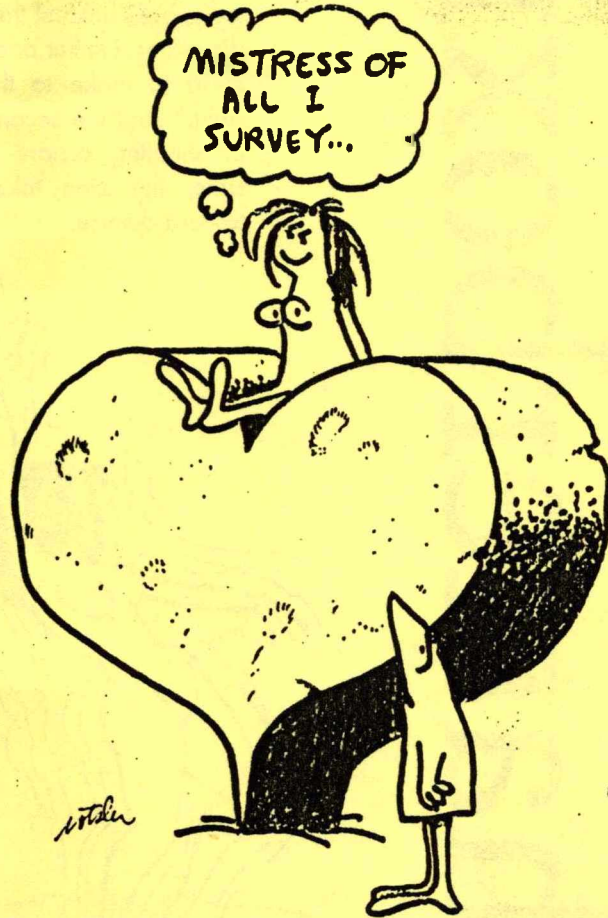


ISSUE 4 MAY 97



X TREMIE

chatterboxing

A Few Little Changes...

As a manager, the professional magazine editor's twin objectives are to get it ticking along like a Swiss watch — and to keep it from falling into an editorial rut. It's a tug of war between the allure of the Comfort Zone and the drive to stay relevant to the audience.

Fanzines aren't prozines, admittedly, but I still feel the pull in contrary directions. I tinker and tinker, in a vain effort to make to the fanzine "just right." And the second it comes with-in shouting distant of that rarified state, the zine takes its first step toward demise.



Xtreme #4 comes from Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107; Email Address: Crossfire@aol.com). It's published for the May, 1997 FAPA mailing and a few good friends. Member fwa. Lukewarm support. afal.

Killing off a fanzine that has grown stale to me is easy enough, but I yearn to be one of those Great Stabilizing Forces for which FAPA is justly noted. So I'm making a few alterations after three issues of **Xtreme**. My main goal is to distinguish it from my other fanzines and establish it as a separate entity.

Fans, me among them, love to analyze and categorize, and explain to death, everything in our hobby. Some may wonder how to characterize **Xtreme**. If you can't wait for the official verdict in **Apparatchik**, try this:

I'd call it a personalzine — never liked "perzine" — except that all my zines reflect my personal concerns, opinions and interests. Its format and content mix will separate **Xtreme** from the rest of my stuff. Well, that's the plan.

One change is that I'm sending **Xtreme** to a few friends who don't have the blessed fortune to be members of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. I'd like to start a letter column in **X5**, but that's not exactly under my control. Electronic mail is preferable, but don't let that stop your postcard or hardcopy response.

If I find some extra room, I'll list non-FAPA recipients elsewhere — don't look while I'm talking! — so that the rest of you can send them letters encouraging them to provide the necessary LoCs. Don't be afraid to stoop to harassment.

Xtreme will continue to go through FAPA to insure a more-or-less quarterly schedule. Think of it as my contribution to the glorious tradition of gen-apazines (**Grue**, **Warhoon**, **Lighthouse**). Due to my current "less is more" kick, **Xtreme** won't be as large as any of those, and due to my fanzining skill, it won't be as good as any of them, either. These are

decadant times, and we must be satisfied with what there is.

