

when applied to the validity of an award? No award means anything more than the opinions of the people voting for it. The purpose of an open balloting is to broaden the spectrum of opinion and give credibility by numbers. A closed vote, as by a panel of judges, means very little. The Hugos are backed up by hundreds of votes, the Faan Awards by dozens of votes, and the Noname Awards by seven people -- which would have the least credibility?

A committee to run the thing would be fine, but the voting should be more open. Get all the fans to participate, but keep the mechanics of voting simple. Too many exclusions or special requirements merely backfire and make the whole thing a joke.

A few thoughts off the top, as they say. You won't be interested in most of them, but it matters little what anyone thinks of an award. It's the idea of having awards that so many people are interested in. Fans are more turned on by things like egoboo polls and awards than any other hobby group I know of, so it only makes sense to cater to those needs.

Personally I think that kind of egoboo is flat and unsatisfying. And too mechanical. I can't deny that it means something, apparently, to the people who take the time (and in one case the money) to vote. There is obviously enough interest in such things, and if that interest will hold up yet another series of fan awards I hope you pull it off in making them more meaningful than what we've presently got.

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2. MEADE FRIERSON III (P.O. Box 9032, Crestline Hts., Birmingham, AL 35213)

Completely agree on the premise - as was often heard in re Hugos, fan awards there don't even have to be for the "fan" product in a single year alleged covered by the award; similarly the faan awards are entire-output oriented, so your selective award is an idea whose time has come.

Following that, however, comes the difficulties. I'm too much of a neo to know why fanzine awards should be called Pongs, but I raise the question of whether the series needs a name since you've picked some (appropriate, to my limited knowledge) names for individual categories. Natheless, given the need to name the series of miniawards, since they are a peer group type award, call them Pheers? Oh well, next topic.

The judges need to be (despite what you say about availability of xeroxed zine extracts) people whose long-term interest in the art of the fanzine and the volume of receipts qualifies them to bestow a meaningful tribute. I may find something by, say, Rich Bartucci a really humorous piece, but I've never read much by Willis, Ed Cagle, &c &c - therefore, coming from me a compliment is less than from a person well versed in What Has Gone Before. Open nominees, yes, I wouldn't hesitate to send something by Jodie Offutt that impressed me in the last year to judges with a strong nominating cover-letter, but let the judges be ... well read? Is that the concept I'm grasping for? Onward...

A Pheer Prize (whatever) could derive some of its meaningfulness from the breadth of nominations and involving numerous zinefen (of which I count myself, nouveau or no) in appointing their knowledgeable spokespersons, i.e., the judges, to choose "the best" on their behalf.

I read all the debate issues of the evolution of the Faans, and heard many ideas espoused about the form of the award, but none quite hit the mark for me. A simple scroll? To me the egoboo comes from knowing that other fans know you got the award - i.e., post-award publicity. Fanzines carrying the list of the year's winners, that kind of thing.

Presentation... I kind of lost track of how that was determined with respect to the Faans. Somewhere in the course of discussion, though, I seem to recall the suggestion of rotating among major regionals. Whoever gets this started just announces the series: Westercon in 1977; Windycon in 1978; Balticon in 1979; Deepsouthcon in 1980; &c - and that is that, unless a traditional regional folds before its turn arrives, in which case the judges pick a substitute from the general area - by the way, I had Midwestcon in mind before I started that list - slip it in somewhere.

That's about it on your topic until feedbacktime.

3. HARRY WARNER JR. (423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740)

I don't see any reason why the new set of awards that you suggest shouldn't come into existence and eventually thrive mightily. If what follows sounds like a contradiction to my first sentence, it really isn't. Experience with the Faan Awards has given me some insight into the problems that you'll face, and you might be able to obviate some of the opposition if you realize the forms it will probably take.

The first thing that will happen will be howls from various people in fandom who are dead set against awards for fans as such, or claim to be opposed. There's no way you can prevent this. You might want to try to get in the first word, though, by pointing out the basic facts: if your proposed awards take the form that you describe, they will differ from the Faan and Hugo Awards both in the mechanism of voting (with a panel of judges making the final choices) and in the specific honors to be bestowed, for specific items rather than overall creativity. Beyond that, I don't know how to convince people that it doesn't make sense to criticize all awards for fanac without also condemning such fanfash traditions as guests of honor at conventions, art shows at conventions, judging for masquerades, and so on.

