

Implosion

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Implosion: The Fanzine that proves anyone can publish a fanzine.
Member, fwa.

Get Physical! A Proactive Program for Fanzine Fans

I am by nature a reasonable man, an easy-going man. A man willing to calmly discuss any issue, with a willingness to see the opposing view.

I'm the kind of man who would rather smile than frown, extend a hand rather than throw a punch. I wake with a song on my lips in the morning, and I sleep the untroubled sleep of the truly blameless.

And I am a careful man. Slow to take offense, quick to make amends. Slow to anger, quick to forgive.

That's the sunny face I wear in fanzine fandom. And frustrations with the duplicator aside, that's pretty much me as long as I don't do something foolish like join the N3F or the Silvercon committee.

I have now had Enough. I've gone my limit -- and about 20% more. In the words of JoHn Wesley Hardin, or maybe some other former nautical fellow, "I has stood what I can, and I can't stands no more!" Mr. Nice Guy is taking a little vacation, at least for this article.

Remember that charming and affable fan described in the opening paragraphs of this article? Forget him. He's out of here.

Meet his replacement, Arnie Toner Katz, the Salty Pretzel. If you're a sidebar-taking, lockerroom joke-making, irreverent talking trufan or insurgent, you'll find me the same genial fan you've come to tolerate. But if you're one of those hall costume wearing, projectile vomiting, *Star Trek* porno writing, pro-fawning, 24-hour roleplaying interlopers who've clogged up fandom for the last 25 years -- I'm your worst nightmare.

My new attitude possessed me one otherwise ordinary workday. I was writing an article about Mike Ditka for **Fusion** and listening to Jim Rome's daily talk show, broadcast locally on KVEG.

I usually listen to talk rather than music when I work. If I listen to KEDG, the city's alternative rock station, I start bopping up and down in my chair. That plays hell with the my already shaky thought processes.

You might think talk would distract me even more, but somehow it doesn't. It drowns out all the other distracting noises, and since I always listen to sports shows, there's very little chance that anything said will derail my train of thought.

I admit that the impassioned debates over the merits of Mike Piazza chances for the Most Valuable Player award or Deion Sanders' latest megabuck deal do occasionally send that train of thought down a siding. I'll pause, mentally frame a trenchant

analysis of whatever the callers are braying about, and return to my task, refreshed by the momentary diversion. Maybe these little breaks are what have prevents me from developing carpal tunnel syndrome.

Jim Rome is a remarkably pugnacious individual whose view of the sport scene revolves around "smack." No, not a drug reference. In the sense in which he wields this word, "smack" is the combination of bravado and intimidation with which an athlete embellishes the actual play of the game. Players "run smack," in the Rome vernacular, against their opponents to cow them before the event and rub in the defeat afterward.

Examples include Mike Tyson describing the forthcoming demotion of Peter McNeeley at the weigh-in, Deion Sanders strutting into the endzone and doing a victory dance and Lenny Dykstra threatening to toss scab baseball players into the nearest river.

Fans always want to be like their heroes, I guess. Jim and his listeners express their feelings in insult-filled rants. They compete to see who can launch the most cutting comments, the most vehement vituperation.

Rome's personal best came on his ESPN interview show. He called inconsistent quarterback Jim Everett "Chris" (as in the female tennis player to denote his lack of masculinity in the face of charging defensive linemen) until the quarterback hurled himself across the table and decked Rome with one punch.

So I listened to people excoriate jolly, lovable Tommy Lasorda, manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, and heap praise on smackers like basketball's Dennis Rodman. "Hey, this could apply to fanzine fandom," I thought when I should've been describing Ditka's opinions about electronic football simulations.

Here's the situation so far. We built this house. Or rather, our parents and grand parents did. They set it up and got it running. They all got together and made some basic agreements about how that house would be run. They didn't write it all down, as was their usual habit, because it was a pretty small group and the concensus was readily apparent. If there were disagreements, they could all discuss them, after which a vote would determine the outcome.

Then they threw open the doors. "Come on in, everybody!" they shouted at passers-by, secure in their belief that everyone who came through the portal would understand that they needed to abide by the house rules.

That open front door -- and who put that "Free Lunch" sign on the lawn? -- started to attract a lot of attention. A lot of people came through that front door, lured by free food and all-night movies (instituted to make the house more "accessible" to potential new recruits). Unfortunately, most took the liberal hospitality to mean that they could come in and do as they pleased. The people inside the house called out in their loneliness for others to join them, but most of

those who heeded the welcome thought more in terms of taking over the house and turning it to their needs and purposes.

