

# A presentation of fanzines for Valbonne [2021 French SF convention]

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## What is a fanzine?

Contraction of *fan* (*fanatic*) and *magazine*, the word *fanzine*, invented by Russ Chauvenet in October 1940, refers to a magazine made by amateurs.

A fanzine rarely pays its contributors, and is exchanged as often as it is sold (the price is often intended to cover costs, or even only shipping costs). The format (often A5 or A4), the number of pages (from 2 to several hundred), the periodicity (from monthly to annual, sometimes briefly weekly, almost always erratic), the content (news, studies, information, interviews, reviews of books and other periodicals, letters from readers, jokes, poems, polemics), the number of copies printed (from ten to several thousand)... vary enormously.

An APA (*Amateur Press Association*) is a group of amateur journalists who send the same number of copies of their publication to a coordinator who assembles them and sends a copy of the result back to each member. The oldest, founded in the USA in 1876 (unrelated to SF), still exists. APAs can be considered as ancestors of internet discussion forums.

## When did the first science fiction fanzines begin ?

It is considered that the first SF fanzine in the USA is *The Comet*, whose number 1 by 1930 under the direction of Raymond A. Palmer (who will become editor-in-chief of SF journals, and propagator of pseudoscientific theories). It is the newsletter of an amateur club. As early as 1932 appeared a fanzine considered substantial, *The Time Traveler*, directed by Mort Weisinger & Julius Schwartz (themselves promised a professional career).

The first *Amateur Press Association* devoted to SF, FAPA, was founded in 1937 by Donald A. Wollheim and John B. Michel. The former became author and book series editor, then publisher (with DAW Books). FAPA still exists, coordinated by Robert Lichtman (editor of the fanzine *Trapdoor* for decades). Its oldest member (since the 1950s) is Robert Silverberg.

## What are fanzines for?

To satisfy the ego of those who publish or contribute to them. Training authors, cartoonists or amateur critics. To maintain links between fans from one physical meeting (club meetings, conventions ...) to another. To announce the conventions. To express opinions that one would not read in more respectable journals. To create a slang specific to *fandom* (all fans and their interactions): *LoC* ("letter of comment"), *prozine* (teacher reviews), *sercon* ("serious constructive", said of a fanzine that wants to talk about SF rather than humorously comment on the lives of its contributors), *faan* (the opposite: fans who are dedicated to fandom more than SF), *fiawol* ("fandom is a way of life"), *fijagdh* ("fandom is just a goddam hobby"), and even *gafia* (go away from it all, said of those who leave fandom).

## How are fanzines made?

Since the end of the 19th century, alcohol duplication has been used for printing at low cost and in small quantities (no more than 200 copies), for example for schools. The graphic quality is poor, and the product ages badly, but many of the first fanzines between the 1930s and 1960s were made this way.

The ink duplicator (called "roneo" another brand name used in France for what's known as "mimeo" in the US) gives better results, although it is not free of burrs and requires printing on a fairly absorbent paper. It is necessary to type its original on a thin plastic stencil, removing the tape of the typewriter to hole the stencil: on a mechanical machine, if you do not tap hard enough, the ink does not pass, if you type too hard, the inside of the loops of the "o", "e" or "a" comes off and produces black blocks on the sheet. Any correction must be made with a fluid resembling nail polish that should be carefully left to dry before retyping on it... Illustrations can be made to the cutting edge, it's tricky, or "electronic" stencils can be produced from an image (it's more expensive).

For best results, offset printing is used: the pages are reproduced by a photographic process (but the photos must be rasterized), professionals must be contacted, and the cost is amortized only for larger prints.

From the 1970s, photocopying on plain paper began to be available at affordable rates, and became the preferred mode of reproduction of fanzines.

In any case, the format imposed by printing machines was the A4 (or its predecessors in Europe, or "letter size" in the USA), sometimes folded in half to obtain A5, elegantly stapled in the middle. Since the expansion of the internet in the 1990s, many fanzines have gone dematerialized. Or have acquired doubles or reissues on the internet that make them more accessible!