You will also get much flak for the proposed naming of each award after individual fans. When the Faan Awards were in the discussion stage and we were hunting for a name for them, I suggested WAWards, both because almost everyone agrees on his spuremacy as a fan for an entire decade and because his high esteem among most fans might lend prestige to the new idea. I was howled down. Other committee members felt it would create all sorts of problems to select one fan for this purpose. I can see the problems that you would run into if you named the fan history award for me. Speer was the individual who was the pioneer in fan history, in the sense that he wrote the first real history of fandom, devised the numbered fandoms notion, and emphasized fanationalism. Moskowitz was the one who wrote the first book about fan history. All I've done is imitate them. If people think of me when they think of fan history, this is because of the accidental fact that Speer and Moskowitz were doing it before I was, and most people in fandom today can't remember when those two were active in general fandom.

I feel that your idea of an international panel of judges is a good one. But if you follow it, you'll be forced to think out carefully the chronological problems. Air mailing stacks of fanzines to judges on other continents, or thick sheafs of xeroxes, could become very expensive. There's the added problem of how to define eligibility for given items. In the Hugos and Faan Awards, it isn't as big as it would be for a set of awards that involve individual items. If you determine eligibility by the date of distribution for an item in a fanzine, and it appears in a fanzine mailed in Australia a few days before the deadline for the year, how do North American fans know of its existence for another three months? If the postmark isn't clearly visible on the envelope, how do they know if the fanzine belongs to the old or the new twelve-month period, when they decide about nominations? One possible way to minimize the problem would consist of encouraging fanzine publishers themselves to make nominations to the judges for what they feel is worthy, trusting them to tell the judges which judging period an issue falls into in case of doubt. This might cut down on the number of doubtful cases nominated by the readers.

It might also be a good idea to think out as soon as possible the form the announcement of winners will take. The Faan Awards seem to be starting to rotate among the large regional cons, the Hugos are locked into the Worldcons, and devising an entirely different place or way to make known the winners of the new awards might help to put them over.

My original concept of the Faan Awards was a certificate or something small like a pin or embroidered patch. After I won the first LoC award and received that beautiful trophy, I didn't have the heart to hold to the line on that idea. But maybe you'd want to consider making the new set of awards something modest from the physical standpoint. It would both simplify the financial problems and reduce criticism about fans who are anxious to fill up their trophy cases.

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4. BEN INDICK (428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666)

I fear the multiplicity of awards would finally become ludicrous. There is no end to awards, after all, which might be given. I think it should be confined as much as possible.

Nevertheless, I agree the present award system is too broad.

I agree, first -- KEEP the present awards. Then - strictly limiting categories:

1. Best single piece of fan fiction, irrespective of general winners (no payment tendered).
 2. Best single piece of non-fiction -- all-inclusive, whether general, con report, travelogue (ahem, plugging my Israel piece there, hope you liked it in SF ECHO -- but I will gladly disqualify myself anyway), book review, etc.
 3. I think there should be no "3" - it's enough!! We'll need Price and Waterhouse yet, and Bob Hope as emcee. I therefore stand as feeling the present categories are enough with the exception of these single best performances. I do not think we need a best layout, best ditto, best mimeo, best single piece of art, etc. -- these are basically already covered.
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5. VICTORIA VAYNE (P.O. Box 156 Stn. D, Toronto, Ontario M6P 3J8, Canada)

I would be much in favour of these individual awards, since things that might otherwise be overlooked (for instance an outstanding article or bit of artwork in an otherwise average zine) would get some honour and egoboo due them.

I am of mixed opinion on the validity of selection by a judges panel rather than a free vote. I understand the NOVA award is selected that way and that there is quite a lot of flack about it. You may get the situation where choices are made on personal reasons rather than merit, whereas with more people voting this might not be so. On the other hand, with large numbers of people voting, the more you get, the less knowledgeable the voting will be. I would guess that if the judges panel is diverse enough, and does not represent an established clique there shouldn't be too much of a problem. Suggestions from non-panelists should all be considered in their due course, though, and if one article/aspect/whatever gets an overwhelming number of suggestions, that fact should be taken into account by the judges.

Some comments on the categories you suggest:

Humor...besides a humorous article being picked out in this--which I would agree is a good category--why not also a best humorous cartoon being picked out.

Graphics...this could be split into various sub-categories: layout effect, repro quality (with subsections for mimeo, offset--except that offset is so often done professionally, with cost being the main determining effect on the quality of the outcome), overall "cleanness" of the zine... Also in graphics, how much would people be blinkered by tricks--a gaudy multi-colour effort may be less graphically sound than some other simple one-colour thing, but the final product, not the amount of work or money put into it, should be the deciding factor. As you say, this would take up an entire issue, since giving the award for one two-page spread seems ridiculous. Probably this award would be granted on the basis of an entire single issue.

