

I never take notes. I write these tomes and always know I've forgotten the "good stuff". I used to blame it on the limited sleep, the workload and the general harried nature of what I do at FanFest. Those are contributing factors but I still suffer from "I can't remember what I wanted to do 5 seconds ago but I can remember something from 20 years back.". Thus begins another FanFest journey.

### **THAT WAS EASY**

Prep work was about like last year: a gazillion little things to remember, haul around and then do plus the usual larger issues. The Bank, aka the Bachelors Quarters, wasn't ready until late Sunday meaning I couldn't get it setup early. Still, that meant the place was cool so the after-work setup wasn't too bad. The Sound and Light Babe, aka s&ra, probably had more frustration figuring out and setting up the new light controller and the 5th light down at the former Methodist church. We also knew the toilet issues at the church haven't been fixed (it's a combination of clogged lines to the septic and quite possibly the septic tank itself). However, the septic issues that plagued us at the Dauphine last year weren't a worry as we had a new tank and drain field installed literally just after FanFest since it got quite "messy" in the old cellar underneath the place. This now qualifies as Too Much Information.

The date remained "moved up" and that seems to work a little bit better for the most people. You still can't get any date, no matter how far out you plan, that works for everybody. We learn that every year when scheduling Projectronics rehearsals.

### **IT'S AN RSVP EVENT**

Each year it's easy to say who will be here as opposed to the people who say they want to be here. And yet, each year we have a lack of notification or hear it 4th hand. That happened this year but we also had some fairly last minute "yeah I'll be there" notifications via Facebook. In fact, those were all newbies thus it was a big year for us in terms of newbies.

- 1) Aaron Mercado De Franco (Mexico City, Mexico)
- 2) Neil Tiedeman (Indianapolis IN)
- 3) Beth Ann Nehring (West Plains MO)
- 4) Gina Ronat (Fenton MO)
- 5) David Ronat (Fenton MO)
- 6) Robert J. Noles (Freeburg IL)
- 7) Melissa Martinoli Noles (Freeburg IL)
- 8) Blane Singletary (Abilene TX)
- 9) Jill Singletary (Abilene TX)
- 10) Sean D'Entremont (Abilene TX)
- 11) Kevin DeSain (St Louis MO)
- 12) Nancy Cope (St Louis MO)
- 13) Eric Fight (Paso Robles CA)
- 14) Michelle Fight (Paso Robles CA)
- 15) John Elsbree (Seattle WA)
- 16) Annette Elsbree (Seattle WA)
- 17) Tracy Hernandez (Jefferson City MO)
- 18) Andy Burnett (Champaign IL)
- 19) Sara Davenport (Fort Washington MD)
- 20) Don Davenport (Fort Washington MD)
- 21) Alan Girton (Kokomo IN)
- 22) Lyne Sylvain (Gatineau, Quebec, Canada)

23) Laura Unterweger (St Louis MO)

24) Li'anne Drysdale (Springfield MO)

Counting the always harried and exhausted hosts, that's 26 people this year, a nice number. Note the \*five\* newbies! None of whom are on roadkill. s&ra and I met Kevin and Nancy ("This Year's Nancy") at the Happy Together show last year the weekend after FanFest. They seemed interested but I always get some of that and never really expect anybody to follow up. Silly me. They came early on Fri and we housed em onsite. Kevin plays guitar in a band in St Louis and had a gig Thu night. Because we try to house as many newbies onsite as we could, like last year, Gina and David graciously consented to stay offsite, this time at the Settle Inn in Linn. Sean came with Jill; he's been active on the social media side of APP fandom for several years. Tracy is local. He stayed at the Dauphine sometime earlier this year. I was probably wearing an AP(P) shirt while cooking breakfast and he asked about it. Of course that led into a FanFest discussion and at the very last minute he decided to come. He based from home which meant a 25 minute drive in the wee hours of the morning. Neil also contacted us fairly last minute and drove out Friday as he had to work on Thursday. I "know" him from Facebook and didn't really know (or remember) that he wanted to come. He and Alan live in the same metro area but Alan was coming out Thu and picking up &y along the way, then heading to St Louis to get Aaron at the airport, thus, even if they could have ride shared, there wouldn't have been room because of &y's gear.

Note a name change. Sara and Don got married in early July. She's been milking it ever since in terms of "I lost my flute notes because I got married", etc., etc. Sara's never missed FanFest so at least she didn't let nuptials get in the way of that.

Our rental house is still rented, until later this month so we again housed 4 of the guys at the Bank. Plop in the 13 people onsite and we cooked breakfast for 17 people. We didn't have any Skype calls until noon, otherwise the people who straggled down after 11am would have gone hungry, or at least wouldn't have had a traditional breakfast.

#### **GOOD THING JULIE DIDN'T ACTUALLY DROP DEAD**

Julie from Omaha did her best \*to\* drop dead the Tuesday before FanFest. Dehydration led to low blood pressure which led to crashing. She ended up in the ICU for two days. We're glad she didn't kick off because it would have put a major damper on the weekend. :) We've already lost Klaus, we don't need to lose anybody else. As she was going to pick up Sara and Don, that meant they had to get a rental car since they flew into KC. And Greg Smith has some kind of issue where his doctor didn't want him flying while taking a current medication. My suggestion of doctor shopping until he got permission to fly was ignored, I don't know why.

If there was a "good" thing about Julie not being here is we now realize that for next year, we'll need to lay in more muscato. We get that mainly for her but it turns out Beth Ann can suck it down almost as fast as Julie. Shopping note to myself for next year...

#### **ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

Lyne came in real early, as in the weekend before. However, she stayed in St Louis with Gina and David and did all kinds of touristy stuff, much of which involved sweating profusely in the upper 90 degree heat that hit us early in the week. As in 2013, John and Annette came in Wed, also staying with Gina and David. A fair chunk of people arrived on Thursday but the newbie contingent along with Beth Ann didn't arrive until Friday.

