: he’s actually editing a distributed perzine, cunningly spread out among lots of other titles. He writes other sorts of more directly fannish pieces too – including great commentaries on art, history, and opinion pieces – which appear from time to time in many of the same fanzines, helping to keep his perzine project under the radar. (As someone who’s published Taral over fifty times you must have experienced the slightly time-lapsed approach to submission of his articles, where he sends the original draft for consideration, with a warning that it’s still being proof-read; and the proofed version follows; and then an update with a few more amendments; and sometimes another update, and another... This is particularly alien to me since, although I’m never really satisfied with my own draft articles, I don’t expose them to anyone except Mark until I’m absolutely convinced that they’re as ready as they’re ever going to get.) Checking which other titles I’ve written for other than my own fanzines, over the past fifteen years or so since I started taking this seriously, I find I’ve written fewer than fifty articles in total for other people in all that time. Maybe I am a fake fanzine fan after all.

I like the way Taral does that, though it has once or twice confused me as to whether he was submitting an article for me

to publish or just sending something out for a look. I, of course, do everything first draft and out which, I gather, is also unusual.

If I am to mend my ways, probably I should now be more systematic and work through the other issues from the beginning of this set, if nothing else so that I can follow through the conversations in your other letters of comment. But then one of the things that’s most obviously different about those five jointly edited issues is



that they don’t have letter columns. I presumed this was because they were ‘special’ issues, with specific themes with which you felt letters on previous ‘regular’ issues wouldn’t fit, especially if you were aiming to push them out to broader audiences who might be confused by the letters; and also that they were prepared as stand-alone issues which just slotted into the numerical sequence of other *Drink Tanks* whenever they were ready to go, so it was easier to plan on not including letters anyway. Although I also noticed, reading through again, that there were another four (or five if you count #258, despite Taral’s ‘Locs’ piece) other issues in this batch of fifteen where you didn’t feature letters. How many of those were deliberate choices (e.g. ‘Handicapping the Hugos’ being another special issue where you wanted to keep the focus on the theme) and how many where you just didn’t have enough letters at the time you were ready to publish to run a separate letter column?

I try to keep theme issues without letters, though usually, it’s not a problem. I don’t get many LoCs and holding off for another issue to publish them will mean I have two for an issue instead of just one in each of two issues. If it’s a regular issue and it doesn’t have LoCs, it means I didn’t get any.

I was interested in your analysis in #250 about what made a typical issue of *The Drink Tank*, about what you feel are its failings and how you use your collaboration with James or others to give it a new boost. I think that you do yourself a disservice here; some of your own writing is fine, thoughtful, well-structured and funny stuff, and that comes through in some of your ‘solo’ issues as much as in joint or themed

ones.

You will also note that most of the writing I do that is at all readable is in zines edited by y'all or Guy Lillian or Steven Silver or Earl Kemp. It's not my writing, it's y'all's editing.

You mentioned that the fanzine feels very fresh because it comes out so often (Taral makes a similar point in his introductory piece in #258 about the sorts of articles he can place with you, due to the frequency and style of the fanzine). But I presume that the frequency is also what foils having a lot of correspondence for any one issue, and your comments in response to Lloyd's letters in #254 and #259 seem to bear that out.

I would guess so, but again, if I waited around and did an issue a month even, I'd lose interest. I guess I'm a shark: swim or die, keep writing to keep away the boredom or head off to something that can keep my mind occupied more frequently.

I was sorry to see Taral's comment in passing in #259 that he thinks he won't get much feedback from our own letter column in *Banana Wings* for the article he's sent us most recently. As these things go our letter column is reasonably vibrant, but I suppose it's never entirely predictable which contributions to any particular issue of a fanzine people are most likely to comment on. We print articles and artwork that we enjoy and which interest us, but there are some topics that just engage our audience – and our most regular correspondents – more than others.

I'm not entirely sure, mind you, who either your core target audience or your general readership in practice is for *The Drink Tank*. I tend to assume that your target audience is quite broad; your fanzines seem relatively

open and accessible, and obviously are freely available. You feature a wide range of material, which I'd have thought would give people a lot of hooks for comments. You also publish some important stuff – not just the material I've identified as 'sercon' but pieces like Cheryl Morgan's interview with Natania Barron in #259 about The Outer Alliance; I was aware of the debate which evidently led to the formation of the Alliance, but hadn't been aware of these positive steps that followed.

