



This is issue #12 of FLAG, a frequent fanzine published by Andy Hooper, member fwa, at 11032 30th Ave. NE Seattle, WA 98125, email to fanmailaph@aol.com. This is a Drag Bunt Press Production. First copies mailed on January 30th, 2013. FLAG appears only in printed form, and is available for trade, graphic artwork and cartoons or letters of comment. The next issue will be out in February, 2014. Art Credits: Ray Nelson: Page 8, title. Steve Stiles: Page 1. Brad Foster: Page 6. Alexis Gilliland: Page 10. Heroic Publisher for the U.K.: Mark Plummer. Vote Brad and Cindy Foster for TAFF 2014!

Do you think that I creep in the night and sleep in a phone booth?

**We keep the wall between us as we go:
Year-end thoughts on *Triton* and *The Dispossessed***

New Year's Eve. Another brief December afternoon. I am sweeping fallen leaves and squishy little burnt-orange berries off the pathway to the front door of our house. Our lot was professionally landscaped, with the apparent objective of ensuring that some tree or tall shrub is shedding something – leaves, blossoms, cones or fruit - on to the walkway in every month of the year. I far prefer the resultant sweeping and raking to shoveling feet of wintertime snow, but I still sometimes long for a more rational front yard.

It was on a day much like this a year ago that I began planning to publish issue #1 of FLAG. My reading of Jo Walton's novel *Among Others* had inspired me, reminded me of some pleasures of fandom that I had neglected for years. I enthusiastically read several large works of new and recent science fiction, talked about them a little in my monthly personal fanzine, made commitments to attend the 2014 Worldcon and participate in other fannish projects. I wrote a brief play that extended the narrative of *Among Others* to the protagonist Mori's first science fiction convention. It was well-received at Potlatch, and I was asked to provide a draft to the British SF convention Novacon, with the intention that it would be performed there to celebrate Jo's turn as Novacon GoH.

Things are a little different now. I was so self-absorbed, pumping out fanzines, I didn't really notice how uncomfortable my wife Carrie was feeling across the autumn months. She was uncharacteristically tired after working on her beloved flower and vegetable beds, and began to have odd dizzy spells while at rest or even in her sleep. She was finally uncomfortable enough to see a cardiologist in November, and after some monitoring, had a pacemaker implanted on December 16th. Yesterday afternoon, we sat in the cardiology office as a nurse tweaked the programming of the pacemaker from a console across the room, then sent us home with a wireless monitor that detects any issue and alerts the doctor's office. The most onerous element of her recovery is that fact that Carrie cannot raise her arm above 90 degrees, for fear that the tiny screws affixing the pacemaker's leads to her heart might be dislodged. All this is, if you'll forgive me, more than enough science fiction to digest at a sitting.

[Continued on Page 2]



Suddenly, Queen Selena felt a stabbing pain in her left nipple!

Quackers, Uppers, Downers, All-Arounders – you name it, we want it.

A Key to the linos published in FLAG #11

Page 1: "It's important to me to make everyone look good..."

Page 1: "...but I never forget that my main job is to make everyone's head fit in the helmet."

Sergeant Bill Dauterive (Stephen Root) explains the duties of a US Army barber, from *King of the Hill*.

Page 2: "The Knicks are the Burning Man of Dumpster Fires."

NBA analyst Bill Simmons pulls no punches in talking about New York's franchise.

Page 3: "Runaway technology is creating a need for new superstitions."

Line by Bob Leman, lifted from a 1964 issue of *The Vinegar Worm*.

Page 4: "Her beloved Manhattan library, where her father taught her to smell books, is set to be demolished."

Page 5: "I guess rich people's greed can be cured by the sight of adorable Christmas trees."

Both lines from Jill O'Rourke's review of the Lifetime Network's *The Twelve Trees of Christmas* for Crushable.com

Page 6: "Hell, I even thought I was dead. Then I found out I was just in Nebraska."

The doomed Little Bill Daggett (Gene Hackman) cracks wise in Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*.

Page 7: "I don't wanna lose my job...that's where I go every day."

More existential clarity from Bill Dauterive, Fighting Barber.

Page 8: "...Battlefield Earth should have been a Tyler Perry movie

Bellowed into a megaphone by comedian Eric Andre, in a sketch titled "Black Nerds" for his eponymous 12-minute talk show.

Page 9: "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural."

Attributed to the late President Nelson Mandela

We keep the wall between us as we go:

Year-end thoughts on *Triton* and *The Dispossessed*

[Continued from Page 1]

And far more trivially, there was no performance of *The Albacon Chub* at Novacon. The people who commissioned the draft had not cleared the idea with Jo; and as anyone familiar with her general outlook might have predicted, she did not care for it when it was presented to her. The parties on the committee who put this in motion told me that Jo +had asked for my email address and insisted on communicating with me herself. But I never heard anything from Jo Walton. Just in case, I'm keeping my 21-year-old AOL email address for another year. In the absence of any other explanation my mind has invented several scenarios, the most likely of which is that everyone involved thought the play was simply awful, and invented this reservation on Jo's part just to spare my feelings. But that's a plot from *I Love Lucy*, not real life.

As I rake the leaves away from the end of the walkway, the winter trees around me are alive with sound. I can hear the high-pitched, liquid clicks of a hummingbird, contesting with the flock of finches roosting in the bushes. Overhead, a mockingbird is rummaging through the many calls and songs it knows, including beeps and rattles that sound like they were inspired by delivery trucks and other man-made machines. It isn't language, but it is communication – and birds are certainly not the

only creatures with a weakness for using words without really knowing what they mean.

"The Natural Object is Always the Adequate Symbol" – Ezra Pound

One of the projects I planned for 2013 was to read and re-read two of the novels discussed by Mori in *Among Others*, *The Dispossessed* (1974) by Ursula K. LeGuin and *Trouble on Triton* (1976) by Samuel R. Delany, then titled simply *Triton*. They are two of the "big guns" in the narrative, works that clearly have some effect on Mori's internal conversation about the genre – what some perspicacious souls might call her *secret mental crifanac*. Most of the books that Mori reads have some interesting characters or settings, or provide a pleasant diversion, but only a handful seem to really affect her perspective as does this pair of novels.

