

Claims Department

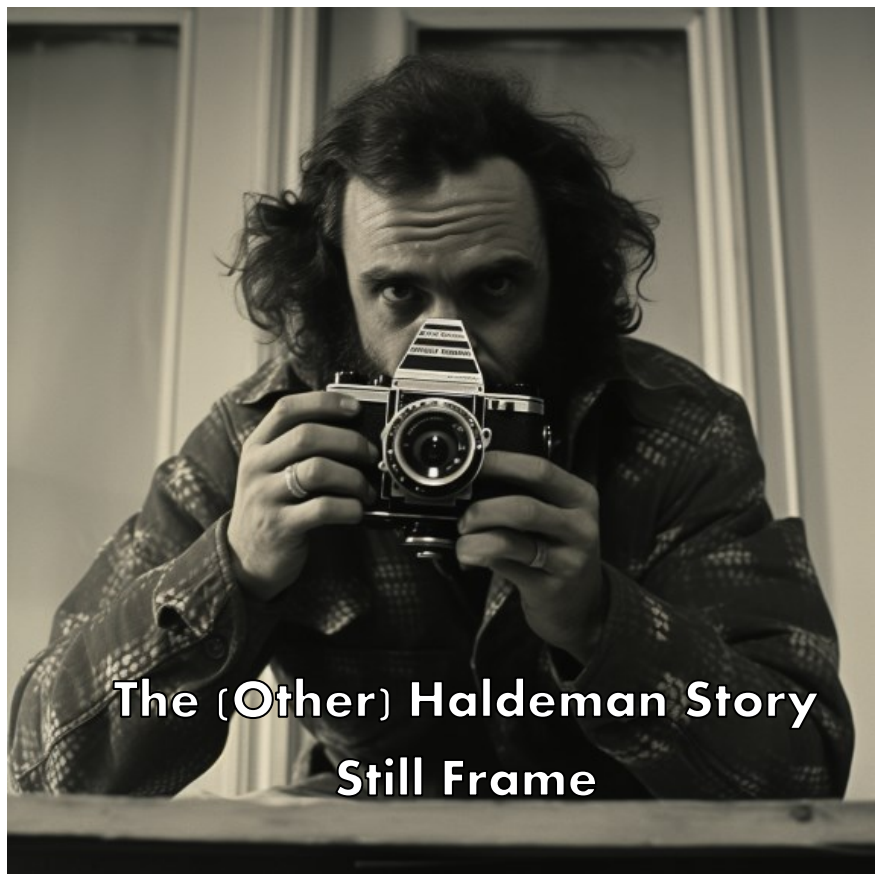


OK, that last issue weren't as normal as I had hoped.

This time, I'm looking at music (The Afghan Whigs) and wrestling (SummerSlam) and some reading (well, listening...) I've been doing, and stuff.

My book is selling. I have no idea how many, and I've still not gotten my author copies, but still, I see movement on Amazon.uk.





Jack Haldeman still surprises me.

I'd never bought *Shadows 7*, even though I knew it had stories by Tanith Lee and Ramsey Campbell, and of course my personal fave, Jack Haldeman. I don't think I would have expected him to show up in this sort of anthology, because most of the work of his I know isn't in the horror mode.

Though for sure *Still Frame* is.

It's a simple story—a photographer has made his name taking snaps of old folks. It's won him the Pulitzer, but he secretly hates

it. He's taken a photo of an old man at a home and has brought it back to his dark room to develop it.

It's not the only thing he develops.

On one hand, this is an old type of body horror, one that harkens back to the late 19th century. It feels like the story could be from any period, but the telling is straight out of the early 1980s. It lets you dig into the character's history, and only once you've had a chance to get there with him, does the entire focus shift and we're put into something we know isn't going to turn out well for our hero.

But there's a lot more here, lurking.

