

The Devniad

Book 71a

un zine de Bob Devney
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Fave Flix of 2000

After an overbusy few months, here finally is my list of the films I most enjoyed during the cinematic year just passed.

The top five below would have been contenders anytime. After that, the quality falls off given this finally rather mediocre cinematic year.

It's a subjective business. But hope this listing proves useful for your future video rental or cable viewing pleasure. Or at least fuels a furious letter to your humble editor ...

1. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

Ang Lee's magnificent film is the *Star Wars* of Chinese martial arts fantasy/romances. Beautifully shot, it takes a low-budget schlock/cult genre and does it up big, smart, expensive (plus subtle and intelligent), and accessible to mainstream Western audiences. Its settings envelop us in a beautiful dream of Old China. And its cast of wise, weary veterans (Michelle Yeoh and Chow Yun Fat) and impetuous youngsters (Zhang Ziyi and Chang Chen) make something majestic of the quest for a magic sword. As in Lee's *Sense and Sensibility*, we're enchanted by the stresses of sisterhood. The search for soulmates. The war between duty and freedom ... Besides, the fight scenes kick ass.

2. *Best in Show*

Christopher Guest's brilliantly dry comedy about a dog pageant is mock-documentary, with the characters often speaking to an unseen camera. Although these contestants may *habitually* talk to unseen cameras. We howled at the little observations and details about the crazed

yuppies (Michael Hitchcock and Parker Posey); the man with two left feet (Eugene Levy) and his roundheeled wife (Catherine O'Hara); the gay guy (Michael McKean) first attracted to his partner (John Michael Higgins) because "he and the borzoi seemed to have the same prance"; and the imbecilic TV commentator (Fred Willard) who notes, "These dogs have coats so silky, they look like they were spun by a giant spider!"

3. *The Contender*

This immorality tale has grown in memory since I saw it. But it still feels like an emotional metaphor for the scandalous Clinton impeachment, presented with writer/director Rod Lurie's foot stamped firmly on the scales in favor of the Democrats. (OK by me; your umbrage may differ.) *Pleasantville's* uptight Joan Allen takes center stage as a principled Vice Presidential nominee who's attacked by Gary Oldman's curdled congressman, a "second-rate Joe McCarthy." This flick's got lush, dark-to-light visual style and lots of high-key melodrama that's damned entertaining. Add the uniformly great performances to its capital direction and cinematography and *The Contender* becomes a confirmed winner.

4. *Joe Gould's Secret*

If you're a misfit, has-been, might've-been, or God-knows-what, have I got a movie for you! It's the true story of a journalist — Joseph Mitchell of *The New Yorker* — who in 1942 writes about and is drawn into the life of a Greenwich Village bum. Joe Gould is a homeless drunk who labors incessantly on a rumored 9-million-word literary masterpiece. Ian Holm gives a wonderful, showy performances as this

nutty professor, but we gradually realize that the reporter (Stanley Tucci, who also directs) is a pretty interesting character himself. Why is he so drawn to outcasts? There's a hidden theme here that emerges gradually, subtly, and most satisfyingly.

5. Traffic

Featuring director Steven Soderbergh's creamy, supremely accomplished style, plus an important subject handled with penetration, this movie might have topped my list. Only a phony speech by Michael Douglas's drug czar (actually, his whole performance seems phoned in) and an outrageously coincidental assassination downcheck a near-perfect flick. Catch it for its Coke 101 survey of the American drug trade, which mainlines from Mexican dealers directly to your daughter. (Erika Christensen plays Douglas's kid, with the year's saddest hot sex scene.) And for wonderful performances by Miguel Ferrer, Don Cheadle, Luis Guzman, and especially Benicio Del Toro as a Mexican cop who may be the movie's most honest man.

6. Cast Away

Tom Hanks, former TV drag comedian, has matured into the most sympathetic screen actor of the age. He's Everyman in a way DeNiro or Ford or Washington or other alpha males can never be. Hell, we'd watch him alone on a desert island for an hour, just talking to a volleyball ... Like here. Sure, the volleyball's role is inflated, and director Robert Zemeckis and writer William Broyles Jr. make it all too neat. But this fable's got everything. Starting with the loudest airplane storm/crash scene in movie history (my notebook bleats, "I AM TERRIFIED"). Plus firemaking, fishspearing, watercollecting, raftbuilding. Plus some restraint: name another South Pacific survival movie with no shark.