In terms of arrivals at the Dauphine, Sara and Don walked thru the back door at 1:50pm Central, then Robert and Meli about 30 minutes later. Wait 15 minutes and it's Aaron, Alan and &y. The Fight Club (Michelle and Eric) came in at 4:45 and that was my last Facebook post until Monday. Everybody else drifted in over the next couple of hours, the most important arrivals being Gina and the Elsbrees with the pizza and wings around 7.

Nobody had insane departures. Well, Beth Ann's kind of was as she drove up from her new job in southern Missouri on Friday and left around 5pm on Saturday (she had a cat to medicate). Aaron had the earliest departure of those who were flying. It meant he, Alan and &y had to leave around 10:30am. Probably the worst thing for Aaron was simply having to get up at 9am in order to shower, pack, get fed and have a little hang time. Still, it meant he didn't get into Mexico City at midnight. Everybody else was either driving (Neil's drive was about 6 hours, Alan's longer because of the detour to &y's) or their flights were later in the day. The Fight Club had to finish one puzzle on the kitchen table so hit the road at 4:30, thus, we had another 74+ hour FanFest.

### **SINE CURVE WEATHER**

Looking at the Weather Underground 10-day forecast was like looking at a sine curve. Every day high of 89-92, every night low of 68-70. Sure enough, that's what we had. It was humid at times but all in all, this was a normal late July weekend. We've been spoiled the last two years when we've had unseasonably cool weather during FanFest so this year was a return to the norm. It still beat any of the pig effingly hot years.

And the bugs weren't bad. I thought in June I might have to spray for mosquitoes (they were really bad at the time) but they too were in the "normal" range meaning they were around but only attracted to the juicier targets and not a horde descending on anything moving on the porch.

### **THIS IS 'MURKA SO THAT MEANS EXTRA-LARGE**

Thursday is everybody chill while the band heads down to the church for rehearsal. That doesn't happen until after the pizza and stuff arrive compliments of the Elsbrees. Like every year, they buy enough pizza not just for Thursday night but for at least Friday lunch. This year, there was so much that some lasted into Saturday. Not content with a crapton of large pizzas, they instead ordered EXTRA large pizzas. There's a hysterical photo of the bare top of Annette's head in the back of Gina's car as she's got something like 9 pizza boxes on her lap. On Facebook, we had a never ending series of "yes" answers to the question "Do we have enough salad dressing?" as s&ra always tells them to not get salad dressing.

The first unforeseen problem was the time it took the pizza place to cook that many pizzas. The second unforeseen problem was that the boxes were so big, they only kinda fit into the fridge at the Dauphine and definitely would not fit up at the house. On Friday, I ransacked both places for every large ziplock bag we had and transferred pizza up and down the hill.

I'm not sure why I sweat Thursdays as much as I do. Rehearsal is its own thing and with everybody onsite Thursday, it usually runs itself. But for the chilling group at the Dauphine, I'm always concerned that there's "not enough to do". Somebody brought Cards Against Humanity and there had to have been 8-10 people crowded around the table playing when we got done at the church and I think to myself "you could do this at home, why come here?" And yet, everybody seems to have a good time just sitting around the table and doing whatever. It's something that's been going on at that table since at least 1890 so something must be right. It then hit me the Tuesday afterwards: the friendships that have been made here are a compelling reason why people return.

Like last year, I hit the sack at 11:50 meaning the rest of my sleep schedule would be dictated by going to bed an hour later each night and still having to be up around 7am the next morning. We had more night owls than in the last couple of years based on my usual "what time did you go to bed" questions the next morning. Bedtimes seemed to range from 2-4am. I just can't pull that anymore. Some folks did nap in the afternoons which might explain why they could stay awake the way we used to during earlier FanFests.

### **THE COFFEE KLATCH**

Or aka The Breakfast Club. Third year running it's me, Alan, &y and Lynn although she wasn't always the first one up. Probably because she was the last one to bed every night (see the aforementioned 4am reference). Nonetheless, by 7:30 each morning, the four of us would be out on the front porch with our first coffee of the day while ruminating about everything. Lynn moved around quite a lot as a kid, Alan provided subtitles to his wife's text messages while the hummingbirds kept eyeing &y as a potential meal source (his hyper-colorful tie dyed shirts). I provide the sometimes entertaining updates about life in this crackpot place with its crackpot residents. This is where we probably started discussing a big group meet at the 25 September APLP show in Newark OH.

The Friday and Saturday meetings of the Klatch are rather leisurely since most people don't seem to straggle down starting around 9am. Sunday morning is a bit different as people pack, some have to leave, etc. Thus on Sunday, once we hit critical mass on the porch with a few more people, it was off to the kitchen for cooking duties as seemingly everybody piled downstairs at once.

### **THE MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE**

I know (now) I'm not alone in this: as I've gotten older my short-term memory has gone to crap. I think of something to do or get or whatever and literally 5 seconds later POOF!, the thought is gone. This first hit me when walking through the Smoker's Lounge. It used to be the Beer Garden but remains the Dauphine Courtyard. Aaron and Lyne smoke (or as I think Lyne called them "poison sticks"). Actually Aaron's quit at least once but it's a tough habit to kick permanently (he mentioned something about having to be inspired to quit but I didn't quite follow the logic--2 days of little sleep and lotsa beer will do that) so he and Lyne took up residence in the Courtyard. We have ashtrays but didn't think to put one out so they improvised. As I'm walking by maybe on Friday, I see the little cup of water filled with butts and say "oh, lemme go get an ashtray for you". Now, it takes approximately 2-3 seconds to walk from where they're sitting to the kitchen door and I swear by the time I opened that door, POOF!, thought gone. It wasn't until the next day I finally remembered to put an actual ashtray out there.

### **SHE'S A SYRUP MULE**

Lyne "smuggled" these tin cans of Canadian maple syrup into the country. They're really old fashioned in that you needed a can/bottle opener, the kind with a triangular end that punches a triangular-shaped hole in the top of the can, in order to open the can.

