

A blur. Blurrier than most years and no, that's not due to the copious alcohol consumption that took place at the 15<sup>th</sup> Alan Parsons Project FanFest. A blur due to age, number of people attending, lack of sleep, usual technical difficulties and general workload. It's a good blur to have. Now if I could just make the post-weekend blur go away by sleeping for 12 hours straight.

### **DATE CONFLUENCE**

We "moved up" the date by a week this year and by doing so we inadvertently aligned one significant anniversary with a few others. It was ten years ago that Projectronics started performing as a stand-alone band (no MIDI backing tracks, etc). It was 15 years ago that we held the first FanFest, originally thought of as a "one off". Finally, on Friday (1 Aug), we celebrated 20 years of owning the Dauphine. Yup, to quote a Beatles tune "It was 20 years ago today..." that we signed on the dotted line and entered into an interesting chapter in our lives.

The date worked much better than we would have thought if for nothing else it meant FanFest wouldn't conflict with the Happy Together tour coming to St Louis the following weekend. That means we could see Godfrey, John, Steve and Manny. Plus, for those attendees with children of various still-minor ages, FanFest didn't creep up on all the going-back-to-school chaos in August.

### **WE'RE GOING TO NEED A BIGGER BOAT**

As time went on, more and more people committed to coming. A brief scare occurred when Alan (The Other Alan) had lawn mowing infrastructure problems that threatened derail his budget for this and Li'anne was very much a last minute attendee. Most importantly, one guitar player from Mexico City had his passport and visa renewed (ten years!) and an airplane ticket in hand so we were set.

- 1) Aaron Mercado De Franco (Mexico City, Mexico)
- 2) Greg Smith (Baltimore MD)
- 3) Julie Jahn (Omaha NE)
- 4) Gina Ronat (Fenton MO)
- 5) David Ronat (Fenton MO)
- 6) Robert J. Noles (Freeburg MO)
- 7) Melissa Martinoli Noles (Freeburg MO via Argentina)
- 8) Blane Singletary (Abilene TX)
- 9) Jill Singletary (Abilene TX)
- 10) Steve Singletary (Abilene TX)
- 11) MichEal Bonham (Boulder Creek CA)
- 12) Brent Bonham (Boulder Creek CA)
- 13) Er(i)c Fight (Paso Robles CA)
- 14) Michelle Fight (Paso Robles CA)
- 15) John Elsbree (Seattle WA)
- 16) Annette Elsbree (Seattle WA)
- 17) Sandee Schaeffer (Seattle WA)
- 18) Andy Burnett (Champaign IL)
- 19) Sara Motley (Dale City VA)
- 20) Don Davenport (Dale City VA)
- 21) Alan Girton (Kokomo IN)
- 22) Lyne Sylvain (Gatineau, Quebec, Canada)
- 23) Laura Unterweger (St Louis MO)
- 24) Li'anne Drysdale (Springfield MO)

25) Mike O'Dell (Kirkwood MO)

26) Nancy Moore (Kirkwood MO)

Steve came back! Since the kids are adults now, that means he's back for the comradery and beer, not just to keep a watchful eye on the offspring. Note some new names in there. Or old names with a slight change as in the case of MichEal. She brought new hubby Brent along (they celebrated their 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary the week afterwards). MichEal's been gone ten years, yikes, it didn't seem like that long. Michelle brought along hubby Er(i)c. The (i) became a "silent 'i'" sometime during the weekend, I don't know why. Thus, by Sunday he became "Erk". Finally, Nancy and Mike are friends of mine from the St Louis area. She listened to the Project in junior high and high school and like most of my friends who liked the Project, didn't go nutso-overboard on the fan stuff over the years. But she and Mike have been out to the Dauphine before and thought this would be a fun experience. She said they'd be back and I don't think she was just saying that to be polite. :)

So, counting your two brain dead hosts, we had 28 people this year, our second biggest FanFest and biggest since we had 29 people in 2004, another ten-year mark. Like last year, we couldn't come close to housing all people onsite. Our rental house is rented (different renters, I could write a book on the deadbeats who were there last year) so we returned to the Bank as bachelors quarters (like last year). In a slight change of pace, we had folks at the Settle Inn and the other B&B near us, Huber's Ferry. The result was four people at Huber's Ferry and five at Settle Inn.

We cooked breakfast for everybody onsite and a couple of people offsite although I'm not sure why; fortunately, our supply of eggs, sausage, bacon and hash browns held out. As a result, we cooked for 17-19 people each morning which maxes out our ability to cleanup in time for Skype calls. Clearly for a group this size, we need staff.

### **LIFE IS A HIGHWAY**

At least it was for Michelle/Er(i)c and MichEal/Brent. Each couple drove here by various routes from California. The state, not the town here in central Misery about 45 minutes west of us. At least Michelle/Er(i)c took a more leisurely approach and were the first to arrive around 12:30pm on Thursday. OTOH, MichEal/Brent left on Tuesday or Wednesday and damn near drove straight here. That's why they didn't pull in until Friday afternoon, the last to arrive. That made (The Other) Alan's drive from Indiana via Champagne where he picked up &y, seem tame by comparison. Everybody else either lives within a 3 hour drive or flies in. Both couples are on an extended road trip vacation so for them, FanFest was another stop along the endless road.

Not content with an already insane drive, MichEal and Brent left on Sunday even before Lynn got up. However, they were the only ones with an insane travel schedule. Everybody else was more or less normal although Aaron red-eyed it to and from Mexico City. That meant nobody left before 10:30 or so Sunday morning and most left noon to one-ish.

### **THURSDAY....AAAAAFTERNOON**

We weren't even at the Dauphine when Michelle and Er(i)c arrived. The phone rings up at the house, s&ra picks it up and they're in the lobby. I was in the middle of something so hustled down the hill, said hi, then moved onto wtf I was trying to do at the time. While away from the Dauphine, Greg, Sara and Don arrived. Greg I saw once I got back but by that time Sara and Don had already collapsed in their room not to emerge for a couple of hours. When Alan and &y arrived about 90 minutes later, we fired

up the keg so that when Steve arrived a couple of hours after that, he only had to be in the kitchen 60 seconds before a Tastee Adult Beverage appeared in his hand.

We're also usually treated to a couple of Sara's "Squeeeeeees!" when somebody arrives. Last year it was for Lynn, this year...it wasn't for somebody new but I'll be damned if I can remember who it was, for all I know it was Lynn again. We compared all the extra beer that people brought (stouts and porters were popular in that regard although &y brought a Sierra Nevada IPA sampler 12 pack) and just hung out.

Swag handout started early. Greg had cool tshirts from Cracked: black with a variation of the DSOTM cover except with a cracked prism and "shattered" colors of light coming out the other end. He wanted to get the right sizes (he didn't have tons of options when he bought em) to the right people, thus, if you've been to the Facebook Event Page (<https://www.facebook.com/events/468343203272177/>) and scroll down, you'll see some em.