Mori compares the two books closely, buying into a critical theory in vogue at the time, which assumed that Delany's book had been written as a direct reply to LeGuin. *The Dispossessed* has been informally summarized as "An Ambiguous Utopia," and *Triton* was formally subtitled "An Ambiguous Heterotopia," an homage which Delany acknowledges. But the relationship between the novels is somewhat more complicated than Mori supposes. Delany notes that

the initial composition of *Trouble on Triton* was done before *The Dispossessed* was published, and he had completed at least one draft of the manuscript before reading Ursula's book.^[1] He added the subtitle as a way of acknowledging that they were covering some of the same thematic ground, and that the two books formed a kind of accidental dialogue. It was also a kind of friendly wave or "shout out," similar to the lyrics by Canadian songwriter Bruce Cockburn that Delany puts into the mouth of a 24th Century performance artist in *Triton*.^[2] Ironically, the phrase "Ambiguous Utopia" originated in cover copy on early editions of the book, and became a subtitle in later editions, to the great relief of a generation of science fiction critics.^[3]

Delany credits R. A. Lafferty's 1968 novel *Past Master* as providing some potential common inspiration for both *Triton* and *The Dispossessed*. Delany and LeGuin were both connected to the publisher of *Past Master*, and both received galley copies of the novel.^[4] In it, a future civilization faces potential extinction, and travels back in time to recruit Sir Thomas More to help guide their society. More struggles to comprehend a culture at least partially inspired by his 1516 work *Concerning the Highest State of the Republic and The New Island Utopia*, the kind of "philosophical fiction" that the writers of sf's New Wave would embrace as their own. *Past Master* was a popular work, a Nebula finalist, and followed by several more re-imaginings of the Utopian ideal. Most of these are more accurately characterized as dystopian speculation, and generally judge the model society as inevitably more limiting than liberating.

Notes:

[1]: One of many points regarding the histories of both novels made in "On *Triton* and Other Matters: An Interview with Samuel R. Delany," published in *Science Fiction Studies*, #52 (Vol. 17, Part 3), November, 1990, edited by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.

[2]: *Ibid*: Chip explains "When I was in England, somebody brought me Cockburn's then new album, *Night Vision*. And it was dedicated to me; it read something like: 'To the author of *Driftglass*.' ... 'So I decided, 'I'll surprise him back,' and took some of the lyrics off the album and used them for Charo's songs. I thought: 'If he comes across it, he might be tickled by the idea of his lyrics surviving a hundred or so years on.'"

[3]: LeGuin, Ursula, *The Dispossessed*, Avon, 3rd Printing, July, 1975. From the cover: "The Magnificent Epic Of An Ambiguous Utopia – Winner of the Nebula Award!"

A Vast Distrust of the Image Itself

Ironically, Chip Delany may have fostered belief in the direct connection between the two books with his lengthy critical essay "To Read *The Dispossessed*," published in his 1977 collection *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*. His admiration for the book was such that he proposed to judge *The Dispossessed* by the most rigorous and idealized standard he could muster, and was delighted to find that, while failing profoundly in many, many areas, it also met that standard in surprising ways. His indictments of overwritten and counter-productive passages seem to echo from distant workshop doctrines of my youth. But his pleasure in her successes completely outshines his disappointment at her failures, and concludes that its enormous and imperfectly-realized ambition was well-worthy of the praise that it received.

LeGuin's protagonist Shevek is a physicist whose work has been stunted and delayed by the harsh nature of life on the moon Anarres; he makes the bold decision to travel to the "sick, propertarian" world Urras, from which his ancestors had escaped some 200 years before.^[5] The narrative leaps back and forth in time, and between his experiences on the decadent Urras and the dusty Anarres. Critics have suggested that the book's structure is also intended to mimic Shevek's theories about simultaneity and causality.^[6] At the climax of his odyssey, Shevek performs one of those acts of theoretical legerdemain that characterize science fiction, a breakthrough that heralds a new understanding of the mechanisms of space/time.

[4]: "On *Triton* and Other Matters:" Delany again: "R.A. Lafferty began the process with his satirical reading of Thomas More in *Past Master*. Ursula and I shared a publisher with him, and we were both sent readers' galleys. In our turns, we simply followed suit."

[5]: The events leading up to the Odonian secession are covered in LeGuin's short story "The Day Before the Revolution," first published in *Galaxy* in 1974.

[6]: Rigsby, Ellen M, "Time and the Measure of the Political Animal," *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. LeGuin's The Dispossessed*, edited by Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman, Lexington Books, 2005, page 169

A novel is a prose work of a certain length that has something wrong with it.

LeGuin suggests that this insight is catalyzed by Shevek's newly bilingual/biplanetary perspective on reality. The breakthrough will lead to the creation of a new interstellar drive, as well as the instantaneous communicator known as the *ansible*, and contact with civilizations willing to share technology that will ultimately make life more livable on Anarres.

Although Delany is as enthusiastic a linguistics-wonk as one may find in the field, I think he has a healthy skepticism toward the transformative powers of communication; in *Triton*, people generally only hear the things that reinforce what they already believe. But both writers seem to have internalized the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which asserts that language has a determining influence on cognition. LeGuin seems to place an almost mystic reliance on the gaps in Anarresti language to demonstrate a real divergences between the two cultures. When he accuses her of "Van Vogtian babble,"^[7] Delany does LeGuin the ultimate compliment of accepting her pretense of writing about two worlds orbiting Tau Ceti in the distant future, when she was also clearly writing about some of the academics, socialists, scientists and artists that populated her world in the 20th Century. But the novel also offers images that we can only find in science fiction, as in the scene where Shevek lingers in a darkened office on Urras to see his home world rise in the evening sky.