Both Lyne and Aaron related the quizzical looks they get when they come into the country. Quizzical in that when asked "why are you entering the country" at least Aaron says "I'm going to Bonnots Mill Missouri to play Alan Parsons Project music with some friends." He says he almost feels like he needs to preach to the surrounding people about this, or perhaps just spread the word in that little way. I think Lyne said more or less the same thing.

### **THE TRIPLE A DRINKING CLUB...HAD LOTS OF HELP**

Ah a baseball reference, kinda. The Single A Drinking Club (Alan) left Kokomo. It became the Double A Drinking Club when &y was picked up, then the Triple A Drinking Club when they got Aaron from the airport. Get it, three "A's". I think at least a couple of people didn't make the connection. Significantly contributing members of the Club included Lyne and Robert. This is a good segue into the Tastee Adult Beverage portion of the weekend.

Much to my amazement, I had no trouble getting beer, mainly because I went thru a burger joint and pool hall in Columbia to get it. The owner stays with us from time to time and offered to help. Easiest FanFest beer purchase ever. I had two 50 liter kegs (13.2g) of Schlafly Pale Ale. As backup, I had a partially "open" pony keg of Amber Ale from Olde Main Brewing up in Ames IA (I bring a keg home the 3 times a year I'm up there for work). On top of that, I had a torpedo keg of Hemp Hop Rye from O'Fallon although I wasn't gonna share that if push came to shove. I somehow managed to squeeze the three kegs into the fridge down in the church basement although it was a tight fit and I had to prop up the bigger keg with some wood because of the interior layout. I then gave Alan and &y instructions on what to do when the first keg ran out...and we all knew it would run out...

Right as we were going down to the church for the Projectronics set and Band Hampered Karaoke on Friday. There was no time to haul one keg up the hill but never fear, we had full growlers and Alan had brought a cooler full of Abita products and maybe a couple of other things so no one went thirsty for the 3+ hours we were down there. The second keg died at 11:30 Saturday night but we still had 5 growlers left which much to my amazement, lasted until now. Nonetheless, I pulled my partial pony keg up just in case.

Per Julie's standing request, we had muscato. Then Julie ends up in ICU and we think "who's gonna drink this stuff?" Enter Beth Ann on Friday. I think she polished off half the bottle and everybody else had small amounts toasting Julie's future good health. We had some alcoholic cider products, again per Julie and I think Gina took a bunch of that home. The Cancer Twins (Lyne and Aaron) had a bottle of tequila (a "tradition" they started last year in the hot tub) which was gone by Sun morning. There was some wine but I'm not sure how much. As always we had plenty of soda and water both for both the tea totalers and those simply trying to pace themselves.

### **SUCK IT UP, PRINCESS**

This became a theme for the weekend. During Klatch time Friday morning, Lyne was venting about a new boss, a bad boss, a high maintenance boss. She said that whenever said boss would complain about something, she just wanted to yell at her "Suck it up, princess!" Thereafter, anytime somebody had a complaint, stubbed a toe, whatever, you can guess what the collective response was.

### **GINA'S FLEA MARKET OF COLLECTIBLES**

I setup the Collector's Hell table with about half open for stuff and the other half for expected puzzling. I also put stuff on the sideboard in the formal dining room. I put out the blown up photo of me and s&ra in the DeGaulle terminal (cover of IR), the German boxed set I purchased to make one custom jigsaw puzzle from, the usual 8-tracks, some POE stuff and as always, the old Dauphine guestbook (Dave Clark's is the last entry) and the magazine piece Klaus did on Eric.

The empty half of the table then became Gina's Flea Market. She has a lot of treasures! and wanted to unload some of them. Brilliant sales strategy! Every now and then I'd see her in there and stuff was being sold. She brought me her OA mobile for which I owe her a bottle of nice wine. What was

interesting is she had several things that I hadn't seen before and of course that launches into the story behind them. Can I remember what those were now? See above references to memory loss. Collector's Hell is always a fun place to congregate because so many items lend themselves to discussion.

On the window ledge, I put a stained glass "Turn" cover that Sara did as swag years back. Gina brought two others, smaller ones. I didn't realize that one was from the "drink coaster" section of the LPs from the German boxed set. Really cool.

### **PUZZLE 'TIL YOU PUKE**

Because of the success of last year's last-minute puzzle options, we decided to do a couple of custom puzzles for this year. One is based on the LP sleeves from the German boxed set, the other from the IR cover. I've posted both on Facebook. For the weekend, I put the IR puzzle up at the house and the Boxed Set one down at the Dauphine. Because of the explosion of Gina's treasures! on the puzzle half of the table plus the fact most of the puzzlers liked playing Cards Against Humanity, puzzling didn't get into gear until Saturday afternoon up at the house. I think Michelle cracked open the IR puzzle and was then helped by Laura, Don and Meli. They got maybe halfway done before we adjourned downhill for dinner, Pictionary, Group Photo, and Swag but then Michelle, Sean and Jill came back up sometime after midnight and puzzled until 3am when they finished it.

Sunday saw John break out a puzzle of hyper-colored balloons. He started it on the floor of the lobby on s&ra's homemade puzzle board but it quickly was transferred to the kitchen table. This was a really nice way to chill thru the departures. Don commented on how nice it was that not everybody had to rush out. As it was, the puzzle wasn't done when most people left meaning Michelle was there plugging along. She was even joined by me and Eric. I haven't worked on a jigsaw puzzle in over 30 years so it was a nice chance to catch up with both of them. Puzzle was finished and they left. So the German Boxed set puzzle is still available for next year although by that time, the FanFest Puzzled Group will have already done it (we ordered many copies for people).