Did HeSsay 'Less is More'?

Yes, I did. Lately, I've worried that I'm too prolific for my own good. "Or the good of fandom," some might add.)

With time out for an Abi-induced lull between **Folly** and the monthly **Wild Heirs**, I've fanned pretty steadily since my 1989 return. Even I'm surprised by the sheer *poundage*. Despite the considerable diversity of material, I fear that my spree has cloyed the fannish appetite for my stuff. There has been so much of it that some of the pieces I've liked the best slipped past virtually unnoticed.

Ken Forman and Joyce have advised me to improve the overall effect by jnuling the bottom 20% of my output. How fortunate for my ego that neither knows about the 20 fan articles that languish on my hard drie in various stages of completion.

The more I thought about the suggestion, the surer I was that they are right. **Xtreme** will stay small.

The Soul of Wit

The impact of word processing on writing came up in conversation at Corflu. Ted White declared that the ability to rewrite, rearrange and revise wouldn't help his work.

I was forced to admit to Ted that the opposite is true for my writing. My professional writing took a huge step forward when I embraced word processing, on the Apple IIc, in the early 1980s.

I'd gotten to be a pretty facile writer by that time, through repetition if no other way. Yet I'd also picked up my share of the quirks that writers often acquire through the years.

I had to retype the whole page every time it went wrong. Cross-outs

and over-typing became nearly unbearable. Sometimes it took four or five tries to plow past a rough spot in an article.

Worse, the chore became a barrier to revision. I let minor changes pass rather than go to the trouble of retyping a whole page.

That situation couldn't continue for long. As an editor, I could see how to improve my writing. Dissatisfaction grew.

Word processing let me take advantage of my editing talent. Now I can rephrase a sentence until I'm happy.

"Less is more" gives me the chance to subject a greater percentage of my fan writing to such editorial scrutiny. Such editing tends to rein in my tendency to convoluted sentences and too many adjectives. Word processing is why **Xtreme** will stay small.

Quite a Site

Inside Games (www.insid-egames.com) is now live with new postings daily. **IG** hasn't achieved round-the-clock reliability yet, but parent company Action World is trying hard to cure the system's glitches .

Action World plans a huge launch campaign, but **Inside Games** must depend on word -of-mouth until the site's other elements are ready. These include a store, fee-based games and a second magazine under my editorship, **Action Zone**.

The last six months as editor of **Escapade** helped me shake some of the accumulated rust from my final year with Sendai Publication, and the accelerated pace of **Inside Games** is completing my regeneration as a high-volume writer.

IG has profoundly changed my work-life. I've spent my whole caress

writing and editing monthly magazines. Everything I did was attuned to the monthly production cycle

Escapade's founders' set it up like a monthly. The only exceptions were Joyce's daily news and a few weekly columns (including two of mine). That's the way things were when I became editor, and that's the way they stayed.

We lost one of the founders, Russ Ceccola, in the transition from **Escapade** to **Inside Games**. He always wanted to put off changes, improvements and proposed stories for "a month or two" instead of digging in right then.,

The remaining founder, Rich Heimlich, and I are gearing up to meet the demands of this new medium. **Inside Games** now has a *daily* cover story, and my editorial has gone from weekly totoMonday-Wednesdy-Friday posting. If I don't burnout in the process, I expect to make it a daily feature after the site's officialpremiere.

That wouldn't be much strain for Victor Gonzalez or Harry Warner, but it's a new challenge tome. Daily journalists like them have always had my admiration for their ability to turn out such a torrent of readable, professional copy. Now I'll find out if this is something I can do.

I think I can. That's my usual attitude toward new frontiers, and there's no reason to change. Yet contrary examples, men and women who fell apart under the pressure of daily writing, are plentiful enough to give me pause. For instance, **Wired** magazine burned out some of its writers by trying to make them switch from a big feature every month or two to a daily contribution.