I love Thursday afternoons; we're done prepping so can kick back and greet everybody as they come thru the kitchen door. We sit around the kitchen table, like people have been doing at the Dauphine for almost 140 years, catching up and already forgetting the funny thing somebody said 5 minutes prior. Julie talked about her and husband George's NASCAR activities, particularly the activities that go on with the RV crowd in the infield. She then described two guys from Arkansas (I think) who carry along a portable bar and stripper pole setup. Out comes her phone and eventually she finds her picture of it. That just scratches the surface of the conversation as everybody picks right up where they left off the previous year.

### **THE YEAR FANFEST GOT OLD**

I base this purely on when people went to bed. I always say that my bedtimes are based on when I conk out Thu night. I didn't even make it to midnight, 11:50pm. Yet, it wasn't just me. Most people started collapsing around midnight or just before. One exception would be Sandee and Li'anne (who were rooming at Huber's Ferry) who stayed up until 4am yakking. Friday night I made it until 1:25am, then Saturday night 1:40am. So, no more insane long nights by most people. Heh heh, that being said, we were a binary crowd, hard charging for the day and the evening than it was like a switch was flipped and we went to bed.

I say "old" but this was a year where, technically, FanFest went past its usual 72 hours. As mentioned before, Michelle/Er(i)c got in at 12:30pm on Thu. Greg, Sara and Don (they collectively rented a car) left Sunday at 2:40pm so 74 hours of fun, music, conversation and more fun to mark our 15<sup>th</sup> year. Not quite Sara's "endless FanFest" idea but in terms of hours of people on site, our longest. For someone like Lynn, it lasts longer. She gets in Wed and stays with Gina and David, then goes home on Monday, again staying with Gina and David.

### **PLENTY OF TIME TO SLEEP WHEN WE'RE DEAD**

It's possible the "we got old" feeling stemmed from the fact that so many people came into FanFest working on virtually no sleep. Jill had slept an hour prior to arriving. Aaron had taken a red-eye from Mexico City arriving Thu morning. He slept some at Gina's prior to the drive out to the Dauphine but was dragging by 11:30. Don had driven from Atlanta up to the metro DC area on Wednesday. He and Sara weren't operating on much sleep either which is why they crashed in their room for a couple of hours as soon as they arrived. Sara's days of staying up all night at FanFest are definitely a thing of the past.

So, most people who were sleep deprived, went into FanFest that way. Me and s&ra come out of it that way. I was a zombie Monday and a half-zombie Tuesday. What made it tougher is that we had an incredibly rare thing the Monday after FanFest: guests. Thus, we had to turn around one room and bring the downstairs back from FanFest to “quaint historic inn”. In that regard, we had help but even so, by 5pm, we were wiped. But the help was appreciated.

We cleared out the Bank on Tuesday, then spent Wednesday and Thursday doing the same at the church. We still have gear to haul back to Gina’s on Saturday as we used her keyboard this year and neither her nor David had room in their respective vehicles to haul gear as they were hauling people to the airport.

### **MERCI, GRACIAS, THANKS**

With Lynn and Aaron around, we were downright NAFTA in our makeup. People are helpful and generous to a degree that continues to humble me. Alan and &y went down to the church Sunday after breakfast and not only did they get everything off the stage, they put back the two monster pieces of churchy furniture, a massive lectern and the always unwieldy altar rail. For the first time in, well, ever, I didn’t have to go down and do anything short of retrieving a couple of minor things later in the day. I still needed to get all the gear out and move a couple of other heavy pew-like seats back onto the “stage” but doing that work on Sunday helped immensely.

(The Other) Alan helped with toilet plunging duty (alas, much more on that below) and anybody who plunged the toilet down at the church in order to keep it running has my eternal respect.

Lynn gets up first and cleans off the kitchen table and even does some work in the kitchen. Nobody expects that but it does make my first coffee of the day a bit more relaxing.

Greg, Sara and Don hung around and helped with some of the post-breakdown ranging from pulling down the Ethernet cable from the upstairs router, stripping beds to helping me heave our massive old TV (for videos) back into the office. Guys, it might not have seemed like much but by that time of the weekend, anything that means one less thing for us to do, particularly given our fast turnaround time, is a help.

John and Annette bought pizza like they do every year (more on that below). Steve kicked in some additional beer money prior to FanFest and bought some much desired tequila for Aaron and Lynn on Saturday.

People contributed a variety of things for prizes. Alan tossed in a Dr Who poster. Steve’s name came up for that and he promptly gave it to Jill. Jill contributed another piece of artwork while Laura contributed a framed eagle done with yarn (I can’t describe it well). Li’anne got that. Sandee had about half a dozen TTM CDs sans their covers. Tony Miller sent me some of his usual paper products. One was a playbill that included a Zombies show. I meant to give it to Sara but forgot. There were some Camel concert handouts as well. I gave Greg one and saved the rest for next year when I’ll hopefully remember to identify the hard core Camel fans and give em a copy.

As she does every year, Sandee gives me and s&ra a dedicated gift, this year it’s a massive book on a railroad in Washington written by her brother. Sandee didn’t know that my master’s thesis was on a narrow gauge railroad in Colorado so it was the perfect gift.

Then there's the food and booze. People brought lots of booze: wine, beer, port, mead, more tequila, etc. Food wise the standout were these chocolate and dark chocolate pyramids with a truffle center that MichEal brought. Custom made I think and To. Die. For.

Below I'll talk about what Alan sent; it deserves one big thank you. And finally, our Skype guests, Sally, Lenny and a conference call with David Paton and Ian. Their time is always hugely appreciated.

### **ALL YOUR INTERNETZEZZZ ARE MINE**

After years of having "broadband" who's only thing in common with broadband in real places is the name, we called our provider and asked about an upgrade. First thing they did was tweak what we already had and whaddya know, our download went from an anemic 0.8mbps to a screaming 2.0mbps. Upload stayed the same at 0.3mbps. Even with those heady numbers, we signed up for an upgrade which meant they came out the Monday before to install a new antenna. The result? 4.0mbps down and 1.6mbps up. We already had a new router so were confident of our ability to support the bit vampires when they descended on us.

For that most part that worked. We had to reset the router once or twice and our basic connection is still a bit burpy but for the first time since we finally got broadband, it kept up. Now, that didn't mean I wanted anybody on during Skype calls so I pulled the plug on the router and went directly into the wall when we started Skyping. That also worked very well. Our video eventually went wonky with Lenny but it's impossible to say which side was the problem. Video with Sally was great and since our call with David Paton and Ian was conferenced, it was simply audio.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS, KINDA, SORTA**

Unlike last year, the lead up this year was smooth. Nothing major broke and we didn't feel terribly harried or rushed to get things setup in time. Of course that didn't stop things from going awry during FanFest although nothing major until afterwards.