### **DON'T SIT ON THE CHAIR AND ASSORTED TERLET NUTS**

Ours is an old place, with old stuff in it. Not for the first time, one of the original kitchen chairs popped a spindle (the chairs date from the 1890s at least and have been in continuous use ever since). One of the downstairs porch posts cracked (great, a significant fix job) and the old parlor chairs would make noises or the front legs would bend backwards. Thus, we were constantly telling people "don't sit on the chair" when coming into the parlor for Skype calls.

A towel rack in one of the rooms that I thought I'd successfully fixed just Thu morning came down, again, of course, Thu night although The Fight Club (who was in that room) didn't tell me about it until Sun afternoon. That's still on my post-FF to do list. As is doing a massive fix underneath the dining room table, aka the Collector's Hell table. There's more than a screw loose and several are missing.

Then &y says something about the downstairs toilet. I immediately go into panic mode given our septic travails last year. Nope, just the lid was missing a nut. He hunted around for it but couldn't find it. I'm mystified but at least it's an easy fix. The church septic, much to my amazement, held out. We don't control how/when/if it gets fixed but it's clear it's either clogged or the tank is shot. As such I was telling everybody we had a limited "number of flushes" in the thing. That meant the guys typically went around the corner to the bank which might explain why it only began to make noises and not flush

water away late Saturday night. We're hoping the community group that owns it at least gets the pipe cleaned out soon.

Good news is that all the air conditioning in the various places worked! It was typical July weather in that it was right around 90 with high humidity at times. Nothing brutal and nothing the a/c couldn't handle. No mysterious fire alarms going off, no drunks wandering into the place from the bar and grill "downtown" and all the various electronics, both gigging and audiophile, worked like a charm. Bandwidth and the WiFi router held up.

### **NO MORE MASCOTS, JUST KITTENS**

Every time we say "here's the FanFest mascot", said mascot dies. Our Maine Coon Hendrix died last November so we're down to one cat officially left at the Dauphine (Mason who's 15) and three at the house. Everybody at FanFest knows Annie, she's 16, but there's no way we're designating her the mascot because s&ra loves her more than anything (including me). Our other two cats, Chirpy and Twinkle, are skittish plus we kept them mostly locked upstairs because of the loud music and not wanting anybody to accidentally let one out. So, no official mascots.

But we had foster kittens! Amber and the Poofs because the momma has amber eyes and 5 of her 6 kittens are medium hair poof balls. s&ra took people up to the house on Friday and as she put it there was a line of people going into our bedroom waiting to see them.

### **WAITING FOR GODOT...OR PATON**

First Skype call was tentatively with Dave Paton. The complication was that it was a travel day for him as he's been touring with the Albert Hammond Band. He wasn't sure when he'd get to his hotel nor the broadband availability. So, we scheduled for noon our time but the entire thing was open ended. So, everybody piled into the parlor...and watched videos for 30 minutes. We wanted to actually see him this year as last year we Skyped with him and Ian via conference and that was audio only. Turns out his travel day became much longer than anticipated so he just couldn't squeeze it in. But he's promised he's all in for next year!

Everybody present then asked about Ian because I hadn't heard back from him prior to my usual coordination efforts prior to FanFest. That's very unusual but fortunately Sunday morning I received an email from Leila. He had been at the Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival performing with East West, then went to the Shetlands for 3 weeks with family. We were just glad for an update and it was also nice to see him performing live.

### **NAME THAT (INCHOATE) TUNE**

We were scheduled with Sally Woolfson at 1pm our time and this turned out to be a harbinger of all our Skype calls, what fun!

First she updated us on two ongoing projects: a 35th anniversary release of TOAFC and a 40th anniversary release of TOMAI. She chuckled and said she realized how this seems in that "oh, it's another copy to purchase". Everybody laughed but she said that these would be in HD. Release date(s) will be this fall. One question asked was which "version" of TOMAI would be on it and she said that decision hadn't yet been reached. We then did a quick poll of which version people would prefer. The FanFest 2015 Focus Group overwhelmingly prefers the 76 version. I think I'm the only one who prefers the 87 version.

There will be some new bonus material and this is where it got fun. Her and Lorna had been going thru some old boxes and discovered a ton of Eric's "musical diaries", in effect, cassette tapes he'd make as he worked on things on the piano. As with the bonus material for the remasters, they had to "bake" the tapes in order to make them useable, then digitize them. The result has been them plowing thru tons of material, some more formed than others. She then played one and asked us to "name that tune". We had maybe 4-6 different answers...none of which was the "correct" answer because she didn't know herself. That's when somebody asked a question about growing up listening to that process and we discovered that her and Lorna approached this material entirely different than we did. They literally were in the next room for years as Eric worked so listened to the origins of the material from this raw form rather than us, the fans, who listen to it in highly produced finished form, then work our way back.

We then asked Sally about these releases and surround. She sighed and said every time some type of new release comes up, she dutifully brings this up with the labels and they immediately say no, it's too niche, no market, too expensive for the expected payback, etc.

In other news, POE will most likely finally hit a stage...in South Korea. They continue to work with two West End composers to make the entire thing musical, ie. no talking bits. Assuming this finally comes to fruition, the production would be in English. They are also considering using some of the material for these "musical diaries" for the new material.

### **68 IS THE NEW 58**

Next up, Lenny! Three successive Skype calls is a bit much but we're subject to everybody's schedule and Lenny had a gig the following night so just after we signed off with Sally, we rang up Lenny. And the first thing we did was sing Happy Birthday to him.

Again, another fun call but then we've come to expect that from Lenny. His 68th birthday was a couple of days before and as somebody pointed out, he easily looks 10 years younger. And as he put it, he still has the pipes!

His album still needs to be mastered. He and his partner in this just worked on a couple of sample mastered tracks from a guy with a ton of analogue gear as they were looking for that kind of sound. They were underwhelmed and this led them to go back and listen to earlier mixes of some of the songs and determine they liked those better. It was an interesting story about the process. So, he's still working on the mastering of it, then they have to decide how they'll proceed with promotion, either radio or other media. No word on a release date.