My revamped schedule also means that I've lost the luxury of monthly deadline syndrome. That's

where the writer, no more industrious than he is paid to be, calculates the latest possible start that delivers copy before the editor's outrage erupts into a job-threatening explosion. Daily deadlines aren't nearly as conducive to procrastination.

Going Postal

Game design is one of the things I've been doing lately to close the gap between what I'm used to earning and what Action World pays at the moment. Bill Kunkel brought me in on a project with Reidel Software Productions to contribute to a forthcoming PC and on-line game, **Postal**.

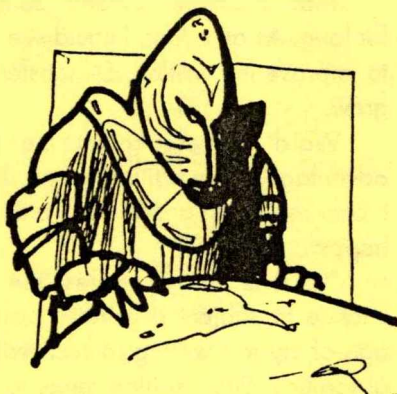
Electronic gaming is marathon musical chairs. The wise professional gamer burns as few bridges as possible, because you never know who'll come in handy on that big deal five years from now.

Not only is this a working reunion, of sorts, with Bill, but two significant names from my past head Reidel Software Productions. Mike Reidel programmed the wrestling game Bill and I designed for MicroLeague, and we contributed design and fine-tuning to other Reidel projects as well. The other principal, Vince Desi, served a term as the agent for Katz Kunkel and Worley in the mid-1980s.

Postal weds a cutting edge concept to a proven action-shooter play-mechanic. As the protagonist, you battle against a demonic invasion of your home town, Bisbee, AZ. Or it may be that you are a psycho killer who is senselessly slaughtering the townsfolk in an orgy of megalomaniacal violence. It all depends on your point of view, and whether dogs can speak English.

The whole thing has tons of dark

humor to leaven the non-stop shooting. RSP asked Bill and me to write some copy for the cut scenes between game levels. My job turned out to be writing articles purportedly published by the local newspaper and scripts for



excerpts from radio reports on the unfolding crisis. Bill worked on other elements, such as the police scanner and the protagonist's diary.

I had a great time writing these bits, and an even more fun larding the story with fan names. I don't know how many will get through to the end product, since so many hands will touch it after mine. But if all goes well, there'll be a newspaper editor named Howard Warner Jr and a roving reporter called Vic Gonzalez.

Here's a shock: Everyone thinks this is funny except the post office. The Postmaster General Himself, or one of his colonels serving as ghostwriter, has written increasingly soreheaded letters to Vince Desi about **Postal**.

The game doesn't exist yet, but the PG hates every byte. A couple of press releases and a website with some advance publicity has the top mail carrier frothing at the mouth.

"I'll come down to your office and hack up everyone with my machete," he might've said, to keep in the true spirit of this edgy, adult interactive

experience. That's the kind of spunk that has made the post office the respected outfit it is today.

Instead, the Postmaster took the more prosaic, expected road. He threatened legal reprisals.

It's good to know that the top executive of an outfit that can't get a letter coast-to-coast in a week via air mail has the time to harass the developer of a computer game that may or may not ever reach the gaming screen.

Come Out and Take Your Punishment

I had plenty of reservations about the recent miniseries remake of "The shining." It seemed a bit soon for a remake, and it was natural to wonder how Steven Weber could match Jack Nicholson's bravura performance as the increasingly mad winter caretaker of the Overlook.

I haven't seen the original since it came out, so look elsewhere for minute, specific comparisons of plot and dialog. Overall, though, I thought the new production seemed more faithful to the Stephen King book, and its subtle presentation left more room for inference than when Nicholson is chewing the scenery.

Steve Weer turned out to be a good choice for the protagonist, though I'm not sure if I can ever watch "Wings" with the same innocence again. Through most of the four hours, it was still possible to wonder whether there really were evil ghosts, or if he was just slipping back into an alcoholic frame of mind.