Every year we make some kind of improvement usually because something old finally breaks. We just purchased a new fridge for the Dauphine replacing the early 60s era Kelvinator ("Product of American Motors") that has been there since the three old maid sisters owned the place. I replaced the wax ring on the toilet at the church and got it attached securely so no water leakage like last year. I cut felt outlines to cover the gothic arched windows at the church so our basic lighting for the tribute show would work better during the first 20 minutes of the set. It also helped cut down on the amount of sun beating thru the windows, thus helped keep the place cooler. And we remembered the steady, 8' ladder downstairs at the church which made putting up the lighting rig easier. We also hung the really cool 2011 FanFest blanket/tapestry that the Elsbrees and Schaeffers gave us two years ago. So the church was in prime shape upstairs.

I'd planned to use the fridge in the basement of the church to store ice and the second keg. So, the weekend before FanFest, I turn it on only to be greeted with a never-ending high pitched squeal. I tore apart the inside, back panel of the freezer to see that the evaporator fan motor was the culprit. Everything still worked but at times the noise was godawful. Closing the door into that room and turning on the a/c upstairs "fixed" the problem by masking it but on Monday, I found a "like kind" part for it on ebay. Order placed with the hopes it would arrive no later than Thursday. Nope, it showed up Friday and by then I had no time to replace it. I go down Monday to do that and discover the

high pitched squeal is gone. Typical. I replaced the damn thing anyway so that I wouldn't be faced with the same issue next year. Always fighting the last war.

Two toilets always bedevil attendees, one at the church and the downstairs one at the Dauphine. Having a plunger at the church meant I wasn't bothered when people discovered a problem and yes, it happened at the church. However, at the Dauphine, we never could get the downstairs one unplugged after the inevitable occurred. Then we figured out why Sunday afternoon: our septic system was clogged. There was water all over the root cellar which sits underneath the original two, 1840s era, rooms. Plumber comes out Monday, clears out the clog and we think, whew, problem solved. There have been no septic issues at the Dauphine for at least 35 years (our 20 years and the previous owner's 15 years)...until now. On Tuesday, you'd think we hit a spring out on the bluff side yard of the hotel since there was water merrily bubbling up out of the ground. Sooooooo, another call to the plumber, then to the toothless guy who does the actual excavating. At least it didn't happen during FanFest although our fallback position is to sweep out the super-deluxe three-stall outhouse up by the chicken coop. No downstairs toidy did inconvenience a few people. Okay, Gina was massively setback because of her knee problem.

For once, the Elsbrees didn't freeze back in The Meat Locker, aka Room 7, aka The Parsons Suite. Maybe nobody cranked down the thermostat in the hallway. OTOH, Nancy and Mike in Room 1 were a bit stuffy—welcome to our HVAC system. That's not unusual for that room but there's nothing we know to do about it other than give em a fan next year.

Finally, we had a large LCD monitor to use for Skype calls and we moved that setup into the Parlor. That meant people could lounge around a bit more, we could squeeze a few more chairs in and I could leave everything setup for the entire weekend. We still haven't done anything with the massive old 27" TV we use for video but since video watching seems entirely dependent on how hot it is outside, it's not as if we've had a big demand for a flat panel. Of course such a TV would be far easier for me to pick up and move; the old beast is getting too heavy for me to heave around for much longer (see above about FanFest Getting Old).

#### **THAT SMELL**

No, not what you think. People would come thru the courtyard and say "you've got a gas leak". That would be the propane tanks, specifically the small one out by the stairs leading to the parking lot. Sure enough, every now and again you'd walk by it and get a whiff. That's not unusual when a propane tank gets low and sure enough, this one was in the 20-ish percent full range. So, another call to another provider was put on s&ra's post-FanFest to do list. It also meant nobody hung in the courtyard which is actually cooler in the afternoons because no sun gets back there and there's always a chance that the lone, remaining Dauphine cat, Mason, would put in an appearance. Instead, everybody hung out front to watch hummingbirds and the locals drive around the block a gazillion times (more on that below).

#### **IF THIS IS THE RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, SIGN US UP**

A third straight year of awfully accommodating weather. It was almost identical to last year in that the temps got into the lower 80s during the day but unlike last year, "only" got down into the lower 60s at night. Still, it meant all the various air conditioners easily kept up (except when I forgot to turn on the unit down at the church on Saturday until 30 minutes before things kicked off in the evening) and we could all spend plenty of time on the Dauphine porch or outside on the deck at the house.

Also like the last two years, no bugs! Well, until I hear from Lyne.

### **THE BREAKFAST CLUB**

After Thursday afternoon, I love the time with the early risers. Like last year, that would be Lynn (always the first one up), (The Other) Alan, &y and me. On Sunday, s&ra of all people actually made it down early enough to join us. I actually get to know people during this time. Okay, I know &y well enough but it's been this time when I've been able to find out more about Lynn and Alan. It's nice, it's mellow, we talk about life stuff. Or when Sandra came down, how me and her hate the insurance industry. That was for Alan's benefit. :)

Then the breakfast tidal wave starts and it's back to the kitchen.

### **LET'S STOP TRYING TO KILL AARON'S GRANDMOTHER**

In 2011, the only way Aaron could get time off from his job at that time was to have a reason, in that case it was his grandmother in Houston's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. With his presence this year, everybody kept remembering it as his grandmother's funeral. This interchange happened again and again. Each time Aaron would say "it was her birthday, stop trying to kill her". On Sunday morning when this came up with Annette, who like everybody else remembered it as a funeral, I said "We've been trying to kill Aaron's grandmother all weekend." She's still with us at 82 btw.

### **THE ELSBREES ABHOR A VACUUM**

As mentioned above, we bought this new fridge and were excited that we'd be able to hold leftovers and more stuff in general. For the better part of a decade now, the Elsbrees buy pizza and salad on Thu night. This year was particularly anticipated because of the re-opening of the pizza place in Linn we used to go to. It closed down three years ago and the other one in town makes this soooooo thin, cracker crust stuff that's just sorta there. But with the re-opening of the place with the same old pizza recipe, chops were being licked.

Because the only nonstop to St Louis from Seattle now gets in later, that meant no pizza until around 8:30pm. We were starving by that point and the Elsbrees didn't disappoint: they must have brought 50 pizzas. And yet, the expected devouring didn't take place. That meant all that space in our fridge was filled with pizza...and two complete pizzas went uphill to the fridge at our house. We think because of the relative lateness, people grazed so that they didn't gobble down tons of pizza Thu night. That meant I had pizza for breakfast Fri and Sat and people snacked on pizza literally at will. Lynn's got a great photo of Aaron doing just that in the Dauphine kitchen. When the hordes went uphill Saturday afternoon for music time, the two pizza there lasted about 5 minutes. It meant that the various lunch meat and lunch stuff we bought is now stuff we'll eat!