He "came to us" from a room in the house which was full of framed photos of him, or him in bands, etc., from over the years. Every year as a birthday present, his wife now gathers up some of these and gets em framed. So he pointed to various ones "there's me in my funk phase", or "there's me with hair" or "there's me in my kind of gay phase"., etc. Somebody then asked him about the first time he shaved his head and as expected, that was a story. Now, can I remember the details?

Meli asked him a fairly detailed question about a promo junket he took as part of the Project to Argentina back in 1980. He talked about how, given the military dictatorship there at the time, how they had to essentially self-censor almost everything they said for fear of offending the government of the time. He also said it's the only country he's been in where he had steak for breakfast, steak for lunch and steak for dinner.



Lenny always seems to have some kind of "textile" to show us and this year was no exception. He got a t-shirt for his birthday and the photo on the back was a very unflattering one of his wife but it all had to do with how he's managed to reach 68 years with the love and support of her so it was all sweet.

One thing everybody wants is for Lenny to attend FanFest before we close up shop and move on. I've been tasked with nagging him into submission for next year. We'll see how successful I am.

The Skype calls were flawless. We finally have the broadband to do this well assuming I toss everybody off the WiFi network beforehand. I disconnect the router and plug an Ethernet cable directly into the wall, then run that 50 ft cable downstairs to the laptop and it worked like a charm. I still need a better microphone that's not so directional but that'll have to wait until next year.

### **THE CAVALRY (DON) TO THE RESCUE**

Parts of the band headed down to the church which is normal as we do one rehearsal before the show. This was complicated by the fact that Laura couldn't get off work so would be arriving late. Still, Aaron and Sara both had parts to work on so we went thru them and eventually everybody meandered down to wait on Laura.

This was going to complicate picking up dinner. As always, we were having fried chicken from the Westphalia Inn, about a 15 minute drive from our place, 20 if you obey the speed limits and don't get stuck behind an old man in a hat going nowhere in no particular hurry to get there. There was no way I could break away from rehearsal to get food but Don offered his services and I can't tell you how much I appreciated that. When we got done rehearsing at 6:30, dinner was there and all we had to do was take the foil off the packages, provide a few serving implements and dive in.

### **COSPLAY**

Just before the Projectronics set starts and as people are filing in, Lyne show up in her Bavarian Beer Girl costume that she purchased in Munich. I think Alan "dared" her into wearing it. We've got a great photo on the Facebook event page of her singing Tarr/Fether while wearing it.

### **OEDIPUS/SHMEDIPUS**

Projectronics went out on a limb again and focused on one album, Freudiana. For years now I always say "we should do Freudiana next year" and it's met with a combination of "meh" and "are you nuts?" This year, far earlier in the process than is usual, &y made that same suggestion. Obviously I was onboard as was most everybody else with the exception of Gina. A few songs says she, sure, but the whole album? We bought her off by saying she could name the set list for 2016 so look for a lot of The Project That Never Was. :)

We then took up Aaron's suggestion and ranked each song and as you would expect, the Freudiana instrumental, Funny You Should Say That, Sects Therapy and Universal Family were not included.

We already knew we'd be 20% better this year because s&ra purchased a 5th light which also meant buying a new light controller. So three weeks before FanFest, we setup our rickety, PVC pipe contraption to hold the lights, get all the gear setup and have a full on band rehearsal (minus Sara and Aaron).

## **2015 Projectronics Lineup:**

&y Burnett: bass, vocals  
s&ra Holder: sound and lights  
Scott Holder: edrums, vocals  
Aaron Mercado de Franco: lead guitar, bass, vocals  
Sara Motley: flute, percussion  
Robert J. Noles: vocals, percussion  
David Ronat: rhythm guitar  
Gina Ronat: vocals, percussion  
Laura Unterweger: keyboards

## **The Set List (Lead Vocalist Listed):**

The Nirvana Principle (Instrumental)  
Freudiana (Robert)  
I Am A Mirror (&y)  
Little Hans (Aaron and Robert)  
Dora (&y, Robert, Scott, Gina)  
You're On Your Own (Gina)  
Far Away From Home (&y, Robert, Aaron, Scott, Gina)  
Let Yourself Go (Robert)  
The Pleasure Principle (Instrumental)  
The Ring (Gina)  
Don't Let The Moment Pass (Gina)  
Upperme (Robert and Gina)  
Destiny (&y, Robert and Gina)  
There But For The Grace of God (&y and Gina)

Preliminary video review suggests we pulled it off. One thing we learned is how vocally demanding this album is. Everybody can sing thru it once and then your vocals are used up. In some ways this wasn't as demanding as it looks given we've been playing YoYo and Upperme for a loooooong time plus we did The Ring last year so it was "fresh".

For Freudiana, Gina asked for some audience participation so during those screechy "Froideeeeeeeannna" backing vocal bits, she stuck the mic out. We also expanded the intro percussion to The Ring now having both Robert and Sara pound away on percussion pads, then have me come on with the e-bongos. Again, it seemed to work.

Two things we did a little differently. The first was on "Moment Pass". The men left the stage (beer break!) and Sara moved up to Aaron's place so it was just the ladies moment in the "limelight". When done, Laura plays the opening pad from Upperme while the men come back onstage, we do introductions and then start in with the greatest riff in rock and roll.

The second was a very slight mashup inserted into Upperme. After the guitar solo, the song goes into the second "The good in me don't wanna believe" bit. In that spot we slowed things down and did the first chorus from Funny You Should Say that, mainly so we could do the whole "Fantayseeeeah" vocal part...that and quiet the peanut gallery afterwards who might have felt they "missed out" on vocally

"helping" with that ala Freudiana. The first time we did it in rehearsal, Sara wasn't expecting it (she doesn't have a part on the song so wasn't listening to the rehearsal recordings) and the look on her face was priceless.

There will be video at some point.

