



The Sixtieth issue of a sort-of letter substitute, kinda thing. Maybe weekly, maybe not. Available from:

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Available via the World Wide Web, or as an email attachment. I recommend the Portable Document Format (pdf) or, if you insist, a word or Rich Text Format (rtf) can also be emailed. Get in touch and we'll sort something out. You are going to [TorCon III](#), aren't you? Dated, already, 21/09/02.

Burnt to the bone.

By James Bacon

'Hhhhhuuurrrraaaaaaaahhhhhh'

In the upstairs lounge of a very nice pub, in the centre of Dublin, a resounding cheer went around the room. It had just been announced the Glasgow had won the WorldCon bid for 2005.

WorldCon, Glasgow 1995, Intersection, that name just conjures up the most magnificent of images, even now they are so vivid and clear, it was such a roller coaster of a convention, so much went on. I remember the parties, with all the free beer and more importantly spirits, an unending flow of rum courtesy of Grinner a Baltimore bidding bloke, the Bostonians giving us Irish lads whiskeys, and one for our wives too, so kind.

The Cabin Bar, not just a place to drink, but also a spot to spend the whole night, drinking free rum, enough for everyone, and nice cubicles for those intimate moments, there was surely a good time going on. Staggering back at dawn, arm in arm, meandering our ways back to hotels, staggering into rooms at eight in the morning, and this is where James Peart, Irelands most prolific WorldCon attendee comes in.

'So I am fast asleep and I am disturbed by this tremendous crashing and banging as James comes into the room, and falls into a sitting position on his bed, then his torso shudders backwards, he lies spread out on the bed and he starts snoring, instantly. It was eight o'clock anyhow, so I got up, had a shower, got dressed, and then said to him, 'hey James, get up, the con starts in an hour' and this creature rises like a Frankenstein, he gets up, has a shower, and we got breakfast. Then we went back to the con, he had about 10 minutes of sleep.'

I had such a ball, it was great fun, and I always feel good when I think of it all. It makes me wonder then when my gushing enthusiasm about intersection or the new bid for WorldCon isn't received with the usual smiles and nods of acknowledgement when I mention it at cons and Pub meetings in England. Did I miss something?

I know I was younger, twenty one, naïve, new, and bursting with energy, like I only went to one panel, over the whole con, there was just too much going on, did somebody die? Ok, sorry, someone did, John Brunner, decent fella, but that's OK, if I am offered a choice between dying in my bed and dying at a con, I know which choice I'll make.

So why is that there is a palpable smell when I mention Intersection, and more recently the WorldCon bid. The mumbles and shaking heads, the smell is discernable, it's the smell of unhappy fans, as they mutter unheard utterances under their breath, all I ever hear is, mumble...bloody...WorldCon...mumble...kill...mumble... never...mumble... mumble...mumble.

Everyone smells it, the smell of dissent, the smell of discord, the smell of division, the smell of distaste, the smell of disappointment, the smell of disgust, the smell of distrust, the smell of disparity. It grips your nose like a finger jabbed up your nostril, a soiled finger, hideous and pungent. The only dising you don't get is 'dis-taff', cause that's a piece of wood, apparently.

So what's the smell?

Well I asked about, hey I am glutton for punishment. Some of the answers were quite surprising, and as I talked to a diverse bunch of people, I got an equally diverse range of answers.

The first reason for the slight cynicism was history. Apparently in 1987 there was a WorldCon, and it burnt out a lot of people who then went on the long walk.

1987? Holy shit I was thirteen, fumbling at my flies, sniffing at drink and writing letters to Tharg. I asked Stef what it was like, he was there. 'I wish I had made friends at the con, it would have introduced me into the scene sooner, it was great.'

Well history is that, but surely Intersection was different, wasn't it? Apparently not quite, as a lot of people also felt that they had a 'hard time,' and again there was a bit of 'burnout.' I didn't even realise this, I just assumed that after doing something as huge and amazing like a WorldCon that you would take a break, anyhow, the same thing happens with OctoCon every three years or so. People get burnt if they do too much. The way to avoid burnout is to only take on a set job, with set out tasks, and stick to it, pacing yourself. You also need enough people.

I can see though that there is a case where there could be pressure put onto people to help, for the cause, as one would say over here, but is there a better way. I looked at the current WorldCon site; I was looking for the staffing structure. You know the who's who, that every con has. They had one, and it looked good, and they promised to have a full structure up by 2004. This got me thinking, a rare occurrence.

So I thought, and a while went by, and I had an idea; why wait till 2004 why not have the structure up now, listing the positions available, as opposed to listing them when filled.

Why not have a web page that details exactly what each position entails, from Division head down to gopher, with every level in between.

A precise explanation of the position, including how many hours a week it would involve in the run up to the con, how many weeks, months or years you will be involved, the experience required for a position of this level, and the amount of time that you will be 'on the job' during the convention.

Then it could be explained what each division specialises in, its no good having a guy volunteer for tech if he can't change a light bulb, or be in charge of gophers if his inter-personal skills are non-existent.

Listing then the positions that are available in each division, and perhaps having a graphic for the structure, again all online, would create interest and show exactly what was available and who you'd be working with. This would also allow people to say, 'well I wont volunteer for that division as I know James is a wanker' so you don't end up with infighting either.

As people volunteer, they can be selected, informed of their position, perhaps one lesser than expected even and then the whole structure can slowly be built up over time, ahead of schedule, and visible on the net.

A Volunteer form, requiring detail, could easily be put online, also once you become a member the form could be dispatched, it would be an easy and efficient way to gather help.

There could be a volunteer register, listing those who are WorldCon Volunteers.

With a positive attitude, it could turn the worm, people love being involved, imagine telling all the moaners, and whiners, that 300 gophers have already volunteered a minimum of two hours gophering a day, and its only 2003. Ha! screw you.

There could be WorldCon Volunteer parties every six months, even for gophers, so that a camaraderie gets built up, and people looking in, think more about joining up.

This committee seem to be very clued into what they are taking on, but just cause I know that doesn't mean it will stop the whingers. Yeah the only way to beat the bastards is to be pro-active, if burnout is perceived to be an issue, openness will show a different picture and that perception has to then change.

Being open and displaying info online is a simple and effective solution.

People will volunteer, especially if they have a chance to think through the commitment they are making, are allowed to make a leisurely decision and now that they are wanted, needed even.

Then there are further thoughts. In the real world a company gets a discount if it promotes something to its staff. Well wouldn't WorldCon Volunteers be a big body of people, who would deserve discounts and thanks to their form, would be easily informed of said promotions?

I think so, and if there were a register, I would happily offer a discount to Volunteers at the next con I run, in actual fact, I will, better than offering it to students, they can volunteer as well. Interaction could easily ask for a discount for their Volunteers, it would be a good thing to offer, from everyone's perspective and some of the fecking ejits might even turn up and pay at the door.

Next issue James Bacon continues his search for strange odours as he takes on 'The WorldCon Science Fiction Deficit', whatever that is.

This is being distributed to a whole bunch of friends on the net, if you received this and would NOT like to be on the mailing list please accept my apologies for this intrusion and let me know so that you will not be bothered by further ramblings. If you know someone who would like to be on the mailing drop me a line.