



Claims Department



OK, I know, I know...

I haven't done any more of the music issues since, oh..., February. I'M SORRY!!! Weather, life, work, and most of all, researching has left me little time to work on them, so now, here's this!

What is this, exactly?

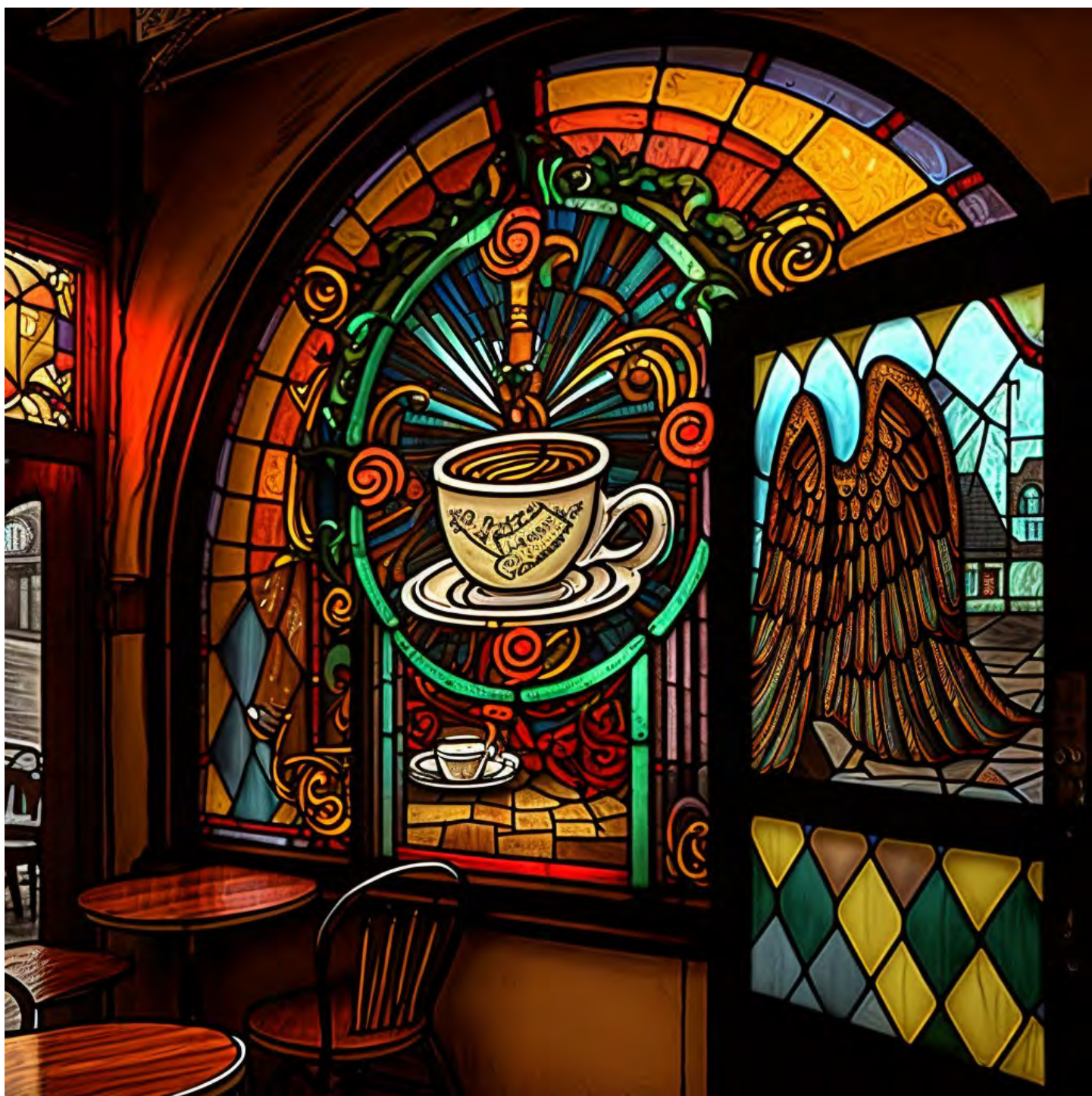
Well, *Claims Department* started as a gimmickzine, and this is gonna be a different gimmick. You see, I've been writing while enjoying my coffee. Short bursts, as it were, but enjoyable. So, I've determined that every time I drink a coffee, I'll write a piece, and try and wrap it up so that every article is just the product of a single cup.

Admittedly, some drank slower than others...

AND ANOTHER THING!!!

Yes, like most of my zines these days, there's a lot of me working with MidJourney and DeepDreamGenerator, but there's also a bunch of 1980s and 90s fanart that Henry Welch never got to use when he was doing *The Knarley KNews* and he passed along to me! That makes me happy, as I love that stuff!

OK, here we go!







## The Jay Haldeman stories—“Thirty-Love”

You have a fundamental advantage over the world. You use it to make yourself rich, part of which means that you’re away from the partner you love more than anything as a way to buy them the future you’ve always promised. You reach a fork in the road and can complete your personal goal or set another along a different path, a better path. That’s the basic outline of the philosophical question within Jack C. Haldeman II’s *Thirty Love*, but there’s so much more going on because it’s actually a question within that question.

Do we approve?

And this is a major part of why I love Jay Haldeman’s writing.

The story is one of Charlie Duncan, a professional tennis player. He’s got a secret: he can flash-forward into the future, meaning he can see where the ball is going to go, how the match is going to play out. He flashes forward and comes back, makes his moves. The way Haldeman describes the method is sensational, in that it brings the reader a specific sensation, and one that I found quite jarring in the best possible way. This is something I would never want to feel in the flow, but rather as a sharp punt, a rush and push and the scene is ours. It’s a wonderful effect, and one that a lesser writer could easily have fouled up. This is not a psychedelic story, or even a psychedelic event. It’s an ability that one figures out how to deal with.