### **Are there only SF fanzines?**

Certainly not, even if the term "fanzine" has its origins in SF fandom. Some SF fanzines, as early as the 1930s, devoted articles to comics or published some; the first fanzine devoted exclusively to *comics* dates from 1936, and a whole *comic book* fandom developed in the USA. Fanzines devoted to Franco-Belgian comics have been numerous and prosperous at least since the 1960s, and in some cases have given birth to professional publishers, such as *Les Cahiers de la Bande Dessinée* — the starting point of the Glénat publishing house. A multitude of fanzines devoted to television series have developed since the first fanzines on *Star Trek* in the 1960s, with a clear preference for *fanfiction* (staging characters from series in situations that the original authors would not have envisaged). On the rock'n'roll side, the first major fanzines were launched in the 1960s by SF fans: Greg Shaw (*Bomp!*, fanzine devenu independent and influential label) and Paul Williams (*Crawdaddy!*, now a professional magazine; Paul Williams remained in the SF fandom, and was Philip K. Dick's literary executor for a long time). Rock fanzines experienced an explosion with punk in 1976-1977. In France, the rock fanzine *Abus Dangereux* has been released since 1987 and has gained a notable influence.

### **1951—1967**

Science fiction settled under this name in France in the 1950s.

1951: January: collection "Le Rayon Fantastique", Hachette and Gallimard.

September : collection "Anticipation", éditions Fleuve Noir.

1953: October: Fiction magazine (French edition of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*).

November : Galaxie magazine , first series (French edition of *Galaxy*)

1953: La Balance bookshop in Paris, run by Valérie Schmidt, where amateurs such as Philippe Curval, Pierre Versins, Francis Carsac, Gérard Klein, but also Raymond Queneau, Boris Vian, François Le Lionnais meet... and later Jacques Sadoul, André Ruellan, Jacques Goimard, Claude Cheinisse... It will become L'Atome after a move.

1954: collection "Présence du Futur", Denoël editions.

collection "Series 2000", éditions Métal.

Unlike the evolution that English-language fanzines had already experienced at that time, French

fanzines remain quite serious, often publishing stories (more or less good) and articles. And polemics, anyway!

The first notable French fanzine was *Le petit Silence Illustré* (1955-1958, 8 issues), published by the bookshop L'Atome, directed by Jacques Sternberg. Curval, Schmidt are on the editorial board, Versins, Klein, Dorémieux, Jacques Bergier contribute. It adopts an original format (10x27, roughly: half of the obligatory A4 sheet folded vertically rather than horizontally as would have done to obtain A5). The atmosphere is one of black humor, and the magazine is considered an ancestor of *Hara-Kiri* (and therefore distant ancestor of *Charlie Hebdo*).

The best-known fanzine of this period is *Ailleurs* (1956-1963, 53 issues + 4 special issues, new series 1963-1967, 8 issues), created by the Futopia association in Lausanne, coordinated by Pierre Versins. Versins has written several novels, is best known as the author of the monumental *Encyclopedia of Utopia, Extraordinary Journeys and Science Fiction* (1972), and the creator of the Maison d'Ailleurs, the result of the donation of his collection to the city of Yverdon in 1976.

1956: discontinuation of "Série 2000" (which published only French authors)

1958: *Satellite* magazine

1959: *Special Fiction* dedicated to French-speaking authors.

Galaxy stops (1st series) after 59 issues.

1963: *Satellite* discontinued after 43 issues.

1964: "Rayon Fantastique" stopped after 119 publications.

*Galaxie* magazine, 2nd series.

1965: collections "Club du Livre d'Anticipation" and "Galaxie-Bis" published by Opta.

The early 1960s saw a fallout in interest in SF and its sales, which stifled the development of native authors, who were forced to fall back on the Fleuve Noir (lowbrow mass market SF series) and the magazine *Fiction*.

The most enduring and regular fanzine of the time was *Lunatique* (1963-1973, 68 issues), directed by Jacqueline Osterrath. He published the first texts of Jean-Pierre Andrevon. *Mercury* (1964-1967, 16 issues; 3 more issues in 2011), directed by Jean-Pierre Fontana, impresses with the size of its issues, which are around 100 pages. Still active in fandom, Jean-Pierre Fontana founded the French conventions by organizing the first one in 1974 in Clermont-Ferrand, and the Grand Prix de la Science-fiction (now Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire).

They were not the only ones, but documentation is lacking. For example, *Le Jardin Sidéral* arrives at its number 27 and last (?) in 1967, must have started in the 1950s, publishes many translated short stories...

## 1968—1984

1969: collection "Ailleurs et Demain", Robert Laffont editions.

1970: SF collection at J'ai Lu, begins with *A Space Odyssey*, by Arthur C. Clarke.