Delany also criticizes LeGuin's depiction of sexuality, which is rendered rather distantly in what is otherwise a frequently sensual narrative. He is also reasonably indignant that the only gay character in *The Dispossessed* is excised from the narrative when Shevek decides he has to buckle down and be a proper heterosexual counter-revolutionary family man. At the same time, *The Dispossessed* also contains one of the more crystalizing moments in the history of sexual politics and science fiction, when Shevek stands in a circle of his new colleagues on Urras and asks, "Where are the women?" Because there are none among the faculty of the Physics Department he has joined, while as Delany points out, the genders are integrated in almost every activity depicted on Anarres.^[8]

To confuse us further, Delany has also referred to *The Dispossessed* as a "...boy's book: a book to make boys begin to think and think seriously about a whole range of questions, from the structure of society to the workings of their own sexuality."^[9] And he considers it the equal of *Huckleberry Finn* in that narrative category; but "unlike *Huckleberry Finn*, the boy in *The Dispossessed* is held up to the man he will become again and again, chapter by chapter, beginning to end."^[10]

Notes:

[7]: Delany begins "To Read *The Dispossessed*" by dissecting the book's first paragraph, with its description of the wall that bounds Annares' spaceport, to conclude: "For the rest, it is the 1975 equivalent of Van Vogtian babble. And that babble, in LeGuin as in Van Vogt, suggests a vast distrust of the image itself..."

[8]: "To Read *The Dispossessed*," part 4: "By cursory count the number of Anarresti identified as female is 43. There is one mention of an unnamed number of old women. the number of Anarresti identified as male is 43. There is one mention of an unnamed number of old men. There are nine characters (any of these figures may be off by one or two as only counted once) mentioned whose sex is not specified. This deployment, and the actual placement of men and women in the society, does more than all the didactic statements to demonstrate the extent (and limits) of Anarres' egalitarianism. The constant occurrence of women (though seldom men) in positions unusual for them in fiction (though not particularly unusual for them in life) forma a

metacriticism of much fiction which seems, through a confusion of women with sweetheart/wife/mother, to posit a landscape in which Woman is a single profession, less interesting because unpaid, but basically on a par with, the single professions of Plumber, Doctor, Lawyer, Artist – these others also represented by one individual apiece, all (of course) male."

[9]: "On *Triton* and Other Matters," "...there's still a great deal to be said for a good boy's book. And for a woman's writing it. And nothing stops women and girls from reading boys' books and learning from them."

[10]: *Ibid*: Delany continues, "(The real tragedy of *Huckleberry* is that the best he can hope to grow up into, personally and historically, is the sociopathic narrator of Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A.") *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Dispossessed* are both flawed. But all through both, greatness flows, surges, sings. Quite apart from any criticisms I've made of it, *The Dispossessed* is beautifully and brilliantly rich."

As for Ursula's prose, Delany seems to luxuriate in its beauty even as he indicts her for writing to expectations and conventions which science fiction is intended to ignore. My re-reading of the novel was also a delicious indulgence – I found myself smelling and tasting the dust of Anarres, the wispy attar of young moonthorn plants, the scents of alcohol and fur and lipstick in the notorious scene at Vea's party for Shevek. Far from finding it a disappointment on subsequent readings, I find my affection for *The Dispossessed* has only increased across time.

Mumblers on the Moon

The area in which *Triton* felt most directly like a "reply" to *The Dispossessed* is in Delany's portrayal of Bron Hellstrom, a white heterosexual male protagonist whom he deconstructs so thoroughly that by the end of the novel Bron has become a woman. And he's quite likely insane, but that's a less perceptible change. While Delany admires Shevek's open-handed honesty, he doesn't regard him as particularly representative of his peers in his world or ours. "Certainly boys—especially white heterosexual boys—are the most privileged creatures in the Western social hierarchy. They are forgiven almost everything in life—and are forgiven everything in art."^[11] And this indulgence certainly seems to inform Bron's attitudes – he feels his dissatisfactions like one who expects to be satisfied.

Bron's narcissism is an extreme case; he probably suffers from an attachment disorder that renders him incapable of empathy for the feelings of others. His adolescent and young adulthood experiences as a prostitute on Mars might also have something to do with his inability to form emotional connections with others. But we are essentially set up to believe that Bron is a sensitive victim of a draconian police state – the recreational Ego-Boosting Booths which dispense the contents of government surveillance files maintained on the customer suggest some Orwellian standard of social control. But it gradually

becomes clear that most of the people Bron encounters are content with their lives – they enjoy a remarkable measure of social freedom, and living in actual poverty is an aesthetic or spiritual choice, not a condition imposed by scarcity. They can have their gender reassigned, turn back the effects of aging, and can even have their fondest desires and needs tweaked and altered to more convenient forms. If the culture of the outer moons is not a true Utopia, it certainly possesses seductive qualities for the longing and/or closeted reader. Bron goes to work naked one day, and returns in an outfit that Zorro would have loved the next. If this isn't a perfect world, it is still pretty fabulous.

Delany also maintains that he derived much more direct inspiration from Joanna Russ than from LeGuin.^[12] The complex game *vlet* was borrowed from her then-unpublished short story "A Game of Vlet." And the lives of Bron's neighbors Freddie and Flossie were inspired by the treatment of "Leslie" in Russ' dystopian short story "Nobody's Home." But his critical fascination with *The Dispossessed* has brought it and *Triton* into crossing orbits, an association that many now repeat as a catechism.

It should come as little surprise that Jo Walton is among those adherents. The idea that *Triton* was written in reply to LeGuin is a major theme of her column "Heterotopian Choices: Samuel R Delany's *Triton*," published at Tor.com on August 17th, 2008. In it, she recounts her own experience of reading *Triton* at age 14, and how the neon-lit Unlicensed Sector of the city of Tethys dazzled and fascinated her. The detailed portrait of Tethys, and its unique culture of ice operas, micro-theater and mumbling religious processions is so beguiling that Jo would like to ignore such problematic minutiae as the novel's plotline and Bron's descent into psychopathy. She's fully aware of his duplicity; she uses those fateful words that Mori later used to describe herself: "unreliable narrator."^[13]

Notes:

[11]: *Ibid*: Delany's view seems inspired by the notion of "desirable" demographics: "Our society is often described as patriarchal—a society ruled by aging fathers concerned first and foremost with passing on the patrimony. At the risk of being glib, however, I'd suggest that it might be more accurate to say that we have a filiarchal society—a society ruled almost entirely by sons—by very young men."