Literary criticism, scholarship in fanhistory, scholarship in science fantasy, and reportage--no quibble. Categories that could be added might include speeches, parodies and satires, poetry. (But how carried away with multitudes of categories do you want to get...there may have to be limits drawn somewhere.)

The art categories, I feel, may not be entirely fair, in the sense that it is fine to award to an artist for a single piece of work, but that piece of work could easily be spoiled by the repro of the zine in which it appears. Is this award to include a factor of quality of repro as well? This is not under the control of the artist at all.

Also, in many cases the same artwork would appear to equal advantage in mimeo or offset, so in most cases separation of these categories may not be necessary. In the case of ditto, since the art would generally be hand-traced, some credit would be due the tracer. Perhaps these categories need to be broken down more--hand-traced and dittofax; hand-stencilled and electrostencilled; and offset.

Public service...probably a good idea. To me this implies zines like two I'm contemplating myself at the moment, a Fanthology and a mimeo handbook. Filksing collections and fanzine directories would also come into this category, as well as the more intangible services fans can offer.

I can see a problem in the judges making their own work ineligible--the judges might well contain some of the top faneds in the field, and it would be unfair to the contributors to their fanzines to make the works appearing there ineligible because of the editor. If judges themselves were ineligible, some worthy work may be passed over, and the awards would be less meaningful. One will have to be careful in the case of winners being people on the panel, perhaps it'll just have to be the person in question abstaining on the matter of his own work. Perhaps judges should be people either no longer actively editing but still receiving many fanzines, or letterhacks who receive a lot but contribute mainly by LoC.

I like the idea, provided it is in addition to and not in place of the Faans. I find the fan Hugos a lost cause already, and we see a progression--readers as well as fanzine fans voting for the Hugos, fanzine fans only voting for the Faans, a small select panel voting for these "individuals." Just as the three would go from large-over-many-years aspects down to individual and specific contributions. I would not miss the Hugos, I think the Faans are a terrific idea, and your suggested awards could be too. But I predict there will be flack. The Faans were criticized for being cliquish, these may well be too.

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ROY TACKETT (915 Green Valley Rd. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107)

6.

I have on hand here somewhere your letter in re: assorted fannish awards. You are, I gather, unaware that my feelings about the Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards are somewhat less than enthusiastic. I wouldn't go so far as to say that they are backed by a bunch of people who can't seem to win the Hugo but I am not, shall we say, fully in support of their aims---

Let me say, also, that I am not enthusiastic about the situation with regards to the Hugos either. The winners this year were, I believe, Geis and LOCUS, both of which have won a couple of times in the past and neither of which, in my opinion, deserve the awards but won them strictly on the strength of their overwhelming subscription lists. Rather than abandon the Hugos, as I understand there was moved at MAC, I would rather see them reformed in some manner to better reflect the fannish scene. I'm not at all sure how this can be done short of declaring LOCUS, SFR and ALGOL professional magazines. I think there is no question that the first two are although I am not sure about ALGOL. Since it is sold on newsstands I should imagine that it would fit into the professional category.

Now as to your award suggestions...may I suggest two additional categories? The Degler Award for the most visionary fan of the year. The George Senda Award for the biggest fannish ripoff of the year.

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PETER ROBERTS (18 Westwood, Cofton, Starcross, Nr. Dawlish, Devon)

7.

My first and simplest reaction to the mooted awards was to say no, there are enough around already, and, after mulling over the idea for a couple of days, I'm afraid I'm not inclined to alter that initial judgement. It is after all a comparatively short time

since the Faan Awards were introduced, and a further set of awards will probably confuse and irritate many fans who are still watching the Faan Awards with some caution and suspicion. It's too soon, in other words, for this new scheme to work; if you do go ahead, I reckon it won't even get a fair trial -- I mentioned it to several people at the London One Tun meeting and their reaction was predictably "Good grief, not another set of awards?" Had you intended this new idea to replace or somehow be amalgamated with the Faan Awards, that might be another matter.

My negative reaction to the idea means it's a bit pointless commenting on the details of the proposed awards; nonetheless I will make one suggestion, namely that any such award should be decided by a poll and not by a panel of judges. British fans will know only too well the perils of being a fanzine judge, thanks to the Nova Award (for best UK fanzine) which is chosen by a small panel of fans from nominations received. I was a judge for the 1975 award and now, a wiser and a sadder fan, can say from experience that a thick skin is necessary. A poll may not give ideal results, but it's a lot less easy to insult and abuse than a panel of judges.