7. Unbreakable

It's official: *The Sixth Sense's* writer/director M. Night Shyamalan is not just a one-shot wonder. Though his story of a security guard (Bruce Willis) who may

have hidden powers and the comics art gallery owner (Samuel L. Jackson) who stalks him starts slow and solemn, with too many shots of Willis just staring. (Harold Pinter Does *The X-Men*?) But I like the insight, new to me, that "comics are a last link to an ancient form of passing on history." And concentration on telling the story through even small details — watch Jackson's hair, his clothes; think about his whole affect —helps *Unbreakable* gather force and meaning right to the end.

8. Chicken Run

Pity the poor British food processors. First mad cows, now an animated hit where the chicken farmer deploys automation (a machine where "chickens go in, pies come out") and the hens make a break for it ... This free-range, riotous tribute to World War II prison break flicks is the inspiration of *Wallace and Gromit* creators Peter Lord and Nick Park. Each of their chickens is quite a character, from the rebel escape artist Ginger, voiced by Julia Sawalha (Lydia Bennet in Brit TV's 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*), to Rocky the cocky Rhode Island Red (Mel Gibson), who's in Yorkshire for "all the beautiful English chicks." Ah, all those plump orange and yellow faces — plus a bonus: hen's teeth.

9. X-Men

If unhappy people are more interesting than happy people, then unhappy superheroes are super-interesting. Director Bryan Singer follows some angsty young superteens — including Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) and Rogue (Anna Paquin) — into a training academy for mutant kids run by wheelchair-bound Professor Xavier (Patrick Stewart). Super conflict ensues against an opposing group that sticks to Magneto (Ian McKellen). The battles are super too, with a great grasp of comic book physics. And Jackman plays like a really fierce Fonzie, getting most of the biting lines. When introduced to kids with names like Storm and Cyclops, he asks Xavier, "What do they call you, Wheels?" Let's bring on that sequel, SFX Men ...

10. *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

See review later, dude, in this ish.

Also worthy this year: *Time Code*, *Nurse Betty*, *The Cell*, *Snatch*, *Almost Famous*.

Films I bet I would have liked if I'd actually made it to the theater ere they fled: *Wonder Boys*, *You Can Count on Me*, *Pollack*.

And for invidious comparison's sake, here's the best-of-year picks from two fairly talented TV critics:

Roger Ebert, 2000

1. *Almost Famous*, 2. *Wonder Boys*, 3. *You Can Count on Me*, 4. *Traffic*, 5. *George Washington*, 6. *The Cell*, 7. *High Fidelity*, 8. *Pollack*, 9. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, 10. *Requiem for a Dream*.

Richard Roeper, 2000

1. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, 2. *Traffic*, 3. *The Claim*, 4. *The Contender*, 5. *Wonder Boys*, 6. *Finding Forrester*, 7. *You Can Count on Me*, 8. *Sunshine*, 9. *Cast Away*, 10. *Almost Famous*.

Plus the ever-popular popular vote from my countryfolk, buckswise:

U. S. Box Office, 2000

1. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, 2. *Cast Away*, 3. *Mission Impossible II*, 4. *Gladiator*, 5. *The Perfect Storm*, 6. *What Women Want*, 7. *Meet the Parents*, 8. *X-Men*, 9. *Scary Movie*, 10. *What Lies Beneath*.

And, finally, from the wider but not necessarily more perceptive world:

Worldwide Box Office, 2000

1. *Mission Impossible II*, 2. *Gladiator*, 3. *Dinosaur*, 4. *Cast Away*, 5. *Unbreakable*, 6. *The Perfect Storm*, 7. *X-Men*, 8. *Charlie's Angels*, 9. *Erin Brockovich*, 10. *Gone in Sixty Seconds*.

Finally, everybody should see *Battlefield Earth*, against heavy odds the year's worst flick. Perhaps it's best viewed as a specific against chronochauvinism. Proving, as it does, conclusively that science fiction

cinematic shlock crap is not just a product of the 1950s.

In fact, it's flourishing. In my local Blockbuster Cinema video rental palace last week, the shelfage allotment woefully dissed the freshest, most intelligent and original *movie*, let alone SF *movie*, of 1999. *Being John Malkovich* rated only three slots.

But they had 11 slots for *Battlefield Earth*.

Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

Major Brit fan **Peter Weston** had fun shooting the Shute at Boskone:

"I very much enjoyed the Neville Shute panel, ably moderated by yourself. It felt rather strange because this was probably the first time I've ever heard Shute's work discussed, so it was really interesting to get some other opinions.