Maybe, more than anything else, the problem is that I don't have a target audience. I have no idea who will, or really who I'd want to, read The Drink Tank. I just do it and put it out there. This means I can publish anything and, if you think about it, that nothing really fits. I've always tried to keep The Drink Tank as a place of the unexpected, where one issue to the next might show you two completely different things. Some folks really don't like that, others seem to enjoy it but I don't think I could do it any other way and feel right about it. Maybe it's that I don't like consistency...

In a completely different vein, I enjoyed your Brighton and London trip report in #246; I'm always interested to read people's impressions of places I know well. I think we've

all written some account of that party-cum-editing-session at James and Sim's house now (James's most recent version is in the first issue of *Straw and Silk*, the new fanzine from Beverley Hope and Roman Orszanski in Australia), but it's the first time I've seen someone writing up the bus trip from Croydon to Heathrow as a tourist experience. Whenever we do it we also spot good pubs and restaurants along the route that we keep thinking we must visit some time; but



then we always forget them until the next time we're on the bus, going to the airport or a hotel with no time and too much luggage to stop.

I was also interested to read your thoughts in that issue and in #250 about working on convention newsletters. It's something that we've never done, although we've talked about how we'd go about it; the closest we've come so far was a series of advance contributions to John Coxon's newsletter at the Eastercon last year, helping to mark the way it was the 60th British national convention (at least in the way we count them now). There's certainly more

flexibility about how to produce a newsletter these days, including where you actually do it, so that writers/ reporters/editors don't need to be tied for the whole time to a computer in a backwater of the convention, trying to comment on something they have no time to experience. Flick and her team – including the 'night shift' based in the UK – got a lot of favourable feedback for the Aussiecon Four newsletter, I believe, but did give the impression of having to be locked away for most of the con in the newsletter room they'd sort-of chosen (at the far end of the convention centre, past the

toilets, in a room that I gather you couldn't leave if you wanted to get back in – it didn't have a sign saying 'Beware of the Leopard' that I noticed, but it wouldn't have seemed out of place).

I did most of the BayCon newsletter on my laptop and it was a good way to move around. I'm thinking of doing it again, though I'd want to just be the writer.

And finally, then, by way of Worldcon we come back to the Hugos – taking in #247 ('Handicapping the Hugos'), #257, part of #259 and with an implicit nod back to #252 which I've burred on about enough already. If I hadn't already been meaning to write to you because of #245, I'd have been similarly prompted by #247. I enjoy your Hugo issue every year; its combination of

personal opinion and more considered analysis is always fun. I note you only predicted five (or maybe four-and-a-half) of the winners this time, but I was surprised too about the results in some of the categories where you got it wrong.

I was especially, and pleasantly, surprised that Moon won. That was a big upset as far as I'm concerned.

I had wanted to make it clear long before the result was announced that I agreed with your assessment of the likely outcome in the fan writer category, and that I wasn't harbouring any false optimism about my chances there or for *Banana Wings* in the fanzine ballot, and also that this caused me no distress whatsoever. But of course I missed my own deadline, so you'll just have to take my word for it. For all the criticisms that can be, and are, made about the fan categories in the Hugos, I don't feel strongly enough myself that I'd decline a nomination – unless by doing so I could guarantee that someone I think is much better would definitely be on the ballot and thus have a shot at winning, which we never will. And that's one of the things I have to admit that I enjoy about those years when we get nominated: it's the ultimate stress-free accolade. It's particularly good when we're also attending the Worldcon (which has only happened in 2005 and this year); it means we get to go to a couple of parties, and to have great seats for the ceremony, but without any of the stress related to thinking that we might actually win, having to be prepared to get up and say something appropriate and coherent, and the inevitable, however momentary, disappointment when we don't. It's much more fun when you know you're not a contender.



I love the pre-Hugos parties. They are so awesome! I loved the first one I went to at Denver and Montreal was just as good. It's also the only time of year I get to talk to Bob Eggleton, who is a good guy!