Heart of Chocolate

I love chocolate. My parents were chocoholics, like most Eastern European Jews. I've followed in their wrapper-littered footsteps. Give me a

Hershey's kiss, and I may binge through an entire bag.

Chocolate cookies.

Chocolate candy.

Chocolate cake.

Chocolate pie.

Chocolate ice cream with hot fudge topping.

Chocolate-filled and chocolate-coated.

Milk chocolate and dark chocolate and even the rarer bittersweet.

Chocolate has made me overweight. Some day it may flat-out kill me. Nonetheless, I love chocolate.

It didn't surprise me when a medical study reported that eating chocolate releases the same brain chemicals as sex. From that first *Three Musketeers* bar, I knew.. (It was only years later, with great outside assistance, that I learned that chocolate nougat is *not* the Ultimate Sensation.)

My dad's was a chocolate-covered cherries man. Occasionally, he searched out esoteric, gourmet brands, but the ones in the supermarket pleased him, too.

My chocolate fetish embodies this same egalitarian view. I try to find the good in all chocolate. I have happily eaten hollow bunnies, foil-covered gold coins and store-brand chocolate-covered doughnuts. I have asked for second on Magic Shell.

My favorites? It's a tough call. Solid chocolate replicas-on-a-stick of Dolly Parton have a certain charm, not to mention psychological significance, yet a Droste chocolate orange is a thing of beauty with a satisfyingly convoluted eating ritual.

On the other hand, I was shocked when I heard the recent finding that chocolate is actual beneficial in the prevention of heart disease. Eating chocolate regularly may inflate that

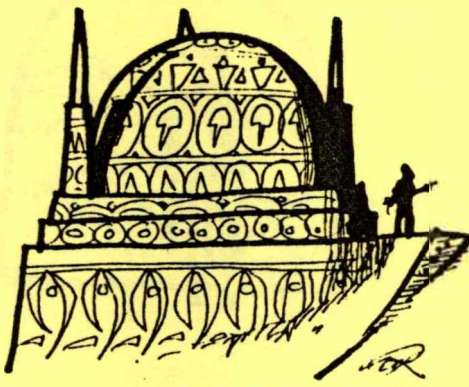
spare tire, but it cuts the chance of heart attack in half.

According to the report, drinking red wine with the chocolate heightens the effect. Wouldn't that chill your momma's bones?

Red wine and chocolate promote cardiological health. They're good for you. I can't imagine my mom saying,, "Eat up all the nonpareils, Arnie. And if you don't wash them down with that bottle of burgundy, I'll tell your father when he comes home."

As I said, this latest claim for chocolate stunned me. Abi Frost would feel the same way if they discovered that chainsmoking cured emphysema. This is what every chocolyte has craved since the dawn of Nestlé: there is an irrefutable excuse to just let go and wallow in the stuff.

I'm no mush-minded psychic psychiatrist. I am a Man of Science I did what the apostles of reason from Descartes to Benford would have me do: I became a total convert to this



new science of heartcare.

Then one evening, while enjoying the buzz from a foot-long tootsie-roll, it came to me. Science had given me license to nosh, but what had I done for science?

Damn little, I reluctantly conced-

ed. I resolved to fix this one-sided situation as soon as possible.

I buckled down to work, a bowl of M&Ms at my elbow for inspiration. I thought about my new mission for 30 man-days. I spent up to five, 10, 20, even 50 minutes a day. Well, almost every day. Most days. Almost more than half.

All right, sticklers for truth... I thought of it this morning, because I need to write this article today. But don't let the off-hand conception prejudice you against the child. Many a Nobel Laureate has sprung from the backseat of a car (usually with some Swedish husband in irate pursuit).

I am ready to make that contribution to Science now. I call it HeLP, the **Hedonistic Life Plan**. The name on my soon-to-be-best-selling book is *The Chocolate, Red Wine, More Sex Diet*. It's going to pay for my mansion in Hershey, PA.

Some of you may be saying to yourself, "I understand the chocolate, and the red wine makes sense, but why 'more sex'?"