The thing about photography is that it's a dance between the viewer and the viewed. One would think that the viewed would be leading the waltz, but it's rarely the case. The viewer is not merely the end-user of the image, but those all along the publication path. The photographer, ultimately, is the mediator, the primary viewer, and the one who establishes not the content, though not necessarily the context. When a viewer is captured, they are done with the process, but they feel the effects of that long after they've done their work. Today, that can be instantaneous, but in the 1980s, there was a distance. Here, our photographer is given what he has captured on his film, just desserts some might say, or simply a trick of the light fantastic.

I found this to be a simple kind of story, and I loved the sensation of knowing exactly where this story was going, but because he wrote it with a clarity and established such a great set of concepts that I found myself loving this story entirely more than I might have otherwise.





True Crime News

The Long Island Serial Killer task force identified another Jane Doe.

Fire Island Doe, believed to be the first victim of LISK, was identified as Karen Vergata, 34 at the time she disappeared.

No one had ever reported her as missing.

They found her identity by running genetic genealogy and following the trail. They found out more about her—she'd worked as a sex worker, which certainly ties her in with the others found along the Long Island beaches, but she was older, already in her thirties. Now, I still think there are two or more killers, but the MO here is clearly the same as with Peaches, and quite a bit different

than those victims found on Gilgo Beach wrapped in burlap. In fact, looking at the others in the case, it very much strengthens the idea that there must be more than one killer, partly because of the lack of absolute commonality as found among those victims in the tight grouping.

Unless, of course, there were many others elsewhere, including in the desert surrounding Las Vegas where Heuermann had a timeshare.

There's a lot here that still needs to be figured out, but I really hope they're not stuck on him as the only suspect.







Barbie.

I loved her as a kid. I don't think I ever had an actual Barbie, but I certainly had a bunch of knock-offs. I've always loved fashion, and the dolls with dresses were super-cool!!! I blame a lot of my love of the physical style of dress in the 1980s to having a bunch of doll stuff and a set of Fashion Plates that I played with endlessly in my Gramma's closet.

What? It was the best place to play because I could leave everything on the floor when I was done and no one would complain!

The ones I remember the best were a set of Barbie-like animal dolls called (as I now know having searched eBay) Gorgeous Creatures. They weren't exactly the prettiest things out there, but they had several outfits, one of which is a golden jumpsuit that really is just fantastic. That one was with Ms. Heavenly Hippo.

These dolls sorta hit three targets—kids who loved dress-em-up dolls, kids who loved Muppets (they all had a Miss Piggy vibe) and kids whose parents didn't have enough money for real Barbie stuff.

I had a couple of others, and it wasn't unusual for 10 and 12 year old me to be on the bottom of that closet, building little walls with my baseball cards, my miniature Fisher-Price Tape Recorder playing whatever I had taped off the radio recently, and the dolls being put in wrestling poses.

I have a complex childhood, I think.

I still love these kinds of dolls. They're fun, though neither of my kids seem to like them much, being much more into nuclear science, books, and Lego and gun-like toys. They're weird like that.





I'm working on a script.

I work on a lot of projects right (and yet can not respond to eMails...)

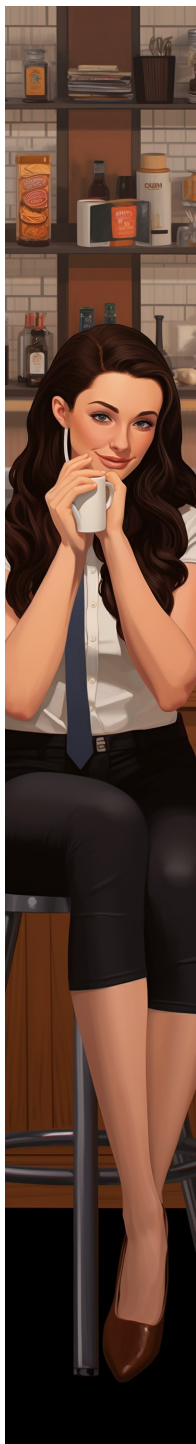
Anyhoo, this one is influenced by William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life* and the idea that a bar (not unlike Callahan's) is a great place for various types of characters to meet, and there's always a place for a hooker with a heart of gold!