I'm not making this up; this really isn't false modesty but simple pragmatism. We're a paper-only fanzine targeted firmly at a fanzine-savvy audience – and personally, although I write for and to other fanzines too, I couldn't possibly be called prolific in the way that you are and certainly not in the way that bloggers are. So apart from anything else, there won't be enough voters familiar enough with what we do and how we do it to make a difference. This may also be one of the reasons why I only ever just scrape onto the fan writer ballot in the years that I'm there; although it's rather more likely (as Taral commented in his article in #253) that this is because it's a very broad category with a large number of people eligible to be nominated, and many of them are pretty good – although sadly most of those I think are absolutely the best don't get onto the shortlist at all. This all means it's a surprise and a delight when we get noticed enough to make the shortlist, but we are entirely realistic about having no chance of winning – and that's been the case since before the eligibility was broadened for the category still (albeit rather unhelpfully for the sake of calm consideration and debate) called 'best fanzine'. So if we're ever on the fanzine, or fan writer, ballot again, you shouldn't feel any need to improve our odds in your relevant round of handicaps.

I like to think that I'm setting myself up for a Post-Humorous Hugo.

In this respect, my procrastination about

sending you a letter has been quite useful. I won't deny now what I've said to many people in person since the shortlists were published, which is that my ambition is only ever to beat 'No Award'; but both *Banana Wings* and I did so much better this year than we – and you, back in #247! – would have ever believed possible that it's good to

be able to acknowledge that and say thanks to everyone who voted for us and gave us a great experience (especially given that it was in Australia, where we feel a strong connection to sf fandom), and yet still only have to write about the whole subject in one letter.

I was tickled pink that y'all came second (and that I ran third, which is also rather a shock) and I think that maybe you'll be walking off with a rocket in 2014. As I've said before, you won Best Fanzine this year in my eyes, as completely worthless as that may be.

Because I would have felt the need to comment on Taral's piece in #259, and also your comment in the introduction there about the fanzine category, if only to make it clear that I don't personally feel robbed in any way, and I don't think the nomination of the winners (or anyone else on the shortlists) was outside the eligibility rules or inappropriate for them to accept. We, and I, happened to come second this year and were pretty thrilled about that; but it's a popular vote and there are always other



people on the ballot... If the categories weren't so broad then some other fan writers and fanzines – even within a traditional-fanzine-oriented definition of those terms – would have been shortlisted along with us and you, and that would have changed the voting in other ways so that we might not even have done that well.

The bigger issue for me

remains the mismatch between the titles and the eligibility definitions of these categories, which just confuses people and makes them annoyed – whether or not they pause to digest the more detailed eligibility criteria. How people interpret 'fanzine' will always reflect the range of different understandings about what a fanzine is and should be, alongside other views within the Hugo-voting part of a Worldcon's membership about what's important to the community and what they want to recognise; but the broadness of the definitions stems, I think, from a desire within the WSFS business meeting to make the Hugos as open and inclusive as possible.

I have some sympathy with the view expressed – in various different quarters for various different reasons, and specifically in several letters to these recent issues of *The Drink Tank* – that fan activity in this sort of sense doesn't really fit within the Hugos these days; I assume many people would probably be happier if the fan categories were dropped, so that the Hugos become awards for professional activity within the sf community. I've also heard people

suggesting a more general 'fan achievement' type category as well or instead of some version of the existing ones, and merely point out that the recent Australian Natcon business meeting had a lengthy debate about removing their equivalent 'achievement' category from the Ditmars. So that wouldn't necessarily solve anything.

But, y'know, they're only awards; they're not why we do any of this fan activity. One of the other reasons I feel so guilty about my three-year gap between letters of comment to *The Drink Tank*, and am consequently delivering such an over-compensation of LOC now, is because I believe that this sort of feedback and engagement is also important as a way to show that we appreciate what other fans are doing in fanzines. And yes, that does also mean I still feel guilty, and need to act soon on that guilt, about all the other fanzines to which I haven't written a letter of comment in the past year or longer.