### **The Band Hampered Set (Lead Vocalist Listed):**

IWWTBLY (Neil)  
Sooner or Later (Gina)  
LSF (Jill and Sean)  
Psychobabble (Laura)  
Night Full of Voices (Sean)  
Cask/Tarr/Fether (Alan, Lyne, Jill)  
Step By Step (Blane)  
I Don't Wanna Go Home (Neil)  
DAM (Gina)  
DoAH (Robert and Meli)  
Primetime (Aaron)  
You Don't Believe (Sara)  
Fingers Burned (Blane)  
Vulture Culture (Laura)  
GPP (Sean)

We had 7 more songs people didn't sign up for which just as well considering the formal set took an hour and two more hours of karaoke playing meant we were beat.

I always say that Band Hampered is about letting people sing songs they love backed by a real band, it's an entirely different experience than regular karaoke. And we as a band only brokedown once in the middle of a song, it might have been LSF but I'm not sure. Regardless, we picked up where we needed to and finished. It's also great when somebody gets up there and knocks one out of the part vocally as Neil did to start off things with IWWTBLY. The songs above are not listed in the order they were done, I just pick people from the signup list and call em up onto the stage, typically having a newbie lead off the festivities.

The other (real) reason for Band Hampered is so I can play onstage with Aaron. The Freudiana guitar parts, while distinctive, don't lend themselves to big ending solos (with the exception of Freudiana the song). The Band Hampered set is a different monster entirely and one I never get tired of doing.

We ended with Psychobabble. It was setup much like last year in that David was up there with his electric guitar and effects pedal, Aaron was there of course, Laura, then me and &y. Typically Aaron, David and Laura will swap the psychedelic bits in the middle but this time when we hit that, Aaron just went off on a huge tear. Laura then picked up on that and filled in all kinds of stuff as he played. When the two of them finished, David then shredded up the place. I haven't watched the video of this particular bit it hit me at the time as being one of the more innovative iterations of Psychobabble we've done over the years.

Jill, Blane and Sean then came up to do a 3-song Chris Rainbow tribute, two with backing tracks and one with Sean on keys.

We got out of the church sometime after 11:30 and moved operations (and the new keg) up to the Dauphine. It didn't take long for another Cards Against Humanity game to break out around the kitchen table. Bedtime for me was a bit more than an hour later than the night before, only 1:15am.

### **MASTER (TAPE) BLASTER**

I'd talked to Alan Parsons (as opposed to Alan Girton, aka The Other Alan) on Wed and his schedule was flexible. Given we had nothing but time on Saturday, Saturday it was. We had plenty of time to finish breakfast and cleanup so at 12:15, I disconnected the WiFi router and at 12:30 we were on.

Yet another fun call. First he wanted to be reminded how long we've been doing this: 16th year. He very audibly made "wow, that long" noises and everybody chuckled.

Alan wanted all the newbies to formally introduce themselves so I passed around the mic. He asked "where's Sandra?" She was lying on the floor of the parlor so got up on one elbow, waved hi, then layed back down. Turns out she was starting to get a massive headache which would last until right before dinner.

He then talked about his involvement with the 35th anniversary of TOAFC. He has the actual master tapes in Santa Barbara. It was hilarious, he said "really I have them, I can prove it" and he then went off camera and came back with one reel. He put the box right up in front of the camera so you could read the information. He said that huge advances have been made in the last 10-15 years on analogue-to-digital transfer and he was excited about the upcoming HD release. I know he's had two cracks at TOAFC for the Remasters and then the Box Set so I get the sense with him that third time is hopefully the charm.

We discussed part of what Sally mentioned in terms of Eric's musical diaries. Alan had been listening to a lot old material like that. He then trotted out two clips from the TOAFC studio session, both of him doing the harpsichord parts on "Ace of Swords", one on the harpsichord and the other on the piano.

He felt that the TOMAI release would likely include both the 76 and 87 versions but again, didn't know anything at this point.

We then discussed surround sound and relayed what Sally had said. He reiterated that if something like that happened, it would probably have to be him licensing the material from the label and doing it himself. He then wanted to know first how many people had surround systems. Almost everybody raised their hands and his response was "that's a high percentage, you're elite" or something to that effect. He then asked which album(s) would we be interested in hearing in surround, his preference being TOMAI. Yeah, everybody was down with that but the other titles would be EITS, TOAFC and IR. Clearly we need to start a Kickstarter effort.

Alan was enjoying a "staycation" so Lisa popped in for a minute and they had two nieces in for a bit so everybody was off to the beach. We said our goodbyes, they heading to the beach and many of us heading up to the house.

## **WE'RE SURROUNDED**

By the time I got up to the house around 1:30, &y was already leading the 5.1 experience. The few people there had heard Apollo and Blue Blue Sky 2. We then worked thru a variety of albums, the 87 TOMAI, IR and a good smattering of dedicated surround material. Because our newbies drifted up at different times, we often repeated some of the surround staples.

One thing I apparently hadn't done in a long time was play the surround mix of HG Force off of the "Ultimate DVD Experience" demo DVD that came out around 2000. The menus are so slow and the time between bits you can't turn off means it takes as long to get to the damn song as it does to listen to it. So we ran it a couple of times as people showed up.

I then asked if we had any Pink Floyd fans in the house, again this was mainly for people like Kevin and Nancy who we'd plonked in the sweet spot. Duh Scott, of course so I put on the quad mix of DSOTM and retired to the deck for a bit.

What's nice about Saturday afternoons is that people can drift in and out of the house (to give their ears a rest), or puzzle in the kitchen where the "box o' sound" isn't so loud, or sit out on the deck if the weather is okay (it was humid but not pig effingly hot) or take a nap back at the Dauphine as s&ra did in the office to get past her headache or the Elsbrees just to catch up on sleep.

I think after DSOTM somebody put on something else and yet another album played, we were up there for a good 4 hours. Then it was another cat herding exercise to get people back down to the Dauphine for dinner. If you've detected a pattern in what we do after all these years, it's because there is a pattern.