### **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE LOCAL EDIBLE KIND**

Food for the rest of the weekend sticks to what we know works: pan fried chicken from birds who were clucking that morning for one dinner and a catered meal from the folks at White Stone Inn for the second dinner. This year we went with salmon, we've done that before, and it was a standout.

Breakfast wise, sigh, our friggin chickens are on another egg laying strike, that means they're molting. We have 3 birds left from the original 5 and added 3 chicks this year. The latter aren't old enough to lay eggs, so, we had to get eggs from the Post mistress who lives "up the holler" and has a lot of birds. So, the eggs remained local. As did the meat products. We've found a supplier of bacon and sausage that's local so we do that for all our guests, it's part of our "eat local" shtick. It's not organic per se but it's also not processed to death.

As mentioned above, people bring stuff like the chocolate pyramids. Julie makes some kind of sweet, snack something that look like balls of pasta twirled together, I can't remember what they're called. I think Sandee brought frangos and there were enough Goldfish and Pringles to last a month.

We do provide healthy bits. Cherries are popular and I think Annette brought a bunch to augment what we had. Peaches, apples, bananas, grapes, etc., we also on full display and eaten. If you go hungry at FanFest, it's because you're asleep or tied up in the cellar.

### **EIGHT (TEEN) IS (NOT) ENOUGH**

My beer purchasing odyssey each year remains one of the more frustrating pre-event things. For whatever reason, the booze distributors here in Central Misery can't seem to ever get the things I know are carried in real places like St Louis and Kansas City. I have to go thru a local grocery store chain to order and as usual, it was one screw up after another, again because the distributors never deliver what they promise. After a week and half of this I finally get a "full" keg of Schlafly Pale Ale and a "torpedo" keg of the same. Now, "full" kegs are supposed to be 15.5 gallons of beer. Turns out the good folks at Schlafly's biggest keg size is 13.2 gallons. Combined with the 5.1 gallon torpedo keg, we went into the weekend with 18 gallons of beer. I knew that wouldn't be enough so asked the known beer drinkers to bring some of their favorite stuff. They obliged.

Alan brought a 12-pack of porter. Sara had two six-packs of stout. As expected, &y brought a 12-pack sampler of various Sierra Nevada IPA. Robert, also as expected, brought Sierra Nevada IPAs so the resident hop heads were happy. Robert also brought slug bait, aka various Budweiser products, aka Robert's Crap Beer, that I think he said he won in a raffle or something. It went mostly untouched. Gee, I'm shocked. I think later Sara and Don picked up some Blue Moon.

By Saturday after the game show and swag handout, we'd finished off both kegs as well as virtually all the beer everybody else brought with the exception of Robert's Crap Beer. I tossed in a case of various Yuengling products I brought back with me from wargaming in PA or VA earlier in the year and that lasted, barely, until consumption stopped around 1:30am Sunday morning.

By my calculations, we drank around 26 gallons of beer. And I'm not counting at least 8 bottles of wine and the big dent Julie made in the 4 liter bottle of muscato sangria we bought. On top of that, Brent brought mead which he consumed. There was a bottle of tequila that Aaron, Lynn and Steve bought Saturday morning and it was gone by the end of the day. I saw a bottle of port that was also mostly consumed by the end of the day. Or the mamosas that s&ra made up for Saturday and I must admit, I had some Sunday morning while cooking breakfast.

As John put it, he drank more at this FanFest than any of the rest combined although he's quick to add that still doesn't add up to much. My favorite quote on this is from Nancy: "Cheers to the FanFest group drinking practically everything in sight. Did you check on your stock of furniture polish and gasoline cause I swear I saw someone eyeing it towards the end." Heh heh, I don't think we're quite there yet but I've made a note that next year, assuming the distributors don't continue to mess with me, I'll get two of the 13.2 gallon kegs of Schlafly Pale Ale (which received high marks from the beer drinkers).

### **SO MANY BIRTHDAYS**

Lenny Z and Robert had birthdays the week leading up to FanFest. David's birthday was that Thursday and Ian's was Sunday. So Meli baked a cake for Robert and David which we shared on Friday. If we keep the same relative date for FanFest next year, methinks we'll be doing the same thing all over again.



## **PUZZLED**

We became aware of the fact that at least six people in the group liked doing jigsaw puzzles. Since that's such a social thing to do, s&ra (who also loves doing jigsaw puzzles) had the brilliant idea of getting some puzzles with an AP/P theme or three. We'd then have one down on part of the Collector's Hell table and another up at the house on our kitchen table.

We went to this big puzzle store that's located in a trailer off I-44 between Rolla and Springfield and sure enough, we found a couple that worked perfectly. One was a bunch of robots, the other was a 3-D pyramid. A third was a really small puzzle that came with its own tweezers. It was a shot of balloons over a lake entitled "Putting On Airs". She started doing that on an old pizza tray while out on the deck on Saturday. The other two puzzles were completed and it's clear we're onto something here. So, expect more thematic puzzles for next year and they might have more pieces.

Because of that, we allocated less space for Collectors Hell than usual and I didn't put out nearly as much stuff as usual. And people didn't bring as much stuff as usual. This part of FanFest ebbs and flows depending on how motivated people are in any given year to bring along some of their "treasures". One thing that I discovered is in the Boxed Set liner notes: there's a photo of Eric wearing one of the original TOMA! promo t-shirts. I had that shirt on display! Okay, not the one he was wearing but one of the original promo t-shirts. Despite our smaller than usual collection on display, it always generates conversations about where it came from, whether or not Kirk has one and how it relates to something else in one's collection.

Video activity also ebbs and flows, I've given up predicting who wants to watch what, if anything. Last year, lots of video room activity. This year, not much. I know people want to see video of the band's 3am tour of Rome. ;)

## **CHRISTMAS IN JULY, OH WAIT, IT'S AUGUST**

Sometime Friday afternoon, a package arrives. It's a decent sized box, from Alan. There's also a poster tube. Several weeks before I'd pinged him about "cleaning out another closet" which is our euphemism for "if you have any neat stuff lying around you want to unload, send it our way." This itself stemmed from a conversation several years back where Alan told me if I gave him enough advance notice (but not too much), he'd like to send stuff.

So, I plop down in the lobby and we collectively spend the next hour oooohing and aaahing over the contents. Some items I used for door prizes, others are for the winning team in the game show and still others I just give directly to people because the prize just screams their name. An example of that is an access badge, in this case "BAND", that has Jill's TOAFC design she did for tour t-shirts she did a couple of years back. Best tour badge ever.

The box had some legal-sized playbill/posters for the orchestra show earlier this year in Clearwater. Greg was at that show so I gave him one and the members of the winning game show team also each got one. There were additional t-shirts, denim shirts, a big poster from a guitar festival Alan attended earlier this year, additional tour/backstage badges on lanyards and even one where Alan was a VIP guest at the Kennedy Space Center. Each and every non-clothing item, Alan had autographed!