Believe me, you are not in need of guilt because you've been busy giving us so much more through your own work! That's more important than anything.

The inclusiveness challenge is not just an issue for the fan categories, and often opening out eligibility to reflect what people are actually contributing to the field is far from straightforward – which I think is clearly borne out by the discussions about the current 'Best Graphic Story' category in #257. I don't know what the perfect answer is there, although I think Nick Honeywell and Liz Batty have done a constructive thing by providing a specific proposal as a basis for discussion and comparison to how things have been working with the definitions used so far. But then I'm increasingly coming round to the point of view that it

doesn't help to tinker with the Hugo categories we have in order to try to reflect how things have changed; it would be more productive to start afresh, deciding what it is we actually want to celebrate and what's comparable in a meaningful way, and recognising that not every sort of endeavour within the SF community can or should necessarily be eligible for this sort of award. I just don't imagine that would be easy either.

This is an interesting point and it's hard to work in that direction. We're doing another, closer, look at the Best Graphic Story category in the near-future, and there's a lot to think about in all the categories.

All that said, I agree with a point that Lloyd made in several of his letters about the Hugos: I, too, hope that people with nomination rights for next year's awards who know Bruce Gillespie's and Dick 'Ditmar' Jenssen's work will go about nominating them. And I'd add John Toon to that list as a fabulous, funny and surreal fan artist; that isn't even a partisan national comment now he's living in New Zealand. I'm



guessing, with all the use you're making of her cover art this year so that more people get to see it, that you'll be giving a big shout-out to Mo Starkey.

I love Mo and would love nothing more than to see her on the ballot along with Ditmar. Bruce should always be on the ballot, as he's right up there with you and Mark and Earl Kemp and Taral as the Best Fan Writers in the world.

Lloyd also mentioned in his letter in #256 that the Aurora awards in Canada now give out pin badges to those nominated, as has happened with the Hugos for some time. With international synchronicity, Paul Ewins was able to use funds raised from memberships for his deliberately low-key 'Dudcon III' version of the Australian Natcon which ran within the Worldcon this year – putting on an excellent Australian Awards ceremony and running the Natcon business meeting, which I continue to find strangely compelling; it's a sickness – to fund about fifteen future years' worth of nominee pins for the Ditmars, with enough left over to provide a version in a different colour for members of Dudcon III. It's a rectangular enamel pin with a representation of the Southern Cross (like the Ditmar awards these days), and the Dudcon version is one I'll be very happy to wear as jewellery – which I could never do with the Hugo nomination pins in any context where I might encounter other fans, since it seems such an affectation to wear them other than at the Worldcon where you're actually nominated. I can only deduce from observation, mind you, that opinion seems to be divided on whether this is poor form or not; who knows what customs will develop around the Aurora or Ditmar nomination pins. But the Dudcon pin is safe from that sort of subtext, and also gives me a small enduring connection to Australian fandom.

I tend to keep my pins attached to the badges of the cons where they came from, or in case I wasn't there, on that year's BayCon badges.

I still think Steve Green's exposé of you

in #250 must be right, Chris, but you mentioned in #254 that you've been trying to relax a bit and thus – by your own standards of frequency – had been publishing less often overall; and also that James is now the permanent Special Edition Editor of *The Drink Tank*, which suggested both a sharing of the load and a confirmation of your comments in #250 that you felt you needed external input to lift the fanzine beyond the plateau you thought you'd hit. I hope everything's OK, and that this helps you to continue publishing in a way you enjoy. I'm sure, in any case, that you and James will continue to be ornaments of the Hugo shortlist as long as there are fan categories remaining.

It's all good, especially now that work is slowly getting more manageable. I'm hoping that James and I end up back on the ballot somewhere. Maybe Best Party Companions?

This may be the most overdue letter of comment I've ever written, but it's certainly the longest. And so – pausing only to switch with trepidation to efanazines.com to see whether you have in fact published yet another issue on which I haven't commented while I've been in the process of composing this letter – I shall therefore leave you for now with the thought that you should run Lloyd's comment from his letter in #248 as a competition, to see how many things people can suggest that would fit the description: 'good when

warm, congealed and disgusting when cold'. Then again, do you want to know that much about your readers' imaginations?