## **CULINARY DELIGHTS**

Dinner Saturday was from White Stone Inn: pulled pork, cole slaw and a potato and green bean salad to die for. Everybody raved about the pulled pork and I sent Nancy and Gina home with some extra on Sunday. Chicken the night before didn't seem as good as it's been in the past but that didn't stop people from noshing on it on Saturday, or late Saturday.

We stopped doing formal sit down dinners years ago as our booze is better than anywhere we could go and the whole eating off your lap, or on what space people can make at the kitchen table, seems more in line with the relaxed vibe of FanFest. This year was no exception. Best thing for us: a week's worth of leftovers.

This year all the eggs came from our very own chickens! Happy eggs! Our meat products are also now entirely local. I even picked up more sausage Thursday morning and we needed it. Somebody brought cheesecake (it vanished shortly after being opened I think) and there were lots of fresh fruits and veggies. Still didn't stop people from diving into the Pringles or Doritos but we as a group manage to do okay with the healthy bits.

## **THANKS FOR THE MAMMARIES**

APP Pictionary returned for a 5th year "new and improved"! By that I mean we had some technical improvements. John brought a tablet and a projector. That way, players could sit on a stool up on stage and draw on the tablet and not get in the way of the drawing. The minute timer was next to the drawing area in a split screen format and it was really slick. We could also plug my laptop with the playing board into the projector and easily toggle back and forth between the drawing/timer screen and

the playing board. Of course I set the bench with the clue cards and dice board in front of the projector so people had to shield their eyes when drawing a card and rolling the die so not every kink was worked out.

As I put it several times "We have made technical improvements but are still using the same crappy clues." I added that I was amazed I could come up with enough clues to replace the ones used last year and figured I would have run out by now. Aaron responded "You ran out of clues when you used 'Dr Ruth' as one". That same "you've got to be kidding me" exasperation showed in Jill (the only time I've ever seen her that way is during Pictionary) when she tried to convey her clue with no success, then looked up at me and said "How am I supposed to draw MONACO?" Heh heh, that's why it was in the "Difficult" category.

I gotta admit that after 5 years without repeating one clue, I might have to do that next year. Pictionary remains a perfect game for this setting in that just about everybody is involved, there's tons of participation even when it's not your team that's up and the reactions throughout the game are hysterical. It starts a bit slow but everybody soon gets into the spirit and rhythm of the game.

I divided the teams up as follows, similar to last year:

Team 1 (Team Estrogen):

Annette  
Li'anne  
s&ra  
Nancy  
Jill  
Michelle  
Lyne

Team 2 (Team Testosterone):

Robert  
Alan  
Neil  
Don  
Blane  
David  
Aaron  
Kevin

Team 3 (Team Venus and Mars):

Sean  
John  
Eric  
Laura  
Sara  
Meli  
Tracy

I learned a little from last year and didn't want 8 players per team, 7 seems to work best so Gina and I sat out. This turned out to be a brilliant move because during the All Play clues, each of us could stand by a specific team and listen for the answers. It worked perfectly. They also helped be the panel of judges. I had one clue I needed to consult with them and they said the guess was incorrect.

I make sure every year that all the newbies play. Nancy really didn't want to come up the first time but was less apprehensive about it the second time. One clue was "Red Rose Speedway" which Kevin guessed correctly although very few people got the Alan connection. I only had to explain one clue to someone, Eric, everything else was self-explanatory albeit obscure and heavily lyrically based. The title of this section stems from the use of boobie drawings as a hint to the clue, or perhaps it was a subliminal carry over from two games of Cards Against Humanity, who knows. It started with Sean trying to draw the clue "Feelings". Two hands on two boobs. A bit later on with Team 1 stuck in the "Difficult" category, Sara was drawing the clue "Memories". She started out with something that conveyed the head or brain, then drew a "sounds like" symbol, then, you guessed it, drew boobs. Her team didn't get it but when she told the clue, she got thunder applause for the drawing sequence.

One of the best team reactions was Aaron. The clue was "Oedipus", another one from the "Difficult" category and time had run out. Before whoever was drawing it could announce the answer, Aaron calls it out, puts both hands over his face and rocks his head back in agony. Therein lies the fun of the game. Everybody can give me grief for either not knowing the origin of any given clue or the insaneness of any given clue, again along the lines of "htf do I draw Dr Ruth?" or every team letting out loud groans when somebody landed on an "All Play" square or the laughter at some drawings or utter amazement when somebody got something deemed really hard.

I think it was Team 3 that sprinted to an early lead but were caught late in the process by Team 2. Team 1 lagged behind because they got stuck on a series of harder than usual "Difficult" clues. As the last square is "All Play" that means anybody can win. Sure enough, Teams 2 and 3 were on the last square as Team 1 plugged along until Team 1 hit an "All Play" square. Team 3 guessed the clue and won!

Pictionary will be back next year although the clues could be crappier and more obscure than ever...or I might have to repeat a couple but as usual, I won't be re-using Alan Parsons, Eric Woolfson, Lenny Zakatek or Sicilian Defense.

### **DELAYS, DELAYS**

Before the general chaos that is Swag, we herded everybody up for the group photo. We didn't have time to do one earlier before Beth Ann left which is just my way of incentivizing people to not leave early, or something like that. John is the official Group photographer and he has this nice camera...which either wouldn't flash when the picture was shot or he couldn't get the delay feature to work correctly. He muttered something about it doesn't have a remote activation feature. Still, after many tries, we got a couple, one of which worked out fine. And unlike a couple of years ago, he didn't sprain his ankle taking it.

This beats in some ways how we used to do it with 8 cameras and an assortment of people taking the photo. I'm even smiling in it this year and he never smiles in photos. :P

### **I LOST CUSTODY OF THE TIME MACHINE**

Swag handout was far less chaotic than in the past. Maybe the structure of the group photo carried over. Li'anne handed out some custom cards with her artwork that she did for Eric when he passed in

2009. It's a picture of Eric analyzing Freud. Sara did another one of her handmade things, this time a "bust" of the Keats cover head which is a fridge magnet or as she called it on Facebook a "swagnet". Gina had another commissioned tile from Jill and Lyne handed out some things to certain people but I've lost the bubble on that one.