Then came the big stuff. Vinyl editions of TTM (we had no idea it was out in vinyl—Greg can opine on this) and TAO. Greg won the TTM vinyl as a door prize and opened it up Sunday afternoon before he left

and it's gorgeous. The artwork as it was meant to be seen, ie., not shrunk down into a CD case. People who aren't normally vinyl people all wanted one. He sent an autographed copy of the recently released Box Set, thus, somebody got their copy of The Sicilian Defense. Other things: 35th anniversary release of IR, autographed copy of The Definitive Collection sheet music book, a blu-ray edition of Steven Wilson's "Raven That Refused to Sing" release, this really neat necklace that held an AP guitar pic, a couple of thumb drive releases of "Fragile" and about 8 CD singles of "Fragile", again all autographed. I know I'm forgetting one or two things but we had a great time pulling things out of the box and leaving them out for people to fondle until I got em organized for door prizes or stashed away for similar giveaways next year.

### **A PILOT PROJECT**

With the official release date of David and Ian's latest happening over the weekend, Kirk sent me a slew of CDs: one to give to Jill (because she did the artwork and does some backing vocals on one song), two to give away and ten to sell. Heh heh, I simply sold the 12 (Kirk, the check will eventually be in the mail). We then put on the CD and listened to that prior to our Skype call. Again because of the release, we'd arranged to do a Skype conference call with both David and Ian.

We got Ian on first and our new and improved bandwidth definitely showed. We were able to video call with him for about 5 minutes when David popped in and we reverted to audio-only (Skype conference calls are audio only). We had a wonderful hour with the two of them. They talked about how they first met, what it was like to become very big and visible stars overnight, in David's case the issues that came with fronting a band when you didn't necessarily feel ready for it, etc. The two of them went back and forth over memories of not just the Pilot years but prior to that.

One of our favorite moments was an anecdote he related about working with Eric in the studio. One of Eric's favorite expressions was "Blow it out your ass, Paton!" whenever a suggestion was made ("Let's put a banjo on this song") that Eric didn't agree with.

They talked about their upcoming gig at <http://midfestgrowninscotland.co.uk/lineup.html> and Greg told them that a number of fans (like him) would be there. We then progressed into more important subjects: Ian's cats. All in all, it was a great time and hopefully one we can replicate again next year.

### **ROAD TRIP**

After Skype, the band bails back down to the church for one final run thru and everybody else is left to their own devices. I think some people stayed to work on the robot puzzle while Alan drove Lyne and Julie to two wineries, one open, one not. It's an excuse for Alan to barrel around are windy, rural roads for a couple of hours. I had to go pick up dinner, as always getting stuck behind an old man in a hat driving nowhere and in no particular hurry to get there...both ways. But, the folks at the Westphalia Inn had everything ready and by the time I got back, everybody was ready. I had lots of help setting things up as s&ra was up at the house dealing with our foster cats. After everybody settles into a nice post-dinner food coma, it's time to rawk!

### **PRACTICE, TEN YEARS OF IT, DOES MAKE PERFECT**

Subconsciously at least, the Singletaries opening act, Projectronics, decided to show-up that brother-sister duo this year; Hah, that'll teach those meddlesome kids! That was made possible not just by Aaron's presence but our collective ability to rehearse 3 times prior to the show. It's possible the set list accidentally contributed to this. But first, the slightly changed lineup for this year:

&y Burnett: bass, vocals  
s&ra Holder: sound and lights  
Scott Holder: edrums  
Sara Motley: flute, percussion  
David Ronat: rhythm guitar  
Gina Ronat: flute, vocals  
Laura Unterweger: keyboards, vocals

Robert bowed out for this year due to work requirements and over the first couple of rehearsals, David filled in on first one song, then another so that by the end of our monthly rehearsal cycle, he had parts on almost every song. On Thu, he was bringing in the Elsbrees who as mentioned wouldn't arrive until around 8:30. We decided to head down to the church so that Sara and Aaron could get their first run thru with the rest of the band. That went pretty well so we head back up for pizza. When done, we head back down, this time with David but sans Sara (retired with a headache) to go thru most of the songs again. If it sounds tiring, it wasn't. We were pretty tight from the outset and with everybody onsite and able to relax for several hours (unlike last year's goatrope), we sailed thru things. We then went thru the entire set list one more time Friday afternoon after getting off the Skype call with David and Ian and felt we were good to go.

The Set List (Lead Vocalist Listed):

San Tokay (Andy)  
One Good Reason (Andy)  
Cloudbreak (Instrumental)  
The Ring (Gina)  
Take The Money and Run (Andy and Gina)  
If I Could Change Your Mind (Gina)  
When (Gina)  
Year of the Cat (Andy)

Encore:

Sirius/EITS

Sara had a much expanded percussion role this year. Once we get "The Ring" online somewhere, you'll understand why. All the backing tom parts are her and during our first rehearsal, she on-the-fly started out the song that way and I came in with additional bongo-ish bits. During all our rehearsals without her part, the song sounded empty. She also did the flutey bits for IICCYM and supporting flutey bits for YOTC. Obviously we substituted the flute for the sax parts with Gina taking the lead.

Yes, we really did something as obscure as San Tokay. Andy and Laura get all the credit for figuring out the music for it. Despite some initial trepidation about doing the song, we really grew to like it over the six months of rehearsing.

Every year there's always a song that we grouse about doing usually because it's **\*hard\***. Typically that song was picked by s&ra who's like "Hey, I don't hafta play it!", think "In The Lap Of The Gods." from 2012. This year true to form we started out cursing "The Ring" (s&ra's pick) but then moved onto TTMAR because it has an annoying 3/4 in the intro and lots of stop/starts. However, eventually we

settled on cursing “Cloudbreak” because have you ever tried to play it without the lead guitar parts? Heh heh, it was Aaron’s choice and it took us at least 4 months of rehearsals to stop playing along to the original recording. During our final July rehearsal, &y would call out “this is where the first guitar solo starts. This is where the second half of the first guitar solo starts” and so on so we knew where we were; it was easy to get lost. Once the guitar player was actually with us, it came together quickly.

For whatever reason, the overall set rocked more this year than in year’s past which is why I thought that we’d finally “outperformed” the headliners, The Singletaries. Hah, silly me. After Band Hampered/Assisted, Jill did a solo piece called “Hey Chris”, yet another homage to the revered Chris Rainbow. She had some backing tracks both instrumental and backing vocals but she wrote her own lyrics for the lead and there wasn’t a dry eye in the house when she was done. Dammit, outdone again! Then she and Blane did another chapter of “Alan Parsons Word Association” which is a mashup medley of songs with some kind of lyrical connection between the AP/P song and the one being mashed. Or is that the other way around?