Cornstarch. Oxblood. Greeks.

With very best wishes, and the promise not to leave it another hundred issues or three years until my next letter,

Claire

As I have often said, one a year is all I ask, and if they're like this one, I will count myself lucky.

I said it when I announced that I'd gotten your LoC on Twitter: I just got a 6600 word LoC form the Best Fan Writer in the World, and I totally mean it. This is not only the best LoC I've ever ran, but the best one I've ever seen, and thus, I thank you.

Now I must sleep, so I give you ... cephalopods!



More Loot from Worldcons by Taral Wayne

The Worldcon this year was held in Melbourne, Australia. Naturally, I wasn't there. I don't even know how Australians can afford to be Down Under. Certainly, I couldn't afford the plane fare half-way across the planet.

But I was up for a Hugo again this year,



which meant a certain amount of loot was coming to me. The first of it I got this afternoon. A local fan that I knew had gone to Aussiecon 4 and brought back a "gift" from next year's Worldcon (in Reno) to the nominees of this year's Hugo. Murray arranged to meet me and have coffee so that he could hand the thingie over.

Thingie was the word. I opened the plain box and found myself looking at something that looked rather like a well-polished mortar shell. The narrow part came off to show that the lower part had a perforated lid. My first thought was that it was something you filled with salt, garlic, onion, chili powder and various other secret herbs and spices, and sprinkled it on the bbq steaks.

But no... it's a cocktail mixer. If there's one thing I'm sure of, in life, it's that I've never mixed a cocktail before... or ever wanted to. Oh well, it's the thought that counts. I can only wonder what they were thinking, though...

The inscription says, "Renovation, the 69th. World Science Fiction Convention, August 17-21, 2011, Reno Nevada, USA."

This will not be its permanent resting place -- I stuck it on top of the TV for the favorable lighting.

You know... I could use it to keep cremation ashes in... but who should I cremate?

Editor's Note: I got one too, and Spike and Tom were nice enough to bring the shaker and my pins to BASFA. It's living on the shelf with my Homer Simpson Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Excellence and the trophy that showed up on my desk that says "I am Ozymandias, King of Kings.: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair."



The Awful and Artsy

By Chris Garcia

I made a movie. It was a documentary about Steampunk, a topic that I am very fond of. I've written up the creation of the Doc for Andy Trembley's new zine *iKinook Reader*, a zine made for portable e-readers and the like. It was an experience, and I half-thought they wouldn't be showing it at the Zer01 festival, the Digital Arts festival that Cinequest was working with to make these movies. Personally, when I first watched it, I thought it was terrible, nearly unwatchable. I handed it off to the folks at Cinequest with the words "Well, it's not what I was hoping for, but it is what it is."

Oddly, despite my reservations, knowing that it was far from good enough for a regular festival, they showed it at Zer01.

There were some problems. First off, Zer01 has a delightful website. It's full of wonderful information and an interesting design that I rather like, though it does at least slightly enproblem usability. The event I was scheduled for was not listed in the schedule, nor was it promoted by anyone, it seemed. There may have been a great many people at the screening on

Saturday night, which was at 7pm, prime time, as it were. The Sunday screenings of the shorts that the bunch of us made were at 1pm. Linda and I showed up a few minutes late, and the films had already started, first with my friend Marya Murphy's *Salve*.

Now, there are many things that are very cool about Zer01. They had environmental art displays, fun little bits like a driving game (Outrun) that had been built into a movie case so as you drove in the game, you drove in real space. That was cool. The area where they had the film screenings was called the Empire Drive-In. The area was mostly exciting and very, very awesome. There was a giant screen with panels like the ones that used to be used at the old Drive-Ins. It was about 30 or so feet high. There was even a snack shack at the back of the set-up, though it was not functioning. The coup-de-

gras was the fact that they brought in a bunch of wrecked cars that were open so that people could sit in them. There were also a great many lawn chairs and the like up front. There were always two kinds of people at drive-ins: those who sat in cars, and those who sat on chairs. Neither were the right kind of people...