"In particular I realise I have to go and re-read *Round the Bend* which seems to have almost completely slipped from my memory. (Strange that, when the others by-and-large haven't).

"How about a good title for a fanzine article: 'Ruined City' compared with 'The Man Who Sold The Moon' ?

"And as for a quote for your e-zine, how about this one from Gay Ellen Dennett: 'Hey Peter, I found your pants in my room' (proclaimed loudly in the Art Show hall).

"So all right, the hotel staff are dyslexic and delivered my dry-cleaning to room 470 instead of 410. It sounds worse in English English, too, since "pants" are underpants.

"You mean my trousers, Gay,' I corrected her."

Peter, great to meet you at last. Next time we're in the same con hotel I'll be sure to knock you up.

Writer and fan **F. Brett Cox** has some prior experience with mediacons:

"Enjoyed your comments on Arisia. It sounds very much like Dragoncon, the

mediacon in Atlanta that I attended for several years because a) it was only an hour away and b) they let me and my wife Jeanne in free. And they could afford it — they sell tickets to the damn thing through *Ticketmaster*.

"On two occasions, Andy Duncan and I were both listed as guests but not put on any programming. No problem — we wandered the halls with our spouses checking out the leather reports and feeling very, very middle-class. I think most of us print fetishists are usually up for checking out a media con. Sadly, I'm not sure the reverse is true.

"Looking forward to seeing you at Readercon again this year."

Brett, I'll be there with leather bells on.

Film critic **Dan Kimmel** offers advance word on an upcoming flick:

"Wanted to give you all a head's up for a big contender for next year's Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo. *Series 7* — which opens shortly — consists of three 'episodes' of the fictional TV series *The Contenders*, where six contestants stalk each other and the last one alive wins.

"Think of Robert Sheckley's *The Seventh Victim* crossed with MTV's *The Real World* and you got a good idea of what it's like. It's well thought out, never losing sight of the satiric point (as, for example, Schwarzenegger's *The Running Man* did), right through the final moment of the film. It's a tight 85 minutes, and is highly recommended."

Dan, sounds like a real serial killer.

And more on mediacons from Aussie fan **Erika Maria Lacey**:

"Arisia sounds like an interesting type of con — the ones that we get up here in Brisbane are all media cons, but not too many teeny boppers turn up to them. Funnily enough, though, they're in average not too heavy, which is surprising considering the weight statistics in Australia ...

"If one wants to bump into pro writers here, one waits for the Brisbane Writers

Festival. Quite often a decent number of SF writers turn up who one may harangue at will if one so wishes ...

"The one media con that I went to was only to catch up on people, but as you say, the panels were ... well ... most people wouldn't turn up to them ...

"Your aural recollections of the con were very entertaining ... [But] people'll be noticing you out of the corner of their eye next and either clamming up or becoming uncharacteristically chatty in an aim to be part of your Aural Recollections."

Erika, so you've met Michael Burstein?

Canadian fan **Lloyd Penney** has an even more massive contribution than usual; after cutting out the dirtiest bits, here's what's left:

"You mention that Arisia had a younger and sexier crowd. We had our own local convention, Ad Astra on the 23rd to 25th, and I found the same thing. Lots of buff guys, and lots of very shapely young women, a dirty old man's dream come true, and I did feel very old at 41.

"It's great that they're there, but the sad thing is that almost guaranteed, they aren't there to meet the authors or discuss anything that ever came out of a book, and we had Connie Willis as GoH, too! They were probably there to drink, smoke, lounge around, buy some large metal jewelry from the dealers' room.

"... Even with increased marketing and advertising, attendance was down slightly. Next year, if they want me, will be my 20th year on the committee. I am finding, however, that such experience is not only not valued or wanted, but may be dated so much as to be relatively useless. I would wish it otherwise ...

"To go with our convention's lagging popularity, there is our huge annual media con, Toronto Trek, every July. It rivals Arisia in size, but has shrunk from its height of 3500 attendees to just under 2000; many mediafans now will not go to a convention that has anything to do with *Star Trek*, believe it or not ... Some have had enough of it after nearly 35 years of boldly going.

"... A new series is in the works that, by all reports, is basically *Starfleet Academy 90210*. Smart, for they have to appeal to the next generation (to coin a phrase) of viewers ... Myself, the *Trek* universe, for all its flaws and silliness, is a very fleshed-out universe, in which lots of adventures could happen to lots of people in lots of places in lots of different ways. Thirty-five years of popularity and four different series (five, if you include the animateds) prove it ...

