



Procrastinations

John Coxon



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Editorial

Bless me, father, for I have sinned. It has been seven years since my last confession.

It seems rather apt that the last issue of *Procrastinations*, the thirteenth issue, was on the subject of burnout. I think it's fair to say that Loncon 3 did an awful lot to disabuse me of the notions I had about fanac and wanting to spend my spare time doing it; I'm not sure whether I'm going to rush to take a high-level Worldcon job again.

But, we're back! I can't guarantee that this is the start of a new, regular publishing schedule, but it feels good to be writing the editorial of a new issue.

This issue is slightly different to previous issues in that whereas previous issues were available in PDF and EPUB format, this issue is also being put online as a webpage and you can subscribe to new issues in a myriad of ways (see the bottom of the page for more details). But the writing is generally the same as before, as is the lack of stapling (no print issues sees to that).

In terms of fanac, though, I haven't been idle. España Sheriff and I have been co-editing a fanzine called Lulzine, and we just sent out *Lulzine* 12 featuring articles by Ian Snell and David Haddock. I've also been recording a podcast called Octothorpe with Alison Scott and Liz Batty, and as I type this we're

approaching the 34th episode! If you want to read or listen to any of that then it's all linked to from [the new website](#) (check out the menus at the top).

The other thing that happened is that there's been a pandemic. I think part of my resurgence in fanac has been a result of that, in a weird way – I feel much more connected to fandom than I did before the pandemic, and I'm not sure whether that's a super odd feeling to have or whether everyone reading this is nodding along thinking “yes, that's how I feel too”. Write in!

Procrastinations is edited by John Coxon.

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Web: <https://procrastinations.co.uk/>. Email: john@johncoxon.co.uk.

Fandom in the pandemic

by John Coxon

In late 2019, I sent Alison Scott a text that asked whether she fancied being on a podcast about conventions and fandom and whatnot, and asked whether she thought that Liz Batty would also be good on such a project. We decided we'd talk about it at Novacon 49, which I ended up not attending for various reasons, and then the idea sort of took a back seat during the Christmas period as fanac is often wont to do.

Fast forward a few months, and the pandemic has taken full effect. Eastercon is looking very much like it won't go ahead, and I've stopped going to the regular meetups at the local board game café. I've finished my TAFF report (well, mostly) so I've run out of fanac to do. And so it was that in late March 2020 we started recording Octothorpe. I would like to think I would have followed through with that even were it not for the pandemic, but I don't think I'd put money on it.

Octothorpe has really made me feel more connected to UK fandom as a whole, but it's not the only thing that's had that effect. España and I weren't going to any regular local meetups prior to the pandemic hitting. It's difficult to go into London for the First Thursday without taking the entire day to do so: getting the train after work and then the train back doesn't leave you much time at the pub. The pandemic changed that; now we don't need to

catch a train to attend, we just need to click a Zoom link. This is much simpler for many people (not just us) and so the First Thursday has made me feel much more in touch with fandom than I did pre-pandemic, when my only real contact with wider fandom was at Eastercon, Novacon, and the odd Corflu.

The other thing we've discovered is that there *is* local fandom near to us! The South Hampshire SF Group (succinctly referred to as SHSFG by its members) meets in Portsmouth, and has also moved to Zoom during the pandemic. I'm genuinely not sure we would have heard about it, were it not for the pandemic. This is in fact the topic of a panel at the upcoming Punctuation 2, which aims to discuss whether or not the role of regional fandoms has changed now that the Internet is what tends to bring newer fans into fandom.

And, finally, there's Punctuation. Liz Batty, Steve Davies, Alison Scott and I ran the first Punctuation in November 2020 when it became clear that Novacon 50 would be unable to run, and it was generally well-received, but it was also a huge opportunity to reconnect with the fandom in the UK, especially given that we didn't get to convene at Easter 2020.

If you didn't attend, the convention was chiefly on Zoom and Discord, and it was really great to have a big, bustling place where everyone was chatting and sharing things together. That blended into the creation of the Anonymous Claire server: a place for fans that are British and UK-adjacent to chill out and chat (if you'd like an invite, message me!). This is something that I really think that fandom has been sorely lacking (I might be biased as someone who only infrequently uses Facebook). There's a pleasing continuity there between LiveJournal and Discord, as Max discusses in her article, up next.

We are now, as I write this, on the eve of Punctuation 2. Claire Brialey has joined the team and been instrumental to keeping us all on track. I'm very pleased to be in a position to pub my ish for the first time since I went to Satellite IV back in Easter 2014. The process of writing for an issue to distribute at a convention is a part of the pre-con rituals that I've missed. (Although I am quite open to the argument that choosing the night before a convention I'm running might not be the best timing.)

Did I gafiate?

by Max Harden

Did I gafiate? It's all so unclear to me.

Fifteen years ago there were friends and conventions, fanzines and LiveJournal and I was surrounded by fannish esoterica. I lived in Peterborough but spent much of my time outside it.

Fifteen years. So many.

Not long after that I started larping and larp ate time. Planning, packing, travelling, catching and recovering from field crud, frothing about the latest adventures, maintaining a larp website, and recovering from exhaustion became regular rituals.

LiveJournal died a slow death of attrition, I lost time for fanzines, the people on Facebook were increasingly from that other world of larp rather than fans.

I didn't know I exited, the door closed quietly behind me. From time to time I still glanced through the window, appearing unexpectedly at a convention without much to say.

Fifteen months ago I was in a different home and a different job. As we watched the global pandemic stir we were sent home from the office in a manner that suggested it might be for a while. "See you, uh, next year?" I said to my colleague as we parted ways. I thought I was joking.