[12]: *Ibid*: Delany explains, "The name comes from a story by Joanna Russ, 'A Game of Vlet.' It's part—or almost a part—of her 'Alyx' series. The game in her story is not quite so complicated as mine; but in Russ's tale, at one point, you realize that the world of the story is actually controlled by the game: you can't really tell where the game ends and the world takes up."

Ah figs, Mother Nature's brown diamonds. In the fall the rotting leaves smell like an Olympian's ejaculate!

Hegemony of the Helpless

Walton refers to the cataclysmic war between the inner and outer worlds as “just scenery,” but I think it proves that Delany didn't believe for a moment that he was writing about a genuine Utopia. For all their freedoms, the citizens of the outer moons are separated from the traditional policy functions of government by a collection of interests known as “The Computer Hegemony,” which has become a kind of professional political class within the anarchic consensus of Triton and other outer worlds. This separation allows the entire system to slide into a destructive exchange of attacks that batter and terrify Bron, kill several of his house-mates, and exterminate 80% of the humans living on Earth.

There is a long coda following this catastrophe, during which Bron returns to work, has his sex change, and broods on the “male thinking” that inspired him to blow up his relationship with his thespian girlfriend The Spike. The sufferings of the



dying Earth and the victims of the war on Luna and other moons leave him comparatively unaffected, while The Spike's vitriolic break-up letter to him continues to haunt Bron to the end. I fancy that I see in him classic signs of PTSD escalating toward a psychotic break, but he may also fear that the death of the Earth also signals the eventual end of life on its colonies, now cut off from their genetic incubator. That's certainly one way to justify the panic that overwhelms Bron at the end of the novel.

Bron's lack of affect is particularly ironic because he is employed as a “metalogician” involved in the creation of controls that should theoretically have prevented the war from occurring. This novel opens Delany's consideration of “The Modular Calculus,”^[14] one of those magical disciplines common to science fiction, like Asimov's Psychohistory, that purport to have the power to predict and potentially shape future events. It's no more fanciful than Shevek's circular reasoning on causality, but it seems to have fewer positive effects on society.

It is a selective reading that concentrates on the elements of life in Tethys most reminiscent of Weimar Munich or the Berlin Love Parade. Jo's remarks made me reflect that Mori may indeed be an unreliable narrator, but I put rather more trust in her than in Bron Hellstrom; and that perhaps one of the things she lies about is actually *reading* all those books. Even if she did push her way through to the end, did she have any understanding of those interparentetical closing lines? (And after repeated (labored) readings, do I?) Her narrative skills are quite above correction, but Mori may still be an unreliable reader.

-- January 1st – 10th, 2014

Notes:

[13]: “Heterotopian Choices: Samuel R Delany's *Triton*,” Jo Walton, *Tor.com/Blogs*, August 17th, 2008. Jo's full take on Bron Hellstrom: “Bron is (as I totally missed for several readings) a profoundly unreliable narrator. He lies to himself. He rationalizes his actions and emotions. He doesn't know what he wants. At one point, one of the other characters outright tells him that he has defined his problem as insoluble and is therefore rejecting possible solutions. He's bumbling his way through his wonderful complex world making himself miserable.”

[14] In “On *Triton* and Other Matters” (published in 1990, recorded in 1986), Delany observed “The three books I've written since *Triton*, set in ancient Nevèrÿon, are basically the game of vlet writ large. Vlet is a game of sword and sorcery. In some ideal future world, with ideal readers, the books might all be considered part of a larger amorphous work, ‘Some Informal Remarks Toward the Modular Calculus,’ to which *Triton* is the SF prologue.”

COLOR PARTY: Readers' Letters to FLAG

[The significant gap between FLAG #11 and #12 has allowed me to collect another handsome file of correspondence. As is now hauntingly familiar, your letters are presented in Georgia, like this, while my comments are executed in Estrangelo Edessa, like this.]

John Hertz

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Hurrah for three Ray Nelson Drawings! He's so fine!

The seeming dominance of fantasy, of inner rather than outer space, of darkness mystify. I'm not sorry such things are published; as Larry Niven once said leading an art show tour, I'm glad any artist tries anything. At Westercon LII on a panel "Why is everything so dark?" Dave Howell said "Because we're wearing sunglasses." Nor of course need fantasy be dark. At Incon XXVII C.J. Cherryh said "Once everything had to be about machines, now everything has to be about therapy, what's the difference?" There are roots to this somewhere. Meanwhile, I'm a devoted cup-is-half-full man.

At Lonestarcon III among my pleasant duties was to stay in touch with Bill Wright. Throughout he was the game and sometimes afoot. During Wright's trip an earnest man in a propeller beanie (as he has been described) posted a few sightings at File770.com.

During L.A. Con II murders were committed at a fictional Worldcon somehow involved. Milt Stevens was at both, and as he says was killed, functionally, a death which did not release him.

Fred Lerner

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Thanks for FLAG #11, which came in today's mail. Your mailbox is a much more exciting place than mine, but then I'm not on Paul Di Filippo's mailing list. It was Paul's 1995 collection, THE STEAMPUNK TRILOGY, that first alerted me to his bizarre way of looking at the world. Too many of his stories appear in venues that I don't often see. I'm a creature of habit who is accustomed to finding my short-fiction reading in ANALOG, ASIMOV'S, and F&SF. If it weren't for the annual Hugo nominee packet I'd know nothing of

what is being published in small-press and electronic magazines. Now that I'm retiring from my day job I hope to find my way to more of the online publications where the exciting stuff seems to be happening. I hope this exploration will lead me to more of Paul's work.

[You illustrate the irony of Paul Di Filippo's selection of trading treasures, which is that it didn't contain enough of his own work. But maybe someone else will address that, as all manner of things have been making their way to me in the mail.]

John Nielsen Hall

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Thank you for keeping me in the loop despite my ornery behaviour.

I used to subscribe to *Mojo* -- I used to have a lot of their cover CD's and I thought I would pack them up and send them to you. Plainly I have de cluttered them all a long time ago, because I can now only find two, but I'm putting those two into the post to you. Otherwise, a very fine issue as always - well, apart, from the interlineations, but you knew that.