In between, we did our usual Band Hampered/Assisted karaoke. We have 24 songs in the repertoire and don’t do all of em each year but do rehearse them at least once. The list:

IWWTBLY  
Press Rewind  
Sooner or Later  
DiiD  
YoYo  
LSF  
Breakdown  
Psychobabble  
Night Full of Voices  
Cask of Amon/Tarr-Fether  
Step By Step  
Too Late  
I Don’t Wanna Go Home  
DAM  
Voyager/WGU  
Dancing on a Highwire  
The Voice  
Primetime  
You Don’t Believe  
Fingers Burned  
Upperme  
Vulture Culture  
Games People Play  
Sirius/EITS

Meli listed 3 songs but none of them were on the list. They were songs we’d done in the past but not in years; we really don’t have “Ammonia Ave” on instant recall. Nonetheless, Aaron and Laura quickly re-figured out another of her picks, “Some Other Time”—it was pretty impressive; the rest of us did nothing but it was a nice effort. Next year, note to myself, put “Only what’s on the menu” on the sign up

sheet. And perhaps list the songs on the Facebook event page so people can practice for a pick if that makes em feel more comfortable getting onstage.

The highlight was Aaron's cowbell/percussion solo on "You're Gonna Get Your Fingers Burned". Only Aaron could pull that off. I dunno if we have any video or audio but if we do, we need to post it.

Finally, a funny moment before the show. I get down there maybe 15 minutes prior to make sure everything's in order plus people tend to wander down so they can get settled. Jill's in a seat and right behind her is Mike with Nancy to his left sitting by the aisle, thus Jill is situated in front of Mike, nobody's in front of Nancy. In comes Blane, all 6' 14" of him and he sits down next to Jill...right in front of Nancy. She moves her head to one side, then the other, then glances around, then yells "Down in front!" Much laughter ensues. It dawns on Blane that he, even by sitting, has blocked her entire view—it's just like being in a movie theater. They then shuffle sideways such that Nancy could visually enjoy more than just the back of Blane's head for the next hour.

### **SKYPE TILL YOU DROP**

I had three calls scheduled on Saturday: Sally, Lenny, Alan. Alan's was a last minute change from Friday due to a scheduling conflict. He was counting on having either a working phone connection or any computer. Where he ended up had neither although none of us knew that ahead of time. Thirty minutes past the scheduled start of his Skype call, we bagged it and s&ra called two numbers and left messages. This is *\*very\** unlike Alan and by Sunday morning, we were actually worried. Never fear, he finally found some tin cans and wire and called (it wasn't from his phone and the sound quality was atrocious) letting s&ra know what had happened. This isn't the first time we've had scheduling problems with Alan at FanFest. Heh heh, his box o' goodies more than made up for the lack of a Skype chat.

One thing that sets FanFest Skype chats apart from most other Q&A events is that we ask about "life" as in "how are the spouse and kids" kinda questions. Sally's two children are 12 and 9 and each is very musically oriented in their own way, the 9 year old already writing songs. Grandpa's running strong in both of em. We also discussed how some fans would be attending the musical festival in Edinburgh and how part of that trip would be a trip to visit Eric's site, bring some stones, etc. Sally said she already had a scheduling conflict or she'd go but that Hazel still might.

When we did talk "bidness" it was about how the box set finally saw the light of day. Sally's been working pretty much full time two years on bringing that to the masses. Apparently Sony initially balked at having another label's presence on there (Universal now "owns" TOMA) but she had an ace up her sleeve: The Sicilian Defense. Sony wanted it bad enough that they worked out their issues over TOMA. Heh heh, as somebody pointed out, TSD was being used in an almost identical role 30+ years later as it was when it was recorded.

The latest on POE is that they're in discussions with two West End production people about making it all songs in order to bring to the stage. Nothing concrete as yet but here's hoping.

We then spent another entertaining hour with Lenny. Yup, talked about life stuff. He packed into two weeks his trip to Turin, his son's wedding, his own birthday and topped it off with an hour with us! He talked at length about his experience in Turin. It was harder because of the constant translation plus he had a couple of questioners in the larger Q&A session who seemed intent on getting him to "dish the dirt" on the Project years.

He talked at length about the issues associated with one-off gigs. He has to do everything and the payoff is always questionable. There's also a timing issue. Yeah, the Project remains big in Germany but if Alan goes thru there, that means somebody like Lenny can't (not enough demand) for at least six months.

His album is done, he confirmed that, but still needs to be mastered. He's going to go the Kickstarter-ish route with that. It's a different group (whose name I can't remember) but the concept is the same. So keep an eye out for that in the coming months.

We ended with more "life" stuff. His commented that with age, his breasts are getting bigger than his wife's. Heh heh, classic Lenny.

### **DUSTY STACKS OF MOM**

After Skype, typically most folks head up to the house for an afternoon of the Way Too Loud Audiophile portion of FanFest. The marauding horde found the two, intact pizzas, from Thu night and they were gone within minutes. We had plenty of other things to snack on plus the always present 4 growlers of beer from the kegerator. This year we broke up into three groups: the people wanting to lose their hearing, the puzzlers and the chillers. Puzzlers worked on the 3D Pyramid puzzle on the kitchen table while the chillers enjoyed warm but not atrociously warm weather out on the deck.

But first, we showed a 45 minute film, Dusty Stacks of Mom. This was premiered at the True/False Film Festival which we attended earlier in the year. The filmmaker, Jodie Mack (<http://www.jodiemack.com/filmsvideos/dusty-stacks-of-mom-the-poster-project/>), is a professor of fine arts at Dartmouth and an old-school, stop action animator. She gave us two copies of the film (we need to send one to Alan). When we watched it at the festival we were like "this is what the Singletaries would make if they were on drugs". It's a story about the rise and fall of Jodie's parent's poster business. The music is DSOTM but with different lyrics and totally different performances for most of the songs. It's very inventive and poignant. Plus, I think the music for "Us and Them" (now called "Supply and Demand") is really good.

Everybody agreed that it would have been **\*really\*** good if we held FanFest in Colorado or Washington state if you know what I mean. ;)

### **THE NEW SWEET SPOT**

Once done with our movie, we had enough newbies this year that we could pry some of the usual Sweet Spot Squatters out of the prized seat. Robert spent a little time up on the landing by the left, rear speaker and pronounced "This is the new sweet spot." I always figured Alan put all the best stuff there. ;)

I took a few requests, then we plopped Brent in the usual sweet spot and played 5.1 On Air in its entirety. Then some more requests. The vibe in the room for this, despite the somewhat anti-social atmosphere of music pumped to 11, is always special. Some just let the sound wash (or cascade) over them, others really get into the groove and there's always few who sing. Aaron's got a great "Graham Dye" voice.