I decided not to go to the next larp event I had scheduled. It was subsequently cancelled anyway. As was the next one. And then the first two big events of the year. And then the latter two big events. People adapt, there were some online events. I went to one. It wasn't the same.

When fandom meetings went online, though, I was suddenly not too tired to attend them every single time. Having no commute leaves me more time for life. So I went to the occasional Tun, attended Punctuation, looked with glee upon the Discord-shaped echo of fandom on LiveJournal. I subscribed to a podcast, rejoined the BSFA, wrote some locs. I reconnected. I think. I still

get talked over at the meet ups. Like online larp, online conventions are not the same – but they're close. I am woefully out of date on SF reading, viewing, listening and not really trying to catch up. I'm back on the periphery of fandom for the culture more than the source material.

Was I ever really gone?

Letters of comment

Lloyd Penney

Not sure what happened, but I have two issues of Procrastinations, 12 and 13. I should get on them right now, and get caught up.

12...Strange that Metropolis should be on the cover of this issue...this coming weekend is a steampunk event in Toronto called Steam on Queen, and one of the many attractions at this event is a reproduction of Maria from that very movie. We need a new camera, so we will do that and get some pictures we can share online.

Yvonne and I were both unemployed, and now, we both have good-paying, full-time jobs. Before those jobs came along, we had decided that we couldn't go to Loncon, so we sold our memberships and cancelled our room at the Aloft. Now that we have the jobs, well, for a moment we thought we could go, but no, it wouldn't look good to tell the new bosses that we would need two to three weeks off right after we've started. Also, we really didn't have enough money saved. The new plan is to go in a year or two, and go to some attractions we have in mind, including maybe The Asylum.

You were at Chicon 7, and we couldn't afford to go then, either. I really think that Worldcons are a thing of the past for us. Torcon burned us, and our financial problems did the rest. We got asked recently if we were going to the Detroit NASFiC, seeing it's just down the highway from us...nope, not planning for that one, either. Don't want to spend the paycheques faster than we get them, and we have a lot of financial recovery to get to.

My loc...check out my Facebook photos for some pictures of Yvonne getting ready for her role on Murdoch Mysteries. As a result of this burgeoning fandom, next month will see the third Murdoch Mysteries Experience near our place, a grand dinner and gathering of fans, preceded by this year an open house at the show's sets in eastern Toronto. Four listings on the IMDB now, and CostumeCon has come and gone, and it was a great time, and it returns to Toronto in 2017. FYI, John, Murdoch Mysteries just finished its seventh season, and is shown in reruns, I suspect, on Alibi.

Hugos...so many fans have lost any respect they ever had for the silver rockets, and for the most part, so have I. Yet, a part of me remembers when I had some awe reserved for the Hugos, and I wish I could indulge that part. My time to be considered, and my time to participate in them, has passed.

13...Who's the crispy critter on the cover, and did a certain convention burn him? Ah, it's you. We were similarly burned by Torcon 3, but at least the chairman of the board did me the favour of firing me not long after we'd won the 2003 Worldcon while at Chicon 2000. Most of my good memories of Torcon 3 consist of assisting the LA folks stage their parties for their (successful) 2006 bid.

There is definitely a lot of work with a Worldcon bid, and many never seem to realize that, even after they have been accepted onto the committee. My own experiences taught me never to do more than you want with a Worldcon committee; we were often Canadian agents for past Worldcon bids, too.

As much as I like social media, I do try to remember that not everyone is on it, many have left it (too many anti-social types on social media), and there are a myriad of ways to advertise to a general public. There's a popular steampunk show coming up in Toronto soon, and while there's plenty of social media to get the word around, one of the more successful ways that word gets out is the 4x6" postcard. Many of the current crop of steampunk events use this method. When it comes to private discussions for a con committee, though, general e-mail still works best, IMHO, but I can also see the advantages of a private Facebook page.

Done for now, have to get moving and get to my new job! Yvonne started her new job yesterday, so we are both relieved and eager to get going on recovery. We won't be at Loncon, so we hope you have the best time ever there. Planning another issue soon? Hope so.

Thanks Lloyd! I think we can both agree that this issue was indeed pretty soon. Seven years counts as soon, right? Glad to hear from you and glad to be able to publish a loc from you in my return to the fanediting scene! I do worry that my extreme tardiness in getting this issue published means there's a risk that your opinions on social media may be out-of-date, so get in touch and let me know if they've changed...

From my perspective, social media has been transformed by Discord. It seems like everything I used to love about Twitter before Twitter got a bit too Twitter-y. I think it's got a huge amount of potential for fannish purposes, not only for running virtual conventions but also for forming fannish communities like we used to be able to have on things like LiveJournal.

Gaming corner by John Coxon

I want to write a little bit here about games before signing off! I'm running a game of Cthulhu Hack for some friends tonight which I'm looking forward to. I played a game of it at Virtually Expo, which was the online version of the UK Games Expo in 2020, and I enjoyed it greatly. It's a game in the style of the Old-School Revival (OSR) and the ruleset only takes up around 35 pages of the book.

I particularly like the introduction of “smokes” and “flashlights” as stats for your character. Want to investigate something by ransacking the archives or searching an office? Roll flashlights. Want to convince someone to spill the beans or do you a favour? Roll smokes. I really enjoy how you can abstract the two sides of an investigation into those two concepts.

The other really neat thing is that it has a fail-forward mechanic, so that when you try to do something your roll dictates how many negative consequences you hit, rather than whether or not you just can't progress. That's a neat way to put the fun and the narrative front-and-centre in the gameplay.

*Cover art by España Sheriff.
This fanzine is unstapled to save the rainforests. (And my wallet.)*