Why *not* more sex? It's healthy exercise, and it increases the appetite for red wine and chocolate.

HeLP is more than a fad, an overnight miracle. It's a lifestyle, one you'll pursue until your chocolate-bloated, wine-sotted, sex-sated body spontaneously combusts.

The meetings are vital. Look out Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers, neither of which offers either chocolate or red

wine, much less more sex.

You've got to go to the Hedonistic Holistic Health Center near you a minimum of three times a week. There, followers draw inspiration from their peers' stories of how chocolate, red wine and sex made them healthier,

happier human beings. With all those rousing testimonials, I imagine the post-meeting socializing will be really something. I'm reserving the Trojan concession.

It feels good to be so useful to Society..

The Bull of the Woods

Sammy "The Bull" Gravano, like most authors, turned to TV to huckster his new book. Although he hadn't secured the right to profit from his tell-all title, Gravano found the ABC Network anxious to merchandise John Gotti's former Underboss to the book-buying public.

Some think it was worth giving this multiple murderer a soft ride to get the two-dozen criminals he helped convict. Others feel that his crimes are so inexcusable that no amount of cooperation should've earned his release. I lean toward the former view, but whichever you hold, Sammy the Bull made a compelling video star

The interviewer at least pretended shock that Gravano could be so matter-of-fact about what he'd done. I can't imagine how he could be any other way and still do all the things he did. A man constantly wracked by moral guilt is not going to pull the trigger as often, and as successfully, as this guy.

Gravano undoubtedly reconfigured the truth in small ways to suit his current position. At times, he seems torn between hogging the credit for the big deals and pushing the blame onto other top mob figures.

Fudged details shouldn't prevent our *Godfather*-soaked culture from perceiving the general thrust of the Bull's narrative: people who get

involved with organized crime are liable, even likely, to get killed.

Talkin' Baseball

Metropolis Publishing wants to produce a newsstand magazine about electronic sports games this summer. Bill Kunkel, who works for the company, got me a bunch of assignments for the first issue.

So I've been one happy baseball fan of late. **Gamefan Sports Network** is all the excuse I need for hours of wallowing in the national pastime. Anyone who has seen my home office, with its shelves of baseball books and memorabilia, will immediately perceive that this is excruciating labor for me. The only thing more horrible would be to get paid for editing a fanzine anthology. (Oh *please* throw me into the briar patch...)

Preparation of this issue of **Xtreme** has shared time with play-testing of five "boutique" baseball

and manager of statistical replicas of actual major leaguers.

The object is to build a team through drafting and trading, and then manage it in simulated games. None of these five games looks very prepossessing, but they are all built on a firm simulation foundation.

Diamond-Mind emerged as the best of the five during the test, despite offering little more than screens full of text in the way of audiovisual candy. The technical quality, clever implementation and flexible interface make it a pleasure to play.

Since I'd just sponsored a switch of our sim baseball league to **Diamond-Mind** for the new season, these findings put a big smile on my face. We'd probably have switched again if my findings had turned out otherwise, but I was glad that further experimentation confirmed my choice.

The Las Virtual Baseball Association heads into its second season with an all-fannish roster of managers. One division has the Detroit Derelicts (Ben Wilson), Boston Bohemians (Tom Springer) and St. Louis Aliens (me). The other has the New York Capos (Bill Kunkuel), the Cincinnati Cyclones (Derek Strazenski) and the Memphis Maroons (jointly owned by Andy Hooper and Alan Rosenthal).

Sim baseball on Wednesday evening is the Vegrants' version of my dad's pinocle night or hearts at Ted and Lynda White's place in Falls Church. We battle through four games in about two hours and then join the partiers in the iving room.

That's all for this issue. See you next quarter. - Arnie Katz



simulations: **Diamond-Mind Baseball**, **Pro League Baseball**, **Full-Count Baseball**, **Baseball for Windows** and **Strat-o-Matic Baseball**.

All are sports roleplaying games rather than arcade contests. The gamer becomes general manager