"Lots of fans complain about the charging for food in Canadian convention con suites. I asked our own committee about this ... I think it has something to do with hotel regulations here, and the greater costs incurred if we simply give the food away. Granted, we are lucky to get any food sponsorship at all in the con suite, but charging means that our hotel costs are lower ...

"Charlie Sumner can still go to Cancun in 2003 ... it's just that if he wants to go to Worldcon, too, he'll have to come up here. Canada and Toronto aren't so bad, Charlie, you might like the idea of coming someplace different without having to travel too far. Go find out something about Toronto, Charlie, and then reformulate your opinions. I'll bet they change.

"I think your bro-in-law [Bob Kuhn] and I agree about fun and SF&F in the following way ... there's plenty of fun in SF&F. There's not much in its serious readers ... The former president of the local support group for the local SF library, the Friends of the Merril Collection, decried our Worldcon bid as an excuse for foolishness, and wouldn't pre-support us. Seeing that our bid chair was another former president, this was a surprise. I think some of the serious SF scholars are definitely not fans, and see assorted fannish follies and fun as a detriment to their study of SF as a genre and literature.

"Upcoming activities ... we're running the con suite for the local filkers at their convention FilKONtario the end of the month. Plus, there's the annual SF/horror convention Eeriecon in Niagara Falls, ON in

late April, and my high school reunion in mid-May ..."

Lloyd: whew!

Friend and fan **Eric Knight** is in law enforcement himself, and didn't like my throwing rocks at Moore's Starling; so here's the word on *Hannibal* from his mean streets:

"Having worked with current and former FBI agents for some 4 years now, I was delighted by Juliana Moore's depiction of [Agent] Starling. She rang very true for me (and at least one former FBI agent I know). The paper-pushing, pencil neck geeks in Washington who refused to back up their agent who performed properly and made correct choices in a split second under true-to-life conditions also rang true.

"I never 'bought' Jodie Foster in the role and felt she lacked a certain 'spine' or internal toughness needed to be an FBI agent. I felt an essential element of self-reliance was missing.

"... As to *Hannibal*, I feel it glorifies a serial killer and cannibal, by making him civilized?!? We find ourselves manipulated into rooting for Dr. Lecter as a hero?!? We don't want him to suffer a similar fate to that which he has meted out for others? I found that truly disturbing."

Eric, I found Foster convincing as a *student* agent, still in the Academy, remember. But I agree that *Hannibal* the book was disturbing in a personal way, and *Hannibal* the movie in a societal way.

Writer **Patrick O'Leary** buckshots thoughts on a buncha stuff, starting with how last ish's Boskone coverage aroused his appetite:

"Got me hungry for my next con: The International Conference of the Fantastic in The Arts — or something. In Frt. Lauderdale. Maybe I'll make a pilgrimage to Travis Magee's port. Pay homage to *The Busted Flush*.

"[Patrick's fine first novel] *Door Number Three* will appear in Korea. Very weird. Sold two short stories to anthologies. Peter Crowther's *Mars Probes* and *The Infinity Plus Anthology*.

"[Patrick's latest novel] *The Impossible Bird* has been accepted not 'bought' by TOR. What this means I don't know. Perhaps minor revisions before the contract is signed. But I'm proud of it. It is one fucked up book.

"*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Great great movie. I keep thinking of it as a musical. Imagine the melody of The Brady Bunch. 'There was a warrior/A morose warrior/Who couldn't get no nookie/So he slayed ...'

"*Chocolat* is the worst movie of the year. This is not my opinion it is a medical fact.

"[Gene Wolfe's] *Return to the Whorl*. Does it surprise you that I think this is a great novel?

"I am so tired of brilliant and beautiful books. Like Doctorow's *City of God*. I read it and think 'Wonderful. Fascinating. What a writer. Who gives a fuck.' When is someone going to write something that bleeds and matters?

"Like Wolfe."

Patrick, to pick just one of the plethora: you're a Travis McGee fan too? We're like soul brothers, guy. Dare I ask about Nero Wolfe? Once made a pilgrimage to West 35th Street: if you average out the several addresses Rex Stout gave for Wolfe's brownstone, turns out it's a police station.

Fan and bookseller/publisher **Michael Walsh** felt Greer's pain at Boskone:

"You mentioned Greer Gilman's adventures with checking *into* the hotel - let me tell you about checking *out* ...

"Sunday a.m. the hotel bill has been quietly slipped under the door awaiting inspection. After raising one eyebrow in Spockian disbelief I check the card by the telephone. And sure enough, they do charge for toll free calls — \$0.85 per call. First time I've encountered that — and I travel too much.