Rob Imes

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Enclosed is a CD I put together for you of my favorite songs by the band **Outrageous Cherry**. I thought you might like it after reading in FLAG #11 your comments about MOJO's "Modern Psychadaelia" CD and about Paul Di Filippo having sent you various items.

Your productivity with FLAG is INSPIRING. I have to admit I have fallen behind in properly responding to 'em, and feeling a bit guilty when the new ish shows up in my mailbox before I've been able to reply to the previous one.

I also want to send my kudos to Ray Nelson for his recent illos and cover logos for FLAG. They give the zine a charming and inviting appearance.

[I hope that knowing how much I have enjoyed listening to your trade will stave off your guilt feelings for a while. Rob. Outrageous Cherry is so Garage-intensive that I swear I can hear the sound bouncing off a 1967 Dodge Coronet parked on the other side of the room. And John Nielsen Hall, the "Trojan Explosion" and "Maximum '65" CDs from MOJO are alternating turns in residence on my Multimedia Drive. Thank you both!]

John Purcell

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I am in complete agreement with you about Joe R. Lansdale's fiction: it is a lot of fun. In fact, just last week I re-read *The Magic Wagon* simply because I enjoy that book a lot.

Beautiful things don't seek attention.

But not a word I heard could I relate, the story was quite clear



I believe the first book of his I read was *Dead in the West*, and really like the Hap and Leonard tales. *Bubba Ho-Tep* was a blast, both print and graphic novel versions. If you will recall, the ninth issue of *Askance* had a special Joe Lansdale section that included an interview I conducted with him plus articles from Rich Coad and James Bacon. This past Saturday (Dec. 14th)

Valerie and I drove over to Giddings, Texas, for the 2013 Weird West Fest, which was originally scheduled for Dec. 7th but was pushed back one week due to a storm system that hauled through most of the country. He was supposed to be one of the guests there, but the re-scheduling meant he couldn't be there on the 14th. Fortunately his daughter Kasey Lansdale was there, so I we had a chance to chat with her for awhile. Oh, well. Maybe next year. I wrote about this one day Steampunk-Western affair on Facebook, and a revised version of that is now in place in the 30th issue of *Askance*, which is *almost done*.

Jerry Kaufman

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The most recent issue of *Mojo* marked its 20th anniversary with songs from 20 of the staff's favorite albums. They are trying out packing the CD in a cardboard sleeve instead of a jewel case, which means it'll be harder to file with the other anthologies and samplers - simple sleeves with no spines disappear between the jewel boxed CDs.

Cool stuff from Paul Di Filippo.

Lloyd Penney

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A comic book based on the original Batman TV series? CRASH! POW! Campy enough to be fun, if I was at all into comic books. I certainly appreciate Murray Moore's resolution to respond to every paper fanzine he receives, and my own resolution to respond to every fanzine I get, at least those I feel I can adequately respond to, continues. I have added steampunk fanzines to that resolution, and have found a couple of new publications, *The Concordium* in Bear, DE, and *AetherNZ* in New Zealand. In the case of those last two, they are extremely graphic-heavy, and production values are quite high. Should John Purcell

decide to pursue faan fiction again, I am sure Floyd Pfennig would be an affable target once again.

Marilyn Holt

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After a rocky start probably caused by sloughing off the bad music of the 70's (with a few exceptions), Devo, Blondie, The Clash, and many others brightened the scene. I am addicted to listening to the current hits on the car radio, always have been, so I do know what's speaking to some segment of the population. Most pop songs are drivel, including those I tend to like. Drivel has its place: a catchy tune filled with clichés in a steady 60 beats per minute rhythm get me through traffic without challenging my concentration. Lou Reed's songs served as a great relief, should I say palate cleanser, but they were gone all too fast. I, too, was shaken by his passing.

Marlin Frenzel

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I enjoyed your article on *Mojo*. I discovered their CDs in the rock section of the San Diego Public Library...I probably copied about 3 dozen of them...they are kept in the rack of blues selections under the title of the disc...some of them are tributes to the Who, Bob Dylan, the Yardbirds, Iggy Pop or artists and tracks that have influenced various artists ...since my musical tastes run from Classical (Opera) through blues, reggae, punk, garage bands, electronica, jazz, soul, ...don't care much for Hip Hop...but do have NWA,, Ice T, Public Enemy, 2 Live Crew...throw in few others (Geto Boys). What I am really looking for is some of the pre-electric blues that came out on Elektra in the mid-sixties...Koerner, Mark Spoelstra, the Blues Project collection (not the group). Geoff Muldaur - it seems like they should be available on CD by now.

Adios - got to read the last 20 pages of *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* tonight!

[You've a broad collection - I observe that you have some serious old school rap (for one who doesn't care much for hip-hop.)]

Mike McNerny

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As to "Drag Bunt Press Production" I can only suppose you enjoy that particular baseball play when it is well executed. I think my favorite baseball play is called the "suicide squeeze" when it works. While I'm not a tremendous baseball fan I have been to 2 World Series games. Back in 1956 when I living in Conn. my father took me to see The Yankees play the Dodgers at Yankee Stadium. Somewhere

here in my basement I know I still have the program for that game but as I was only 12 or 13 I don't have detailed memory of the game specifics. I think Whitey Ford may have been pitching. I'm sure it was either one game before or maybe one game after Don Larsen's perfect game. I was a Yankee fan and know I was thrilled to see Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Billy Martin, Phil Rizzuto, Moose Skowron and Casey Stengel!

Since moving to San Francisco in 1969 I have been a Giants fan. Early in 1989 my wife won a radio contest. The prize was 4 box tickets behind home plate to every Giants game that year. Yes 320 tickets in prime seating location! We decided to sell those tickets to the concierge at the Fairmont Hotel for half price, still a tidy sum. But at the end of the season when the Giants got to the World Series, she was allowed to buy 8 tix to each Giant game at Candlestick Park. We sold the good seats to Mr Ticket for thousands of dollars and kept the cheaper tix for ourselves and our friends. And so we went to game 3 and started tailgating 3 hours before game time. Just before game time we went into Candlestick through the turnstiles just in time for the Loma Prieta Earthquake. At first I thought I had drunk too much, and then I wanted another beer. But alas as I approached the bar they closed down.