Now, am I ever going to finish it? Undoubtedly no. It's always a thought experiment first, and if a few pages get done, that works for me.

The interesting thing is that if I ever manage to actually make a feature-type film, it'd be a super-long, super-slow, Bela Tar on downers sorta thing that'll take a simple first contact story and draw it out.

I don't know why, but it seems appropriate.





I got hit on the other day.

This literally never happens to me, and certainly not while I'm doing my kids' laundry.

The woman at the Launry is very nice, and since I do laundry at the Boulder Creek Laundry about every week, she's someone I see all the time. She's a lovely woman, probably about my age, with a daughter who works that who gets hit on by the older guys (NOT ME!!!) almost constantly. She has an acid tongue, though, and she'll let a jerk have it given the chance. The pair of them were working, folding a drop-off order that had come in, and I was just moving the laundry over from the washers to the dryers. The song *Vacation* by the Go-Gos came on the radio, and I started singing along.

A second later, I literally heard a wolf-whistle

"See that," she said, "if I'd had my way, that's the kinda guy I'd wanna bag."

Now, I'm not sure if she thought I wasn't listening, or that maybe she hadn't said it that loud, but I sure as hell heard it, and while flattering, well, it was unexpected.

I got the dryer going and left.

Strange thing, this world.



The Afghan Whigs

Power Pop has had moments. In the early 1990s, bands like The Smithereens (who may get an article) and The Tragically Hip were gaining popularity in the US, not to mention REM crossing over. The jangle of guitars was in, and one of the bands that was almost instantly recognisable was The Afghan Whigs.

And then they released *Gentleman* and everything was changed from that moment onwards.

Let's start with SubPop.

SubPop was a legendary label that was one of the reasons Grunge happened. If you've got their early fanzines that included musical sampler tapes, you've got gold. I've seen people pay thousands of dollars for them. The Whigs signed early, only the second band not from the Pacific Northwest to do so, being from Ohio. They had a sound at the time that was straight-ahead rock 'n roll, but the sensation you'd get from listening to The Replacements was in there too.

The drumming was competent, but the fuzzy guitar, and the intro-

duction of strings and keyboards gave that edge a counterpoint.

They were great all along, but it was the album *Gentleman* that truly made the biggest mark. The entire album is one of those that just has everything going for it. It's a relationship album, as much of a relationship with another person album as it is a relationship with the narrator's self-conception. It's a stunning piece of work that opens with an almost Emo Rock soundscape-y song, but that gives way to *Gentleman*, arguably their finest song, one of the darkest of their entire discography. It also features one of the best lines in rock history.

All messed up with no place to go.

I love this album, and ultimately the rest of the Afghan Whigs stuff is measured against it, and while some of it holds up, the metal edge and brutal lyrics on *Gentleman* really sets it head and shoulders above the rest.







This has been a blow to me, for a couple of reasons, and if you go back to the first few coffee issues of this little zine, you'll see my coverage of my trip to Maui, so I feel it kinda close. There's also the fact that two of my wife's family live on Maui (they're OK!) and that the town that has taken the most visible damage is one of major Hawaiian historical importance.

And then, there's the banyan tree.

Now, those of you who know me (and for some reason read these...) you'll know that the CZU fires ripped through my

hometown of Boulder Creek almost exactly three years ago. We're known for our redwoods, our trees. The banyan tree, one of the oldest known trees in Hawaii, is giant, and when we visited, Bella climbed it, JP chilled out under its shade, and I looked around it in a sort of quiet Gen-X awe. We loved the visit to Lahaina, and watching the news reports, we could tell that the entire area we visited had been burned.

But maybe not the banyan tree?

It was clearly still standing from the aerial shots we could see, but was it alive? As the day went on and further overhead and street-level shots came out, it was clear that the tree had done remarkably well, that the trunks had not been significantly burned, and that the canopy was damaged over the oldest portion of the tree, but robust in other parts. The fact that there was no ground-cover around the trees, just grass and dirt, meant that the roots are almost certainly still viable and that even if much, or even most, of the tree that is visible is damaged, it's highly likely that the 150 year old beast will start new growth if nothing else.