I grew up going to Drive-Ins. We went to the Winchester Drive-In all the time. I remember loving the swings that were shaped like a horse. We went to one near my house, the old Lawrence Drive-In, only once that I can remember, to see *Nine-To-Five* one of my favorite films when I was a kid. When both of those closed, we went to the Capitol Drive-In many times, and it's the only remaining Drive-In in the Bay Area. The last Drive-In movie I went to was a double bill of *Natural Born Killers* and *Blown Away*. So, having my movie shown on a Drive-In screen was awesome and honestly, kinda touching. Pops loved Drive-Ins, if he had his way, we'd have seen every movie we went to at the Drive-In.

While this set-up was gorgeous and exciting, it was really a neat location and a fine setting, but not without serious flaws. First off, there was the sound. The over-arching building was a massive, semi-permanent tent. The acoustics of the thing were fairly awful, and



there was no real separation either, meaning that the sounds from about the hall often over-powered those of the films. I'd mixed mine pretty loud, well I didn't actually mix it at all, I simply used the in-camera sound which tends to be pretty non-subtle, but sadly Marya's film, a lovely study of her two kids, was completely un-hearable. It's a shame because it really was a lovely piece of filmmaking and I wish I could have heard the sound.

There was a point the first time my film showed that the sound from the main part of the tent coincided with the point in my film where we go from the shot of the folks in costume watching the Babbage Engine to the helical carry that the Babbage Engine does. It was a weird 'wuzza-wuzza-wuzzzzzzzzaaaaa' that would have been completely at home in a 1950s Sci-Fi film. It was weird, but cool enough to add a bit of flavor to the proceedings.

The other films were decent to pretty darn good. They were all on the theme of Building Your Own World, which is a fun theme and gave people a lot to play with. One, by my buddy Vijay, was a fine piece of personal filmmaking, though the audio was almost indiscernible in the space. There was a piece by JB Whaley, whose film *Hell is Other People*, was a fine piece that showed at Cinequest. There was only one, a film that was shot in and round Vegas and so on, that felt way too clunky. It was very artsy, which I guess isn't my thing.

Oddly, shown with the other films in the sequence, I thought that my amusing little heresy worked. It was rough, I've no

rhythm as an editor yet, but the slightly twitchy cinematography and disassociative sound worked well set with the other films. It also looked great on the big screen. The cameras they gave us to make our films with, beautiful Cisco UltraHD FlipCams, put out great image and fantastic sound. It seemed that a lot of folks didn't trust the sound on the cams and went with various external sound devices, but the sound on the things are really good.

Sadly, when I got there, the only people

actually at the screenings were Linda, Marya Murphy and me. No one else. Almost no promotion, no space on the official sched of the Zer01 festival and perhaps the rest of the events of the fest, meant that there was no draw for the event. Marya left after a while and Linda and I were left on our own. Some folks wandered in to look at the Empire Drive-In set-up, but not at the films.

Which is a shame, as I thought the films were pretty good.



And now, just as I was finishing the issue, a letter from Kevin Standlee!

In TDT 259, Taral Wayne says, “What puzzles me is why the Hugo committee permitted Pohl’s name to appear on the ballot. If the rules are to mean anything, his name had no business being there.” While I was not on A4’s Hugo Award Administration Subcommittee, I can make what I think is a pretty good guess about why this was, and it comes down to some of the legal theory behind how the Hugo Awards work. When it comes to technical matters such as how many words a work has or when it was published, the Hugo Administrator has clear authority, similar to how the judge in an American law court has jurisdiction over what are known as “matters of law.” But when it comes to deciding whether something is actually a work of science fiction, fantasy, or a work related to fandom, or whether a person is a “fan” or not, the Administrator has no jurisdiction. That’s because it’s not a “matter of law,” but a “matter of fact,” and matters of fact in legal theory are left up to the jury to decide. In the case of the Hugos, the “jury” is the electorate. The members of WSFS as a group get to decide whether a work is SF/F; they get to decide whether someone is fannish enough to be nominated for Best Fan Writer. It’s not the Administrator’s business to make such decisions.

I see it like: the voters are The Voters and the Administrator is The Supreme Court. It should be the job of the administrator to make sure that the voters make decisions that are in line with the rules, though that requires strong definitions, which we lack and which I think that’s the real problem.