Needless to say the Giants mojo was disturbed and they went on to be swept 4 to 0 by the A's. I've never forgiven Oakland for that to this day. And Mr Ticket only paid me face value for those worthless unplayed game 5 tickets costing more than one thousand dollars that I would have received if there had been a game 5.

Yesterday was the last scheduled regular game at Candlestick. A 49er football game. The park was only built in 1960 but I guess they are going to demolish it in 2015. The Beatles played their last concert there. It is sad.

[55 years is actually a pretty long run for a modern sports facility, and you can't claim that Candlestick was a comfortable place to play baseball. But I'm sure there are people around who miss Kezar Stadium too.]

Bob Jennings
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I don't know who came up with the quote on page 9 about poverty not being natural, but I disagree with it completely. Unfortunately poverty is natural, and an established pattern of human existence for hundreds of thousands of years. The battle for survival forced

humans to gather into family/tribal units which evolved into government groups from city states to loose federations to empires. At every stage of the process humans have had to battle the elements to wrest basic food supplies from the environment. It is easy, and very common, to be poor when rains don't arrive in time to save crops from drought, when supplies of game animals or fish dwindle down, when people don't have the basic technology to preserve and store food in those times when it is abundant.

What is not natural is the rise of a wealthy class able to manipulate others in the group/tribe/nation to provide themselves with more food, weapons and resources than necessary for their survival so that they are able to achieve an artificial status with the members of the group

I am not a socialist; some people have better survival skills and can make themselves more useful to the civilized unit as a whole and as such they should be rewarded for their innovations and expertise. On the other hand, often the rule of might makes right. When brutality is the order of the day it often results in an artificial ruling class that takes from the mass of people struggling to survive in order to enrich themselves without giving much back to the welfare of the group. Wealth is not natural, but unfortunately poverty is and always has been.

[You're quickly emerging as FLAG's go-to-guy for Malthusian Realism, Bob, but I still think I side with President Mandela on this one. In the contemporary world, poverty is more a man-made phenomenon than the consequence of natural disaster. And if the rewards for your innovation and expertise benefit no one other than yourself, how much of a reward is that, really? You're not a Socialist, but neither are you a sociopath.]

Kim Huett
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[In FLAG #11] Taral is probably right about his letter to Airfix being eighty-sixed though I doubt it was for the exact reason he suggests. Back in the days before Internet dominance Airfix (and later other firms such as Esci & Italiere) were limited in what subjects they could cover by the fact that they were selling their stock to model and toy stores. Those retailers were not surprisingly of the opinion that the most likely purchaser of 1/72 figures (and 1/35 figures for that matter) were teenage boys so they were only stocking subjects they thought would appeal to this group. This explains why nearly all the figures Airfix produced in that period were either of the WWII or Napoleonic periods and why the most notable exceptions to this rule were influenced by television, the Robin Hood, Sheriff of Nottingham, and Astronaut sets for example.

Of course now that even major manufacturers can sell to

Like the untamed wilditude of nature, exploding in the space where your brain used to live.

Fandom then was an island of conflicts in a sea of conflicts.

retailers that deal largely online smaller runs of less popular subjects are now profitable which is why companies such as Pegasus, Revell, Italeri, and Esci have produced various sets covering the Vietnam War. Mind you, according to the Plastic Soldier Review website only an outfit called IMEX has produced any Korean War sets so I see a gap in the market there.

[It's a pretty great time to collect model soldiers, but there is always more to wish for.]

William Breiding

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I subscribed to three magazines that included CDs in every issue: *Paste*, *Magnet*, and *Pop Cult Press*. All three died in hard copy. But before doing so, *Paste* and *Magnet* were well established digitally, and are thriving on the Web. *Magnet* was reborn on paper recently, which amazed me. The hardcopy *Magnet* is now sans CD but they have free downloads at their website. I loved *Pop Cult Press* because they specialized in incredibly obscure pop bands I was unlikely to otherwise run across.

I admit that *Paste* and *Magnet* both have a reassuring, familiar tone to them. They didn't get wilfully obscure or strange like *Pop Cult Press* once did, but these magazines steered me toward some really fine pop groups over the years. As my friend Ken Love once said, "The day I stop seeking out new music is the day I begin to die." Indeed.

I agree with you about '80s music. When I hear someone saying what a bad decade the 80s were for music I realize their complete ignorance. When you have such gorgeousness as Fear, The Human Hands, XTC, Robert Palmer, Echo and the Bunnymen, Stan Ridgway, Joe Ely,

Miracle Legion and Prince all co-existing on the same turntable, the jaw still drops (and that's just for starters!)

Steve Bieler

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Dear Grandpa Andy: I have to reply to FLAG #11, specifically to "The Trades of Paul Di Filippo." This article is

a blatant ploy to get free stuff, and I bow to you for thinking it up. I've been trying to get free stuff all my life. I've mostly failed since my grandparents passed away, and here you are effortlessly raking it in!

Of course, Paul Di Filippo (full disclaimer: Paul Di Filippo does not give me free stuff) is also running his own con on you. He's shaking the stratus from his files, dressing it up in fancy envelopes and calling it a trade. A trade for what? FLAG? No, FLAG was just Paul Di Filippo's way of locating you. But you're happy and I bet Paul Di Filippo is happy, so the system works. I'm in awe of both of you.

Someday half of the useless stuff in my parents' house, where they have lived since 1957, will be mine. (I've offered to cede my half to my sister's little boy, but my sister threatened to call her lawyer.) When that stuff becomes my stuff, I will be sure to send you a box...or two. Don't expect anything as good as learning how to con the government into paying you to swap your wife or those postcards of Harlan Ellison's exploitation novels (which were sent to you by Paul Di Filippo, not me). Meanwhile, to keep you happy, I will throw some stuff into this envelope.

Thanks, btw, for telling me that MOJO exists, which you found out from Jerry Kaufman. Now that's the Jerry Kaufman I met in 1981. Plugged in!

[Your generosity is exceeded only by your perspicacity.]