We last for about three hours of this and then everybody heads back down the hill. This year, dinner was delivered early so we ate earlier than usual. It allows everybody to get good and sleepy prior to the chaos that is the Game Show and Swag Handout.

## HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE PLAYING?

I goofed in not turning the a/c on at the church until perhaps 30 minutes before people arrived. It never caught up. Maybe that contributed to the heated competition that ensued. Well, that and the Taste Adult Beverages close at hand. Like last year, I divided the group into three teams, one male, one female, one mixed:

### Team 1 (The Coed Dorm)

Robert, Alan, Greg, Julie, Annette, Li'anne, Don, Steve, Lynn

### Team 2 (Team Testosterone)

Andy, David, Aaron, Mike, Brent, John, Eric, Blane

### Team 3 (Team Estrogen)

Sandra, Nancy, Michelle, MichEal, Laura, Sara, Sandee, Jill, Meli

I always split up couples and the Singletaries. Gina sat out this year because her knee (she had surgery on it the following Wed) was giving her fits so she was an audience of one. s&ra plays every year since it's the one time where she feels like she's not required to host anything. That meant 26 people were screaming stuff at me for much of the next 90 minutes.

Like every year, the color on the projection image of the playing board is "off" so we spent the entire time asking John "is this the real green?" or "is this the real blue?" After the game, he finally edited the playing board (it's a PowerPoint slide) and put a legend on there so everybody knows what color represents what broad topic. That means I'll do Pictionary next year although I'm having a helluva time coming up with clues that haven't been used before.

That's one of the "charms" of the game: the obscure, lyric-based clues I come up with. Everybody always goes "wtf did that come from?" I never remember but fortunately this year, Aaron was around and he seemed to know where every one of them came from.

I put a white board up on the "stage" and away we go. Another longstanding problem is that depending on where the drawer stands, not everybody can see what's going on. This isn't a problem if the drawer is just drawing for his or her team but when it's an "all play" square, more chaos ensues as people either complain that they can't see what's going on or half the people literally "rush the stage" to get a better view. The setup wasn't designed for 25+ people on 3 teams. Plus, whenever a team would end up on an "all play" square, or as we call it All Play Hell, one person draws while 25 people yell out possible answers while I try to figure who screamed the correct one first. I didn't always catch the first one to get it so several times I had players say "Oh, I heard so and so say it earlier". Heh heh, we're all friends here so went with that.

We had our first disqualifications this year! Usually it was for pointing to a clue or saying something. You can't do that. But you also can't use symbols. In one case, s&ra got "Money Talks" as a clue and drew a rectangle with 4 dollar signs in each corner. Her team got it instantly but then Annette pointed out the symbols. As she put it "somebody had to say it". My fav tho was Jill. She pulled "Hyper Gamma Spaces". Now, I don't see the drawing of the clues since my back is to the drawer since I'm concentrating on cutting thru the din to (not) hear an answer. Somebody gets it in like 10 seconds and I couldn't believe it. I turn around to see that she's drawn a blob-ish outline (think an amoeba) and next

to it the Greek character “gamma”. Immediately the audience says “that’s a symbol”. Heh heh, I think this is the only time I’ve seen Jill sound even the remotest bit “defensive” and says “how else am I supposed to draw Hyper GAMMA Spaces?” The judges (me after pondering about it while sipping a beer) ruled the clue violated the rules and we moved on to the next team.

The most amazing correct “guess” had Meli up drawing. There’s a picture of it on the Facebook event page. It’s a stick figure holding a shield and what looks to be something vaguely shaped like a sock next to it. I’m looking at it now and I can’t figure out wtf it’s supposed to be. Her teammate, Nancy, got it: The Sicilian Defense. Nancy hadn’t heard about The Sicilian Defense until FanFest and I’m not even sure which conversation she heard that referenced it. But there she was, clear as day saying “The Sicilian Defense!”

Team 3 jumped out to a big lead but was eventually caught by Team 2. Team 1 lagged way behind until late but then went on a tear but still weren’t close enough when 2 and 3 both ended up on the last square, another All Play Hell square. When Team 1 hit its own “all play” square, Team 3 got the answer and won.

Now that we have a playing board with the right colors, John talked about maybe doing something where the drawing was done on a tablet that connected to a projector. That way everybody could see the drawing as it was done. Now if we could just figure out a way to accurately hear the first, correct answer.

### **THE MAYAN PANARAMA OF MY PYRAMID PAJAMAS**

I’m gonna mess this up completely because the chaos of Pictionary carries over into swag. Somebody gets up front first, announces what they have or made and hands it out. There’s a lot of conversation that goes on as this occurs so when the next person gets up, it’s often hard to get everybody’s attention (the “herding cats” concept applies here). As a result, I often have a hard time figuring who gives out what. I know that Gina gave out another tile with Jill’s artwork. The Singletaries, I think, gave out these little flat, credit-card size squeezable LED light with the cover art from “A Pilot Project” on it. They’re pilot lights, get it? Don gave out DVDs of a live Dream Theater DSOTM tribute show. I handed out two “newbie” packages to MichEal/Brent and Mike/Nancy consisting of some swag from previous years (I have extra “copies” of a lot of things), the Eric Woolfson memorial shot/tea/candle glass, two of our four remaining beer mugs and then various items customized for each. For example, I’ve had a 3-CD set of the Ultimate Collection for years now; most people attending don’t need it. But Nancy and Mike’s AP/P collection is pretty thin so they got that as well as one of the extra TTM CDs that Sandee so thoughtfully provided.

Julie provided another set of note cards, this time packaged with the Vulture Culture album title and songs from VC. There’s also a personalized key ring with the Pyramid logo. Who did that? Like I said, it was confusing and I was trying to get my act together for the door prizes drawing.

The highlight as you’ve probably guessed by now, were pajamas given by the Elsbrees and Schaeffers. A couple of months back, John asked us to help get sizes from people. I figured t-shirt, then forgot about it. Instead we have shorts and a t-shirt top with all kinds of pyramid stuff on them. On the back is a take-off on the Great Seal of the USA (look on a dollar bill) except that the eye at the top of the pyramid has been replaced by an Eye of Horus. The text has been changed so is now some faux-Latin riff on FanFest. And so on. Absolutely brilliant.



I then did the door prize drawings, deliberately keeping the number to around 15 prizes. That caused a little confusion as in at least one person thought everybody was getting something. Heh heh, not this year, I always want something in reserve. Greg's was the first name drawn and he grabbed the aforementioned TTM vinyl. We went thru that process until the last item was selected and then, amazingly enough, made it thru the Group Photo in no time. John's posted it on Facebook and several attendees have reposted on their own profiles.

I stood there looking back at all those people and was struck by what a big crowd we had. And then I needed a beer refill (we were out at the church, a disaster of minor proportions but a disaster nonetheless) so &y turned off the main light over the stage (we told him he needed to flip then on and off) and people slowly started to head up the hill.