Every precedent with which I’m familiar with the Hugo Awards, going back more than twenty years, reinforces this. Every time an Administrator has made a ruling that a work isn’t sufficiently close to the category definition to qualify -- ***A Brief History of Time*** in 1989 being the class example of this, when Noreascon 3 ruled that it wasn’t sufficiently related to SF, Fantasy, or Fandom and disqualified it -- the WSFS Business Meeting has immediately passed rules that say, in effect, “You’re wrong, and we won’t let you ever do that again.” With that much history, Administrators are extremely reluctant to make a ruling on the facts and basically let the voters decide. ***And see, I think that was unquestionably the right thing. You had mentioned the example to me before and I went and looked up the rules at that point and there’s no question that it didn’t meet them and it was the right call.***

Now maybe you think that’s wrong; Taral probably does. And maybe in the cases of Fred Pohl or John Scalzi it’s so “obvious” that y’all don’t think it would be bad for the Administrator to DQ them. But consider this: there is absolutely no appeal from the decision of a Hugo Administrator. There’s no review, no second chances, and nothing you can do if the decision goes against you. What if an “activist” administrator looked at ***The Drink***

Tank and decided that ***in his opinion***, it wasn’t fannish enough and disqualified it? Would you not be outraged? (I know I would be.) I rather expect we’d see motions of disapproval placed before WSFS and attempts to modify the rules to more clearly state, once again, that ***vox populi, vox Dei*** -- “the voice of the people is the voice of Ghod.”

If there were real definitions, and Best Fanzine needs stronger redefining more than any





other category except maybe Best Graphic Story, then I'd not only be fine with The Drink Tank being DQ'ed, I'd hope it would be if it didn't meet the definitions.

I do not in the slightest fault Vincent Docherty and the rest of Aussiecon 4's Hugo Administration Subcommittee for not disqualifying Fred Pohl for Best Fan Writer. Had I been on the Committee this year, I would have made the exact same decision. Taral's ire, such as it is, should be solely aimed at the electorate for choosing people he doesn't think appropriate. If there is a problem here, the better solution is to do a better job of publicizing "real" fanzines and fan writers to the electorate, and to encourage people with what you think are informed opinions to nominate. Nominating is in this case even more important than voting on the final ballot.

I don't fault Vince either, as the rules go currently, Pohl's blog is fan writing, but to me that's not the issue. There should be stronger definitions that make it 100% clear who is and isn't a fan writer. In the 1970s and 80s, it was so much easier: if it showed up in a fanzine, it was Fan Writing and there was

no question that whoever did it was a Fan Writer. What I would really like is if Pros who got nominated turned them down, which is a cultural thing we should be encouraging until a strong definition for the category can be written taking away any questioning. This is how other awards work. There is no argument of Vox Populi in the Oscars: there are firm rules and they are established and they are enforced. My favorites are the rules for Animated Feature, Short Films and Documentaries, which is the level I think every Hugo Award category should shoot for. In Animation, they give a clear definition of what is eligible and what an animation is and even how much has to be animated. If everyone voted for something that did not meet that criteria, it would not be counted. It's not left open, like Best Fanzine or Best Fan Writer is. There are clear lines drawn that tell you what is what and that's what we need. You can open people's eyes to good stuff and it won't mean anything unless there is a strong framework in which to work. There need to be better definitions, especially as to what makes a Fan Writer. The debate about the Taral's article may be proof that there's no way for Fanzines to compete with Blog/Podcasts/etc. There are dozens of responses to the topic on File 770, yet only you in these pages and when I asked on the thread, only four people said they read it here. That's despite the link in the File770 post.

You really don't want activist administrators. They're fine as long as they rule your way, but you can't guarantee that they'll always be on your side. It's safer to err on the side of the vot-

ers.

Kevin Standlee

I don't want activist Administrators, I want definitions that turn Administrators into referees who are simply enforcing clear rules. That requires better rules. Think of the rules of soccer. What's the one rule that is the most subjective? Off-sides. What rules causes the most problems? Off-sides. Strong definitions lead to strong awards.