Murray Moore

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You and Langford are Foster boosters. I am waiting to see if the influential Fishlifters will make known their preference in *Banana Wings*. Fans whose ac is art is good: the first Worldcon Guest of Honour was an artist: however I am licking the point of my 2B pencil, practising to draw on the TAFF ballot a 1 in front of 'Curt Phillips.'

Other Correspondence Received From:

Paul Di Filippo (I can only bow humbly before the honor you bestow upon me in FLAG #11. I'm so thrilled the little mailings have spawned some entertainment. P.S.: Issue #11 provides the usual banquet of pleasures. I pass these on to folks like Barry Malzberg, BTW); **Alexis Gilliland** (Thank you for all the FLAGS, most recently #11. A comment on Ray Nelson's cartoons is enclosed); and **Howard Waldrop** (Had eye surgery December 10th – still can't see Jack Shit, but can see *something*, which is an improvement. Retina guy next. Meanwhile, a friend gets a new hip next month and I have to dog sit.)



1.) BIG SKY #2, Peter Young, 136/200 Emerald Hill Village, Soi 6, Hua Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan 77110 Thailand, email to peteyoung.uk@gmail.com: I flip through BIG SKY's pages with a mesmeric intensity – when design and content complement each other perfectly, the pleasure that comes from experiencing the results is some order of magnitude greater than merely reading something funny or entertaining. Pete Young's eye for fanzine design is probably the best argument yet advanced for the supremacy of composing and distributing your work in an electronic format – the 102-page montage of full-color, very high resolution graphics is frankly better served by a nice big monitor than by the most lavish printing methods. And then he takes this incredible engine of invention and uses it to perfectly recreate the seamy, pitted, down-on-its-luck world of pulp noir, from Harlan Ellison's exploitation fiction (again!) to *The Wages of Fear*. And these is something wonderful about a 21st Century efanzine that talks so much about old fashioned *books*. I am in awe.

2.) JOURNEY PLANET #17, guest-edited by Colin Harris for James Bacon and Chris Garcia, c/o efanzines.com, email to Journeyplanet@gmail.com: Another monumental tome from the feverish hands of Bacon Garcia and Co., this time involving guest editor Colin Harris, who has helped them fashion another winner. This one is all about the Worldcon, celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the first World Convention in 1939. This is obviously a subject close to my heart; despite my long absence from the event, I've been covering the same territory in articles for TRAP DOOR, and reading JP #17 felt like entering a symposium of authors working in the same field. Some peaks include Bob Silverberg's review of fifty years of Hugo award ceremonies, Vince Docherty's overview of the World's Fair phenomenon and its connections to Worldcon, and Rob Hansen's history of Loncon I. Harris' editorial reinforces my impression that Worldcon is now embraced by a community to which the convention is fandom, both in being and purpose, and with an increasingly tenuous connection to the speculative works that inspired its creation. Perhaps all fandoms tend toward fakefannery over time. A fanzine that both disquiets and entertains me is a rare and wonderful thing.

3.) SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY #86, available from efanzines.com, mail to Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street, Greensborough, Victoria 3088 Australia, email to gandc@pacific.net.au: One reason this issue of FLAG has been delayed for nearly a month is that design sensei John D. Berry lingered behind with me at the very end of my New Year's Eve Party to exhort me to fix my layout so people could read it. "Because it's really good," he said, "but you just can't read it with these margins." I struggled with this; he suggested a two-column format, and I sort of liked my sprawling archaic pica-inspired lack of design. While muddling this, I opened up SF COMMENTARY #86, leaping from the Web with cat-like speed. This is the usual mix of personal and literary content, with memoirs of the

late Peter Darling and Graham Stone, and engrossing essays on a veritable clown car full of science fiction writers and their work. There is no real reason why Bruce's screen-formatted .pdf layout really needs to spool out to 122 pages; he could easily make this gorgeous fanzine more compact and far more economical to print. But this is the way that Bruce wants his fanzine to be; he loves the material so much that he feels it deserves to be seen in a certain aesthetic context, and doesn't shy away from the ruinous implications of this stance. I love what Bruce does too, and hope that the Web will allow him to remain as lavish as he likes. And this is one reason, at least, why FLAG #12 is 12 pages long, rather than the customary 10.

4.) TRAP DOOR #30, Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611-1948: Rob has re-published the text of my zine for this year's W.O.O.F. mailing, "Bradbury's Worldcon," and commissioned achingly-cool heading art by Dan Steffan to decorate it. Boy, it's long; but Robert has put it in front of much wider (and wilier) audience, and I'm delighted by the response so far. Just in case you were interested, the issue also contains pieces by Greg Benford, Rob Hansen, Jeff Schalles and Pascal Thomas. Dan's cover art made me larff. As always the letter column features names you won't see much elsewhere, giving TRAP DOOR its unique sense of connection to fandom's full lifespan, or at least Robert's, which is pretty impressive too.

5.) CHUNGA #22, Byers, Hooper and Juarez, 1013 N. 36th St. Seattle, WA 98103, online c/o efanzines.com (soon). Having abandoned all pretense at objectivity, I will admit that D. West's covers for CHUNGA #22 have an enthralling effect on me; I think we struggled to make a fanzine worthy of them, particularly the Rousseau-inspired back cover. Best thing is Graham Charnock's chatty pantomime cachalot "Mopey Dick," but Randy's journey through the Seattle Opera's production of Wagner's Ring cycle is close behind. And this issue contains the first chapter of Rob Hansen's report on his trip to Seattle and Portland for Corflu XXX, the subsequent parts already having appeared in BANANA WINGS #53 and BEAM #7.

6.) BANANA WINGS#54, Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES United Kingdom, email to fishlifter@gmail.com: One of the things I appreciate most about BANANA WINGS is that it presents sometimes intricate speculations on fandom without feeling the need to explain Hugo Gernsback first. A fanzine that reference Justine Larbalestier, Anders Holmström and Vadim John without particular preamble is definitely at home in the advanced curriculum. Mark and Claire set this remarkably tight standard with the editorials that bookend each issue, and this seems to inspire even the letterhacks to a similarly rigorous standard. I know they are editing certain pleasantries out of the letters they print, but they get people to just **wail** for pages at a clip -- thank Roscoe, I don't get letters like this, it would just break my

FANZINE COUNTDOWN: December 5th, 2013 to January 29th, 2014, concluded

drops many names common in the first fanzines I read in the late 1970s, Roy Kettle, who discusses collaborating with the late John Brosnan, and D.S. Kettleby, who weaves reference and exaggeration into an almost undetectable brand of hokum in her discussion of mystic Glastonbury.