I had a team prize package compliments of Greg Smith, Alan and Lyne. Greg had several David Paton CDs, some Greg Smith (the bass player) swag while Alan donated a Poe graphic novel and Lyne donated a recent novel by Mathew Pearl, the Poe Shadow. Each year Jill donates a piece of her art and I randomly draw for it, Meli won that. As part of Gina's divesting of treasures!, she donated a tshirt they got at the Roswell show which had been autographed by the band, that went to Blane. Finally, Kevin and Nancy donated a tank top that was related to breast cancer awareness with two pink donuts going where the boobs are. I can't remember what it said but some things that are donated just scream for one person, so I gave that to Lyne.

I also do up a newbie package and try to tailor it if I can. Due to Alan P's generosity over the years, I've got a supply of various autographed event things like concert posters or seminar flyers, etc., and a seemingly endless supply of promo TTM stuff; Kevin, Sean, Neil and Tracy got those. I had some tour denim shirts, one S and one M so the latter was an obvious item for Sean. Earlier in the day when I asked Kevin if he'd heard the 5.1 mix of HG Force he said he hadn't heard TTM in years as "I didn't get custody of The Time Machine" in his divorce. Well, it's almost as if Alan P knew last year when he sent me a big box o' goodies because I have maybe 4-5 copies of TTM so Kevin got one. Being he's a gigging guitarist and bassist, I also gave him an Ian Bairnson guitar pick and a Greg Smith bass pick (the latter compliments of "our" Greg Smith). Tracy didn't know about TTM so duh, he got a copy. I can't remember what I gave Neil that was somewhat tailored for him but hopefully I dredged up something.

### **SATURDAY NIGHT'S ALRIGHT FOR...**

Things break up at the church and folks who go back to the Dauphine or head up to the house for either hot tubbing or some additional audiophile sessions albeit at sensible volume levels. It took me longer than usual to get up to the house as we had a little "gear review" time with Kevin (he wanted to see &y's PRS) and when I got to the Dauphine, I was informed the keg had just run out so I had to go back down to the church to retrieve the next one. By the time I got to the house, Alan, Tracy and &y were just chilling in the living room, somebody was already working on the unfinished IR jigsaw puzzle and Laura was doing that while waiting for me to open up the hot tub. Since she had to drive back to St Louis, she wasn't in long but was replaced by Don and Sara. That was it for the hot tub, a surprisingly small number this year.

At some point Jill, Sean and Blane show up and start working on the puzzle. Alan's bailed for bed, s&ra, then Neil show up so 4-6 of us just chill in the living room, no music, just a relaxed vibe while sipping Pale Ale. I think that part broke up around 1:15. I went upstairs at 1:45am while the puzzlers were still going at it. I told them to take their time, leave thru the front door and make sure not to let any of the cats out. There was no way I was gonna be able to stay up with them and still be expected to function later that morning. I was in the sack at 1:50 and they told me later one that they finished up around 3am.

### **I'LL PRAY FOR YOUR SOULS**

I got up "late" on Sunday, 7:15 and it was the only time during the weekend that I woke up with that disoriented "I just woke up abruptly and need more sleep" feeling. &y was the only one up but as usual we were quickly joined by Alan, then Lyne. With the Klatch complete and the weather perfect, we had



our coffee until John showed up to walk uphill to the Catholic church for Mass. He's been going with Meli the last couple of years so was waiting for her. When she didn't show, we thought maybe she went out the kitchen door. So as John's leaving I tell him to say hi to the Pope for me. He assured us he would and then added "I'll pray for your souls". Turns out Meli slept in, she just couldn't get up but would get to Mass once her and Robert returned home.

The tidal wave of breakfast hit shortly thereafter. As every year, every breakfast, there's tons of laughter around the table as people get up, sit down or mill about smartly in the kitchen. It's one of the most rewarding times as a host, hearing everybody laughing at the kitchen table.

### **I'LL NEED TO STUDY FOR A YEAR**

Tracy's a fan but not the kind of hyper, somewhat obsessive fan that many of us are. As I mentioned, he stayed at the Dauphine earlier in the year and the subject somehow came up. I think he came out Friday just for the day/evening to sort of "check things out" before deciding to come back on Saturday. He had never heard of Freudiana for example. Kevin had and while he indicated that of he and Nancy he was the "big" fan, she sure knew a lot of the material based on what I saw during Band Hampered Karaoke.

But as we're talking over the weekend with Tracy, he was just blown away by the depth of knowledge, yeah, that's it, shared by so many in attendance. I think for once we didn't scare somebody off with that sort of like how my college friends, all big APP fans, always look at me and s&a with bemusement because of the whole "uber fandom" thing. As Tracy put it "I'll need to study for a year to get up to speed".

I'm always a bit leery of how newbies enter into this because as you see over the event, there are some close bonds that have developed here and I'm always worried that we might come across as too cliquish. I mean it was one thing for somebody like Lyne to "fit in" instantly the first year she came as we all had over a decade of "knowing" her from Roadkill. Fortunately, everybody goes out of their way to make anybody new feel welcome. Nancy commented on the diverse backgrounds of everybody attending and Tracy went out of his way to tell me how everybody made him feel right at home. Thanks y'all!

### **RETURN ENGAGEMENT**

The demand is there so far be it for us to say "that's all folks". I mean when I have Alan P saying "we'll make sure we send a box o' treasures! next year", we need to ensure there is a next year.

Tentative date is 28-31 July 2016. That's the same date relative to this year. If we have to adjust, it will be one week later, 4-7 August 2016 but chances are that won't happen and if it does, we'll should be able to give everybody plenty of notice. Regardless, pencil in the July dates for planning purposes.