### **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE LOCAL(S) BAD KIND**

We typically don't bother anybody during the weekend. I mean on any given weekend here, there's plenty of people drunker (easily) and louder than us. Plus we're self-contained to four buildings and don't spend a lot of time loitering about on the few street corners here in town. And yet, occasionally we have an encounter with somebody local. It's usually benign (18 years here and people still don't know what to make of us). This year, a little less so.

Friday night around 11-11:30, the phone rings in the hotel. I pick it up since s&ra and Nancy are uphill visiting/feeding our little foster family of cats (a momma and her two babies). It's Mom (she lives two houses up from the hotel) saying that there's some loud pickup truck on the street that keeps going up and down the street. Now, I'm not sure exactly what she thinks I'm going to do about this so I duly note the gripe and hang up. I think I moved into the kitchen or somewhere because I wasn't out on the porch with some of our people when said bubba in the Ford, diesel, 4-door pickemup truck turned onto the street fronting the hotel. Based on what Julie and Alan told me afterwards, this guy had been parked in front of the bar and grill, backed up, then went around the block many times before turning to go up the street (that street is the one that fronts our house and Mom's house). As it so happened, s&ra and Nancy were then walking down the street when the truck came by. All s&ra noted was the loud hip hop music coming from inside. We always find it hysterical that the crackers that live amongst us either listen to C&W (not surprising) or hip hop, there's no in-between.

So, the guy turns onto the street in front of the hotel and Julie says "I wonder if he's casing the place." Apparently said bubba heard that because as he turned the corner going back in front of the bar and grill, he stuck his hand out the window and flipped off the group. Nice. He continued on his way to the river road, his truck never seen again over the weekend. We've never had a street brawl at FanFest but there's a first time for everything. We've got two big guys, &y and Blane so maybe next year. :)

The next close encounter was Saturday night after the Game Show and Swag Handout. I've finally gotten everybody out of the church and I need to get up the hill to get the house somewhat prepped for the hot tub crowd and the evening music crowd. I sidetracked thru the Dauphine to check on things, confer with s&ra over what cleaning still needed to be done and was about to head up when I notice somebody on the front porch that's not one of us. I go out, see that it's a woman, 40-ish and I ask "May I help you?"

I might as well have been talking to a porch post. She didn't even react. She might have had a friggin cell phone to her ear, I'm not sure so I then get up in her face and repeat "May I help you?" Now she has to react and says "Is so-and-so here?" She's asking about the guy who lives over the post office. All

I do is point across the street to his “flat”. She walks around me, the whole time as if she’s in a daze (most likely three sheets to the wind drunk—that’s the only way I can see the guy across the street getting a woman into his place) and then she says either to me, the possible phone or the porch ceiling, I’m not sure which, “I’m in the wrong building”. You sure are sweetie. As she reaches the stairs to head down, she looks halfway around (I’m behind her at this point) and says “Thank you” in the same spaced out way she said the rest. As she headed downstairs, I headed up the hill.

### **WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE**

My encounter with the drunk blonde meant that the hot tub crowd had already settled into the tub so my job was to bring them towels, that’s my Cabana Boy roll at FanFest. As I was setting up inside, the evening music crowd showed up so I shooed most of the cats into various rooms and locked them up, brought up *\*more\** beer from the basement as we had drained the last of the growlers as well as all the bottled beer people brought (again except for Robert’s Crap Beer), then we settled in for some surround sound nirvana as represented by Alice Cooper’s “Welcome To My Nightmare”.

Saturday night is typically a music evening not confined to AP/P stuff. Instead we either listen to other surround discs or something else audiophilic, typically brought by Greg. This year, Alan requested Nightmare not knowing I already had it, thus, Greg had brought a copy as well. Of course nobody has to twist my arm to play it so we plopped Alan in the sweet spot and away we went.

I also learned that many audio releases these days on blu-ray DVD contain 5.1 remixes in DTS, Rush’s “Moving Pictures” being one. Alas, my universal player isn’t blu-ray so instead we listened to two songs in 5-channel stereo and I had to catch grief for not having a blu-ray player. Finally, we put in the Dream Theater DSOTM tribute show that Don brought.

The weather was nice so like last year, some of us also hung out on the deck with the hot tubbers. Every so often I’d hafta admonish them about water sloshing over the edge but other than that, things were pretty mellow. Everybody, except Aaron and Lyne, headed down the hill around 1am or so. Since Aaron was staying offsite, his ride, Steve, was waiting for him downhill. Greg too was going back to the Settle Inn with Steve so he came up and we occasionally badgered the two of them to *\*finally\** get out of the tub—it didn’t work. But finally, they felt sufficiently pruned to leave around 1:30am and I was in bed ten minutes later. For once, and this is a first, I went to bed Saturday night, oops, Sunday morning, before s&ra.

### **OUR NEW FELINE MASCOT**

We went officially mascot-less last year. Our Maine Coon rescue, Hendrix the Magnificent, looked like he might step up but as of last year, he didn’t. What a difference a year makes.

First off, surround sound doesn’t bother him. Normally cats *\*hate\** surround sound. If I happen to semi-blast any throughout the year and they’re in the living room proper, they look around, look up, and then bolt. Not Hendrix. Admittedly he wasn’t in the sweet spot or inside what I consider to be the optimal listening area but even the loudness didn’t bother him. What he’d do is flop on the floor behind the sofa in the area that leads into the kitchen and people would have to step over him or better yet, get down on their knees to pet him.

On Saturday when I was sorting thru the stuff Alan sent us, I did so behind the love seat so of course Hendrix thought I needed supervision so he’d sit on posters, shirts, etc. At one point, Julie got our feather toy and he chased that around. All the while we’ve got people coming and going, music playing

loud, etc. The same thing happened Saturday night. He just loved hanging in the living room with everybody. Janey would be proud.

### **LIKE A BAD PENNY**

FanFest always turns up. When 75% of your guests say "I'm already making plans for next year" who are we to say it's over. That and Projectronics still hasn't covered every song in the catalog. Oops, that's not a good thing since it would probably take us another 5-7 years to do that and unless we can fit an orchestra into the church, we'll never do "Fall of the House of Usher."

So, tentative dates for FanFest 16 are 30 July – 2 August 2015. Note that's the same relative weekend as this year. Normally we would have "gone back" to the 6-9 August weekend the way we had done for many, many years. However, I polled everybody about either weekend and there was a general shoulder shrug of "either is fine". But, since this slightly earlier date makes things a bit easier on people with school-age kids, teachers and the fact that (The Other) Alan is once again involved with his national fraternity which will be meeting the following weekend in New Orleans, we're gonna stick with what apparently was a good weekend for everybody.

s&ra and me as always love hosting everybody and are flattered people come back. We're looking forward to next year!

scott