7.) REMEMBERING AL ANDREWS, Bill Plott, 190 Crestview Circle, Montevallo, AL 35115, online c/o efanzines.com: Heartfelt appreciation of one of the founding members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance (an apa), and co-editor of the fanzine ISCARIOT, who died in 1970 at the age of 42. Very readable layout, and brought to life by the inclusion of photographs of Andrews and his contemporaries. I think the biography has become my preferred mode of absorbing fan history; this kind of very specific and personal history is the antidote to numbered fandom theory and fan psychohistory.

8.) OF MICE AND MARTIANS #1, Jason Burnett, P.O. Box 18496, Minneapolis, MN, 55418, email to Jason.burnett@starfleet.com: This was the first fanzine of 2014! Jason has made a series of stabs at regular fanac, but apart from apazines, he has previously confined himself to a series of one-shots. This, he hopes, is the first of a continuing title – can't wait to see his version of the fanzine countdown! Mostly concerned with the brusque way that DC comics has dealt with his favorite characters – a very fanboy way to start the new year.

9.) FILE 770 #163, Mike Glycer, 1507 1/2 S. 6th Avenue, Arcadia, CA 91006, email to Mikeglyer@cs.com, online c/o efanzines.com. Mike completed this 2013 edition of fandom's yearbook just in time to qualify for the 2014 Faan awards, among other things. Pretty much every part of this is fun except reading all the obituaries of fans who passed in 2013. Particularly liked the appreciation of the late Ray Bradbury, who seems to have been on a lot of writer's minds in the past six months or so. The lead story would appear to be the decline of regional SF conventions that now threatens the survival of institutions as venerable as Westercon and Midwescon. When I want to see some actual reporting on things in fandom, Mike's there first.

10.) SPARTACUS #2, Guy Lillian III, c/o Green, 1390 Holly Ave. Merritt Island, FL 32952. Email GHLIII@yahoo.com: Take note of the address change; with their jobs in Shreveport evaporating, Guy and Rosy have relocated to Florida. Ever thoughtful, Guy's comparison of Mark Snowden and Daniel Ellsberg illustrates both differences between the two individuals and the worlds in which they live/lived.

Also Received or Released:

ALEXIAD #72, Joseph T. & Lisa Major, 1409 Christy Ave. Louisville, KY 40204-4020, email to jtmajor@iglou.com
ANSIBLE #317, 318, Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU United Kingdom, ansible.co.uk
ARGENTUS #13, Steven H. Silver, 707 Sapling Lane, Deerfield, IL 60015-3969, email to shsilver@sfsite.com

ASKANCE #30, John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845, Email to j_purcell54@yahoo.com
BCSFA ZINE #487, 488, edited by Felicity Walker for the BCSFA, c/o efanzines.com, email to Felicity4711@gmail.com

BREAKING IT ALL DOWN, Vol. 1, #2, Alexander Case, 9150 SW 4th St. Wilsonville, OR 97070, online c/o eFanzines.com. Email to alexander.case@gmail.com:

BROKEN TOYS #24, Taral Wayne, 243 Dunn Ave. Apt. 211, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6 CANADA, email to taral@teksavvy.com.

BUNYIP & ayotochtli #1 & 2, edited by Bob Hole, c/o efanzines.com, email to rhole2001@yahoo.com

THE DRINK TANK #362 - 363, Chris Garcia, c/o efanzines.com, email to Garcia @computerhistory.org

ECDYSIS #1, Jonathan Crowe, online c/o eFanzines.com, email to ecdysis@mcwetboy.met

FADEAWAY #38 & #39, Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd. Oxford, MA 01540-2035 Email to fabfcbks@ aol.com.

FANSTUFF #41 Arnie Katz, 909 Eugene Cernan, Las Vegas, NV 89145, available at efanzines.com, email to Crossfire4@cox.net.

FILE 770 #163, Mike Glycer, 1507 1/2 S. 6th Avenue, Arcadia, CA 91006, email to Mikeglyer@cs.com

INTERSTEALLAR RAMJET SCOOP, Dec. 2013, Bill Wright, 1 Park Street, Unit 4, St. Kilda West, Victoria 3182 Australia, online c/o efanzines.com

JOURNEY PLANET #18, James Bacon, Chris Garcia and Helen Montgomery c/o efanzines.com, email to Journeyplanet@gmail.com:

LAKE GENEVA #2, Pablo M. A. Vasquez III, c/o eFanzines.com, email to chepablo@gmail.com

MY BACK PAGES #11, Rich Lynch, P.O. Box 3120, Gaithersburg, MD 20885, email to rw_lynch@yahoo.com.

THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN Vol. 72, #6, David Speakman, c/o eFanzines.com, email to cabal@n3fmail.com

NUMBER ONE #21, Mike McNerny, 83 Shakespeare St., Daly City, CA 94014, Email to ELANDEM@ATT.Net

OPUNTIA #270 Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7

ORPHEUM #5, Alan White, 6244 Chinook Way, Las Vegas, NV 89108, online c/o smellthefandom.com, or eFanzines.com, email to podmogul@cox.net

THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS #96, Tom Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road, Owenton, KY 40359, email to tomfamulus@hughes.net

SCIENCE FICTION SAN FRANCISCO #148, Jean Martin, et al, c/o efanzines.com, email to SFinSF@gmail.com

SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION

BULLETIN, Vol. 10, #2, Jennifer Liang, et al, co eFanzines.com.

SPACE CADET #25, R. Graeme Cameron, 13315 104th Ave. Surrey, British Columbia V3T 1V5 Canada, email to rgraeme@shaw.ca

SPORADIC #22, Bill Plott, 190 Crestview Circle, Montevallo, AL 35115, online c/o efanzines.com