"But the kicker is this — one of the calls was to a *Starwood/Sheraton toll free number*. Yes, \$0.85 for that.

"The clerk at the front desk parrots the Corporate Line of 'It's Starwood policy drone drone drone.' Doesn't seem to get the

drollness of charging a guest to call the hotel's own toll free number ..."

Michael, what we want is a corporation that's *troll-free* ...

Bookseller **Dan Kuenzig** objects to my bowdlerization last time of an ailment of wife Barb's that I'd previously mentioned more directly:

"Hey Boob,

"You're really in trouble after this one. My wife doesn't have bunions!"

Dan, guess my cure was worse than the disease.

Fan **Gary L. Dryfoos** whets our appetite for an upcoming major motion picture:

"Reading *LotR* in the shadow of the upcoming movie, I kept thinking mostly about all the things I hope they won't leave out, but that they probably will. Like the pacing of the entire last part of the story (SPOILER WARNING is that really necessary here, dya think? Hamlet dies, the white whale drags Ahab down, Jesus dies but disappears from the cave and visits his friends for lunch a couple times, etc. etc. And Frodo does the thing he set out to do) ... So, once that thing is done, comes maybe the sweetest denouement in fiction.

"Lots of important stuff happens. It takes several chapters. If you haven't read it in awhile, take a look. Something that big and involving, you want it to go on awhile longer; you need time to get unwrapped from so much. But the Hollywood thing would be to cut from the explosion of the Death Star, as it were, to a couple of quick Yowsahs! from the gang, to the finale of a big ceremony and then roll credits."

Gary, what, you gotta advance copy of the script?

My beloved aunt, **Ann Paterson**, dips her toe cautiously into the SF pool:

"Thought *The Devniad* was particularly interesting this month. Many authors mentioned, of whom I had not heard, sound interesting enough for me to look for at the library. Surprised to learn that Shute is considered a SF writer, but then on further

consideration — *In the Wet, Round the Bend*, even *The Chequer Board* — all have what I thought of as intimations of Immortality, rather than SF. I hope someone put in a kind word for the really sweet heroes, Theo Honey and Keith Stewart ..."

Auntie, why didn't I think of this? Should have scheduled *you* onto the panel!

Fan **Vicki Rosenzweig** has a thought about Old Earth Books' just-announced reissues of the work of minor SF master Edgar Pangborn, plus more on my badly (well, completely un-) researched statement that all the hobbits in the books are male:

"All the short stories [of Pangborn] would be good. And what about *Atlantean Nights' Entertainments*, which somehow turned up in *Books in Print* listings for a few years but seems never to have existed ...

"[Re LoTR] ... Take a closer look at the book(s). Sam's daughter Elanor is female, as is his wife Rosie (farmer Cotton's daughter), and of course there's Lobelia Sackville-Baggins."

Vicki, for Old Earth Books info, write to Michael Walsh at Post Office Box 19951, Baltimore, Maryland 21211-0951.

About my miserable hobbit-sexing, well, guess I didn't have my glasses on when I held them up to the light ...

FlimFan

VERY GOOD:

O Brother Where Art Thou? — Advance word on this movie spoke of a darkly comic adaptation of *The Odyssey* concerning prison escapees in 1937 Mississippi. That and the fact that it was written and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen (*Raising Arizona, Fargo, The Big Lebowski*) were enough to compel my attendance. If you feel the same, avoid any spoilers and go see it tonight ... If you're still here, I may mention that although it gives first writing credit to Homer, in fact