1973: collection "Dimensions SF", editions Calmann-Lévy.

1974: collection "Le Masque SF"

"Great Anthology of Science Fiction" in the Pocket Book (*Stories of...*)

1975: anthology/quarterly review *Univers* at J'ai Lu, directed by Yves Frémion (19 issues until 1979)

Patrick Siry becomes director of "Anticipation"

1976: Elisabeth Gille becomes director of "Présence du Futur"

The early 1970s marked the commercial expansion of SF in France, with prestigious collections (at

Robert Laffont for example) and well-distributed pocket collections (J'ai Lu showing the way). The fanzines multiply, slowly at first. *Nyarlathotep* published 10 issues from 1970 to 1974. *L'Aube enclavée*, by Henri-Luc Planchat, produced only 6 issues in 1970-72, but the quality of its choice of short stories earned it a great impact. Note, on the comics side, *Le Petit Mickey qui n'a peur des gros*, by Yves Frémion. *Magnus*, by Eric Batard, is a popular *newszine* that publishes a dozen issues until 1977.

French-speaking Belgium stands out: *Xuensè*, by Alain Le Bussy, published 57 issues from 1972 to... 2009. *Ides... and Others*, by Bernard Goorden, is a collection of anthologies featuring translations (150 volumes from 1973 to 1998). *Octa*, by Claude Dumont, 62 issues between 1975 and 2000.

*Le Citron Hallucinogène*, 14 issues from 1971 to 1980, is due to Bernard Blanc, with a very militant political tone. With Frémion, Blanc plays an important role in the media coverage of a "new French SF", very committed, and sometimes experimental in its form. He will direct the collection "Here and Now".

1977: SF collection at Livre de Poche

SF collection at Presses Pocket (now Pocket)

*Galaxie* stop (2nd series).

collection "Ici et Maintenant", Kesselring editions (stopped in 1980).

1980: Dorémieux returns to the magazine *Fiction*, which welcomes many fanpublishers.

1981: discontinuation of the SF collections at Le Masque and Livre de Poche

1984: departure of Dorémieux de *Fiction*.

End of the "Dimensions SF" book series (published by Calmann-Lévy)

The growing weight of mainstream SF, the gradual discovery of the British New Wave, the arrival of more French authors in the pages of *Fiction*, and more ephemeral magazines, and at "Présence du Futur", and the new collections from Opta ("Anti-Mondes", "Nebula") or Lattès, are accompanied by an outbreak of fanzines. These include *Rivages* (1978-1986, about thirty issues, Rémy Gallart), *Espaces Libres* (1979-1983, 14 issues, Stéphane [now Stéphanie] Nicot), *Garichankar* (1982-1986, 11 issues, Roland Wagner), *Les Lames Vorpales* (1983-1987, 15 issues, Markus Leicht).

Francis Valéry appeared in the fandom in 1977 with *Ailleurs et Autres*, also known as A&A or *A&A Infos*, which will publish 163 issues until 2008, with constantly changing formulas (from 1991, No. 136, A&A becomes very irregular and disparate in its content). There are at least as many issues of various publications related to A&A, which go as far as the attempt at a professional journal. Valéry successively surrounds himself with individuals who will pursue their own path (Pascal J. Thomas, Jean-Daniel Brèque, Patrick Marcel, Pierre-Paul Durastanti, André-François Ruaud...) SF's only French APA, *AAAPA*, was launched in 1979 in the wake of A&A. It will have 138 issues until 1997.

After taking care of *Archipel*, André François Ruaud launched *Yellow Submarine* in 1983. There will be 132 issues until 1998... and others still appear in the form of books at Le Béal' then at Les Moutons Electriques, a publishing house founded by Ruaud.