Anyway, sorry to torpedo a project, but perhaps I'm in a minority of one, in which case put it down to the sour aftermath of that 1975 Nova Award.

JERRY KAUFMAN

8.

I don't really like the idea. (1) Too many new awards to allow any of them to mean anything; (2) the panel of judges idea looks bad in England -- why would it work here? (3) the best single anything -- especially bit of artwork in three categories -- is cutting things far too finely. To quote Anna Vargo, "The sure sign of the morbidity of a group is the systemization and institutionalization of self-congratulation."

MIKE GLICKSOHN (141 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3)

9.

I'm in favour of your idea about a set of awards for individual pieces of fanzine work and I even approve of the idea of a panel of judges making the decisions. But I'm not sure everyone else will! You probably know about the recent brouhaha over England's NOVA award which is presented in this way. The other difficulty might lie in deciding how the panel of judges would reach its decision: a simple majority? Or, say, five of the seven in agreement before a winner is declared? What if no majority can be reached? It would be ridiculous for something to win with two votes because the other nominees all had one. And would you allow for certain judges to sit out certain categories? Those they didn't really feel qualified to judge?

Since not all personal writing is humorous, you might consider an award for best non-serious as well as best serious personal article. Not best letter, though: it's be impossible to judge properly because of the sheer bulk!

I'd sit as a judge, if nominated, and if judges were ineligible and if the judges were balanced internationally.

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ANALYSIS.....

BRUCE PELZ

Of the nine responses received during the month, 3 are dead against the idea (Tackett, Roberts, Kaufman). In addition, 1 is opposed to the Judges Panel (Locke) and 1 opposed to more than two categories (Indick). I would very much like to hear from the rest of you before trying to decide whether to shelve the idea, modify it, or plunge ahead regardless.

This issue will go to the original mailing list, plus three Dons I should not have forgotten the first time: D'Ammassa, Miller, and Thompson. (I'll include copies of Part A.)

Some individual comments to subjects brought up by the letters received so far...

I am point-blank opposed to another set of awards selected by poll, on the grounds that we have enough of those, whereas we do not have any selected by expertise. The Fann Awards are a step in the right direction, but still have too much Lack of Knowledge possible in the selectors. If enough people disagree, I'll drop the idea entirely, and let someone else take up the Individual Item awards with selection via poll. (Actually, I can think of a way to select by poll and make sure all voters have seen the material on which they are voting, but it's far too much work for anyone to take on: take nominations from anyone, select the top five in each category, and publish a compendium fanzine, available to all who wish to vote. The voting fee would pay for the compendium, which would be sent with a ballot. If you know anyone who could take on this sort of a job, let me know... .)

Categories could well be limited to half a dozen or so. (Two wouldn't be worth the effort, Ben.) I would suggest that a category of "Best Humor" would cover both written and graphic humor. "Best Essay" might be used to cover the serious articles, and "Best Illustration" would be broad enough to cover both fanzine covers and portfolio-art that might be inside a zine. (I doubt that fillos would be nominated, but there are full-page items that should not be disqualified just for being interiors.) "Best Editorial" could cover personal writings. I still like the idea of "Best Reportage," and "Best Critique" would recognize the importance of that type of writing in fanzines.

Presentation and form of awards: I think I am in favor of going after the Fan Hugos, and have presentations made at Worldcons. If the individual awards are seen to have more validity than the Fan Hugos, the latter will have to be shaped up or dropped. (I prefer the idea of shaping them up.) I think photo-engraved plaques might be a good compromise between a plain scroll and an ostentatious Hugo-type trophy. Harry's patch is good, too.

Internationality of Judges is essential. Tentatively I was considering 1 from the U.K., 1 from Canada, 1 from Australia, and four scattered about the U.S. I may be a bit naive, but I would hope that this internationality would prevent the complaints of clicquishness that marred the Nova Award recently. Selection of judges would probably have to be by volunteerism and appointment to begin with, with a mechanism for continuity worked out once the awards were a going concern.

As for names, I am not wed to the idea of naming each category for someone prominent in that field, though I do like it. As a general name, how about something like Fandom's Awards for Individual Merit? [We could do up an Award Poster with a harbor full of ships...FAIM Is Fleeting... ook-ook... .]

Obviously my brain is going, so I shall do likewise... .

Next issue 1 December or thereabouts.

Bruce