It wasn't long before the house, now a complex covering acres of prime real estate that could otherwise alleviate the nation's refuse dumping crisis, grew uncomfortable for its original inhabitants. The newcomers weren't bad sorts, but they didn't share the original residents' philosophy, temperament or interests. They didn't care how the house came to be built, and the family journals held no magic for them, either.

When the old hands wanted to have some intelligent conversation or maybe work on one of their literary projects, the latecomers might want to parade around the place dressed like Chewbacca, caterwaul about purple unicorns or pretend to be Vampires. Those activities are very fine, in their place, but that place probably isn't within the confines of what is really a very small house in a very large world.

Fandom is that house. (You thought maybe it was going to be The Odd Fekllows?.) Thousands with no real kinship with classic fandom, its context or its ideals, have trampled our house rules, outraged our sensibilities and made us barely tolerated guests in our own home!

Thanks to Jim Rome, this worm, at least, has turned.

It's time to tell the visitors to leave. Let them build their own houses, as the comic book fans and electronic gaming fans and monster movie fans and wrestling fans have done. And if what they conceive is as frightful to our eyes as a *Star Trek* Creation Con, it will be what *they* want, and none of our business or concern.

Fandom has become a ghastly, perpetual performance of "The Man Who Came to Dinner." Let's help Monty Woolley exit stage left and ring down the curtain.

If the Pen is Mightier than the Sword, as William Rotsler (or Shakespeare) says, then let's prove it. Our fandom is sick and bloated nu a surfeit of graciousness. We've just been too damn nice, too afraid of giving offense, to ask the intruders to leave.

Subtle hints have failed. A person who wears a mesh body stocking, and nothing else, into a tablecloth restaurant is not going to be deterred by a little laughter or a comment in a conreport with too many words for them to read.

We've got to state our request for them to quit the premises in a way they can understand. If we make our wishes known in such a clear, unambiguous form, they will think twice before tarrying in our domain.

"What does he mean?" Shelby Vick asks Suzanne.

"He wants us to get tough with these special fandoms people," she says. "I think he wants them to take off their costumes."

"Some guys never change," he observes.

I imagine Shelby is wondering what the heck I have in mind. I will tell him, and you, without further ado.

I want to stop sitting back, letting outsiders take over our conventions and turn them into sideshows.

I say we start with the hall costume people. They're not the only folks who seem to be in the wrong place, but they're symptomatic. Like most fanzine fans, I go to cons to meet old friends and get acquainted with new ones. When someone swaggers

around all day dressed like a space pirate, and only speaks in character, there is no possibility of communication. They're not hurting us, but they're dead space -- and it's *our* house.

The next time you see some dork dressed as a Klingon in full regalia, take the initiative. Draw that taser and give him two right in the chest.

Shelby who is a gentlesan of the old school, may initially feel that this is too harsh. Not at all. What I propose is that instead of just sneering at them or ignoring them, that we enter into their delusion world to deliver our message.

Here's how I've got it figured. I have watched every episode of *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and I think I know as much about Klingons as any person who has no intention of learning their language or undergoing plastic surgery to look like one.

Over and over again, Worf tells crewmates, and anyone else who will listen, that Klingons love pain. Make the guys with the crustaceans on their foreheads howl in agony, and they have orgasms. (I had a girlfriend like that once, but let it pass...)

All I want to do is heighten their experience. They want pain? Try a couple of shots from a taser! When they cruple to the carpet and lie there twitching, they're gonna have all the pain they can handle. Believe me, after the first few such encounters, people will think twice before showing up in costume anywhere but at the masquerade.

Once the Klingons flee to their own galaxy, we'll turn up the heat on the elephantine women who think the chain link bikini is the right look for fine dining, church or lying supine in a hotel lobby. If violation of aesthetic standards was a crime, they'd be penned up in a cell, mirrored to enhance its rehabilitative effect.

I say we photograph these overexposures. We take a picture, blow it up to 3 ft b 2 ft. We run off a mess of copies and nail them to 2x4s. Then we picket the offender's home for a couple of weeks.

"That won't get rid of them," Joyce said when I told her what I had in store for these appalling women.

"Why's that? I demanded.

"If they cared what they looked like or what people thought, they wouldn't dress like that in the first place," she explained.

That may be true, but what about their neighbors? Our picketing will galvanize the community. Soon these fakefans will be hassled so much at home they won't come to our conventions looking to fight with waitresses, bellhops and maitre d's.

I'm sure you can think up other components of fanzine fandom's action program to retake its institutions from those who has demeaned and desecrated them. I'll be looking forward to reading your ideas -- and see you at the next worldcon.

Don't forget to bring your taser and that Polaroid in the drawer under the platform bed.