Things that survive often become rallying points, especially for those who are afraid all is lost. IN our town, it was a peacock. A white peacock names Albert. He lives wild and is usually around downtown Boulder Creek, minding his own and occasionally eating a mouse or lizard or just grazing on the local homegrown produce.

He was nowhere to be found when folks evaced, so it was feared he was dead, if not burned, then perhaps succumbed to the smoke.

As soon as some folks could get back in (around poorly-manned police blocks) someone found him, sitting on their fence, just like normal. They took him with 'em and he served as a rallying



point emotionally for a community that is dealing with so much devastation.

And Hawaiians are so welcoming, the place so entrancing, we all kinda feel like their our community.

Then, I saw the Reefdancer.

The Reefdancer is a semi-submarine, really a stylized glass-bottom boat. It's cute, the bright yellow so many of us associate with Jacques Cousteau, and it's a good trip out. I saw Hanu, the green turtle, swim by and even caught a brief glimpse of one on camera. The boat is pretty distinctive, and I caught a couple of photos.

Then I went looking through those photos of the burned Lahaina, the ruins still smoking, and I noticed that most boats were

either gone, or have mustered out on one far corner of the jetty.

Save for one.

It was badly burned, so it wasn't exactly clear that it was the Reefdancer, but when I zoomed in and compared to the photos I'd taken, it was clearly the same. The ex-



ternal railing supports exactly the same, the position on the harbor, and the size all fit.

But the top portion was gone. The bright yellow paint burned off. It was still floating, but it was almost unrecognizable. The harbor burned so intensely that even a metal hulk like the Reefdancer could suffer extreme damage, though the fact that it stayed afloat was a good sign. I really hope they can re-pair and return to service. They were incredibly nice!

Yeah, I may have some attachment to these fires because of our experience with our own fires, but really, it's heartbreaking to see so many historical locations destroyed. Lahaina was incredibly important to the colonial period, and there were reminders of that everywhere. There were ruins of a fort, untouched by the flames it seemed, and the Banyan tree nearly stretched so far as to touch them. The Lahaina Courthouse burned, though the structure still stood. It housed a gallery and the Historical Society, and I fear everything was lost, which kills the historian in me. The last Hawaiian flag to fly over the courthouse was in there. Lahaina had been the capital for a while, and was a major important whaling site. The Pioneer Inn, the Baldwin House, so many shops along Front street, gone.

They will rebuild, of course, and they will thrive once again, even without the historic aspect. I hope I'll get to see it again, in a few years, but I'll always remember the way it was back in May.



Ala Hele Mo'olelo O Lahaina • Lahaina Historic Trail
Command Post of Kamehameha

During the wars of unification of the Hawaiian islands, Kamehameha the Great landed here with his fleet of war canoes from a place, many of which were up to 70 feet long and double-hulled. The fleet was made up of 800 canoes, stretching for miles along the great reef.

Constructed on the shoreline at this harbor were canoe sheds, thatched sheds for the chiefs, a hale (a large, thatched meeting and eating place for the chiefs. A hale, or dignitary temple for the Hawaiian gods, was also located here.

From 1802 to 1810, Kamehameha and his retinue directed about 1,000 people (manned at Lahaina, repairing, detaching, and making public improvements to the area that had been plundered by war. Thatched pillared dwellings and two paths stretched as far along the coast as the war canoes. For the first time in decades, Lahaina enjoyed peace and relaxation.



That's all for this issue.

August is weird as it feels, weather-wise, like June, which after last year when August felt like absolute hell, is a relief. We've still got Summer II coming, traditionally at the end of September, and then maybe we'll have a rainy season.

Next week, I'll be writing a lot more about my love of film because it'll be Cinequest here in San Jose. I'll have some looks at films and filmmakers.

OK, til next time! The coffee was the Kauai Coffee Garden Isle blend, both with and without Blueberries, which I gotta say is an awesome addition!