More than before, fanzines are specializing, even if the borders are not watertight. There are those who publish almost exclusively short stories, such as *Espaces-Temps* (1976-1979, 12 issues, edited by Marcel Becker), with many texts by Serge Brussolo (who also released two issues of his own fanzine, *Les Oiseaux des Pierres Sourdes*, before starting the career we know), there are ephemeral fanzines produced at the conventions (that of 1975 for example), there are some who favor the fantastic: *Magie Rouge* (1980-1993, 41 issues, Suzane Vanina), *Le Fulmar* (1981-1986, 27 issues, Pierre Charles), there are places of manic and admirable erudition: *Melmoth* (1983-1987, 22 issues, Jean-Luc Buard), *Fantascienza* (1979-1981, 3 huge issues, Claude Eckerman, Alain Grousset,

Dominique Martel), there are club publications: *A la poursuite des SFFans*, then *Bulletin du SFFAN*, in Rambouillet (1976-1980, 35 issues, Jean Milbergue), *Vopaliéc* in Angers (1979-1986, more than 80 issues, Patrice Verry), *SFère* (1983-1985, 27 issues, which publishes in new version *Le Serpent d'Angoisse*, Roland Wagner's first novel), there are mainly humorous publications such as the productions of Francis Saint Martin's Editions de l'Hydre (from 1982).

## 1985—1995

1986: departure of Elisabeth Gille from "Presence du Futur"

1987: departure of Patrick Siry from "Anticipation"

SF series at Livre de Poche, 2nd series (directed by Gérard Klein)

1990: *Fiction* folds.

1995: *Cyberdreams* magazine.

The early 1990s marked a low point in French SF, with a great lack of outlets for short story writers in particular. The publication of short stories in fanzines develops, including *Poivre Noir* (1984-1990, 30 issues, Micky Papoz), *Chimères* (1987-2001, 50 issues, Josiane Kiefer), *Miniature* (1989-2002, 52 issues in two series, launched by F. Valéry, taken over by Chris Bernard), *Micronos* (1992-1997, 25 issues, Bid Chiren). There are also generalist or critics' fanzines: *Rayon Ardent* (1986-1995, 14 issues, Jo Taboulet — organizer of the Roanne festival), *La Geste* (1991-1998, 22 issues, Michel Tondellier), *KWS* (1992-2021, 88 issues, launched by Sylvie Denis, taken over by Pascal J. Thomas), *Les Chroniques d'Ailleurs* (1992?-2003, 31 issues, Jean Luc Triolo); scholars' journals, such as *Etudes Lovecraftiennes* (1988-1994, 14 issues, Joseph Altairac) and the *Bulletin des Amateurs d'Anticipation Ancienne et de Littérature Fantastique* (1990-2006, 54 issues, Philippe Wadbled), or *UFO comme Solstare* (1992-2002, 37 issues) with its continuous pagination (nearly 1000 pages in total) and its fantasy pseudonyms.

Above all, mention should be made of the Présences d'Esprit club, initially founded around the "Présence du Futur" collection, whose fanzine has published 106 issues since 1992, to which must be added since 2004 the AOC news fanzine (61 issues to date).

## 1996—present

1996: *Galaxies* magazine.

*Bifrost* review.

Mnemos editions

1998: Nestiqvenen Editions

editions Le Béliat' (first books)

discontinuation of *Cyberdreams*.

First Utopiales festival (at the Futuroscope in Poitiers)

1999: collection "Lunes d'Encre" created by Gilles Dumay at Denoël

2000: "Presence of the Future" stopped

Bragelonne editions

2004 editions Les Moutons Electriques

Black Coat Press (Rivière Blanche...)

ActuSF editions

SF, and especially fantasy, is growing again, thanks to a handful of independent publishers that, in some cases, will become very big.

Many fans are starting to use the internet to publish their writings, and yet, many fanzines continue to be published. We notice the emergence of fanzines made by groups of fans of a particular series, such as Perry Rhodan: *Basis* (2000-2021, 87 issues + annuals + special issues) and *Rhodaniens*

(2002-2003, 17 issues, Paul Alary), or *La Tribune des Amis d'Edgar Rice Burroughs* (1998-2021, 108 issues). *Meteor* (2007-2021, 30 issues) is oriented towards pulp SF. There are still fanzines of short stories, in addition to *AOC* mentioned above, we can highlight *Eclats de Rêves* (2004-2018, 25 issues) or *Le Calepin Jaune* (2003-2008, 18 issues).

## Notes

It is difficult to identify the fanzines, all the figures are approximate and all the choices questionable.

If European French-speaking fanzines live in the same communication space, French-speaking Canadians are more clearly separated and we preferred not to try to include them, despite the many relations between the two sides of the Atlantic.

## Sources used

[www.noosfere.org](http://www.noosfere.org)

[www.revues-litteraires.com](http://www.revues-litteraires.com)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanzine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanzine) (the article "fanzine" in French is mainly about rock fanzines)

Jacques Sadoul, *History of Science Fiction*