there's a characteristically loose approach to the *Odyssey* parallels. George Clooney plays con man Ulysses Everett McGill. Together with fellow chain-gang refugees John Turturro (Pete) and Tim Blake Nelson (Delmar), Ulysses is trying to get home to his wife Penny, get it? Along the way, they are enchanted by sirens, encounter a one-eyed giant, face possible animal transubstantiation, and so on. But there may in fact be more references here to other movies than to *The Odyssey*. You get everything from *Sullivan's Travels* (*O Brother Where Art Thou?* is a film proposed by the director character in that Preston Sturges classic) to *Cool Hand Luke* (the prison guard's menacingly opaque sunglasses) to *The Ox-Bow Incident* ("You got to go to the lonesome valley" sung for a climactic lynching scene) ... *O Brother* is a picaresque series of episodes strung together without much care for things like character consistency. For instance, Clooney's Ulysses is as smart or dumb as a given scene demands. What this movie cares about is the look and the laughs. It gets the look right, as far as I can judge: this is a nicely rendered Depression-Era Mississippi landscape, complete with a riverside baptism, a truly chilling Klan meeting, and a music hall show; plus cotton fields, barns, rivers, pies cooling on the windowsill; flivvers, sweat stains, dust, and Dapper Dan pomade. The laughs are there too, beginning with the wonderfully Keatonian choreography of three chained convicts trying to board a moving boxcar. Clooney, who impressed me in *Out of Sight* but not so much in *The Perfect Storm*, creates an authentic comic character, a not-so-smart trickster with a Clark Gable 'stache and a tight, rapid, autodidact's delivery. Listen to Ulysses ask a trainload of hobos for help in filing off his prison chains: "Say, any of you boys smithies? Or if not smithies, then trained in the metallurgical art?" Or politely turning down Delmar's proffered taste treat: "A third of a gopher would only arouse my appetite without bedding it down none." ... But on another note, what's happening to Holly Hunter? In several movies now she's taken a small role and not seemed to do

much with it; here's another one ... The soundtrack may be the real star here. Beginning with a scam wherein Clooney, Turturro, Nelson, and a musician friend (Chris Thomas King playing a devilishly talented bluesman named Johnson) cut a snappy little record under the name Jordan Rivers and the Soggy Bottom Boys. The movie's got a tasty mix of chain-gang chants, mountain music, Delta blues, gospel, and other old-time tunes. In fact, this whole thing is durned close to a musical, folks. If your idea of heaven is a nicely de-crackled listen to Harry "Mac" McClintock's 1928 hit "Big Rock Candy Mountain" — the original, not the 1950's cover by Burl Ives — this is for you. Who could resist Mac's hobo's reverie: "In the Big Rock Candy Mountains / All the cops have wooden legs / And the bulldogs all have rubber teeth / And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs ..." You even get a cameo by Gillian Welch (she's the Soggy Bottom Boys fan in the Woolworth's), one of my favorite retro-folk stars, who also sings and plays here with other luminaries like Emmylou Harris and Alison Krauss ... *O Brother Where Art Thou?* is a quirky little screen gem, if perhaps a tad self-indulgent. But even a minor-league Coen brothers movie is a major event.

GOOD:

Snatch

The Gift

Backchat
on *APA:NESFA* #369,
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To Joe Ross

FEB: Where else but our APA could you find the full legal text of the decision in the recent Howdy Doody puppet custody case? Fervent thanks, Joe. I read every word with fascination. Especially concentrating on "the

changing views of the plaintiff ... as to whether the Howdy Doody here has the same head now as in 1948." In my opinion, of course, every puppeteer is a head case ...

To Anna Hillier

FEB: So you're originally from the Pittsburgh area. Did NESFA do a swap, sending Jim and Laurie Mann down there and getting you in return?

To Mark Olson

FEB: Thanks for your big list of personal recommendations for this year's Hugos and the 1950 Retro-Hugos. I second your astonishment about 1950's deep bench of short form quality: of your seven novelette choices, I'd read and could instantly recognize four of them. Of your 15 short stories, ditto for 7. I've got to run get your first three ss choices (Poul Anderson's "Quixote and the Windmill," A.J. Deutsch's "A Subway Named Mobius" — never even heard of that author — and Poul Anderson's "Gypsy,") all of which you put ahead of Cordwainer Smith's strange-flavored classic, "Scanners Live in Vain." Guess if one were born in 1952, the Golden Age of Science Fiction would be minus two.

To Paul Giguere

Horrible thought you had: "[E]very word I type in my APA is a word taken away from my dissertation proposal." This kind of thing haunts me also whenever I take on other fanzine writing or other fan activity, which is the second most important reason I try to limit that stuff. (The first most important reason, of course, being *The Wrath of Queen Maureen*.) And really, it goes for everything, doesn't it? Our whole universe is a zero-sum game.

Besides, as a single guy, you should ask yourself: between your APA and your dissertation, which is more of a chick magnet?

To Lisa Hertel

Thanks for the continued thoughtful, loving, yet somehow delightfully anthropological reports on Liana. Glad that

at 2 years 9 months, “she’s no longer the characterless blob that eats, sleeps, and eliminates.” Although as Maureen and I exhaustedly try to plan some kind of relaxing getaway this year, that sounds like pretty much the perfect vacation ...

Aaaarrggggggghh again. Space left, but no time ... See you next ish.