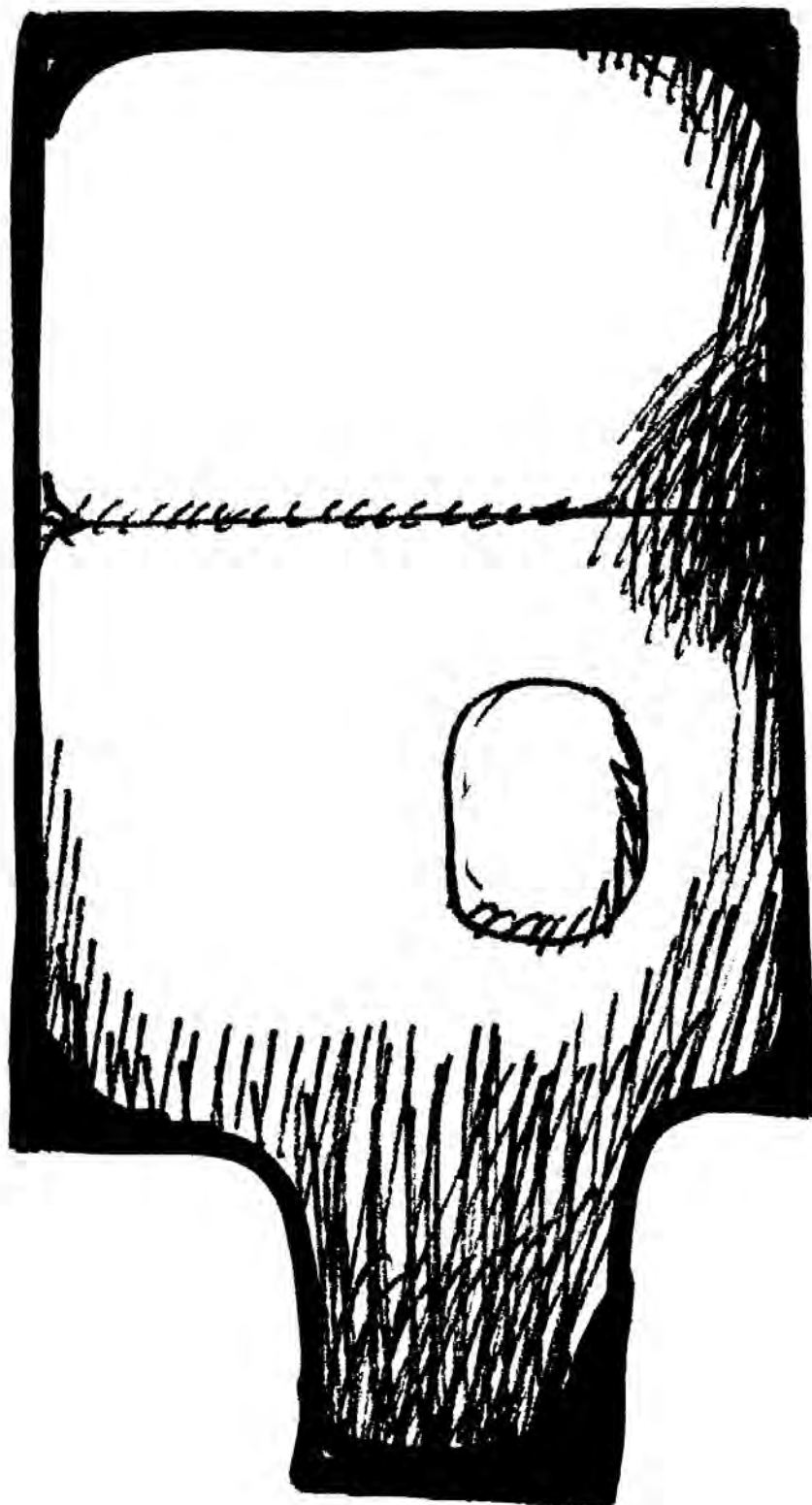
And he makes his living off of it.

Let me bring something up, and it’s something I’m not 100% certain Jay Haldeman, but it does seem to be a theme in several of his stories – cheating. The flashing-forward idea is a form of cheating, a fantastical form of cheating, but still cheating. It’s all about having an advantage over the other guy. The idea of steroids as a significant part of sports was on the rise in public consciousness by the late 1970s, so it would make a lot of sense that Jay would add a tinge of that into his stories, though it wasn’t so deeply ingrained that it was the meme that it is today. Several of Jay’s stories deal with the idea of how to cheat, and how it effects the choices that the players have to make.

And that's the one we see here. He can cheat to win, but he also has a view of what's going to happen if he does, and he makes a choice. In this case, it's a choice where he has to walk a tightrope. He has a goal that he's been working for, and he's literally 'one day away from retirement!' and his opponent is a kid in his first big time tourney finals, and has everything ahead of him. The flash tells him what will happen... or at least what could happen. I guess you can see that this is going to be a moral issue, but it's not quite simply that. It's about not only free will, but about what is cheating, even if it isn't to benefit yourself. I love that angle.

It's a wonderful story, one with an impressive moral and a hero, who is also the villain.

That's right, he's both. Like John McEnroe.



IMPASSE

ROSLIN



# My New Meals

Since I've found out that I'm diabetic, and have high blood pressure, I've had to start cooking and eating different. Here's the most frequently made dish around GarciaGate Manor.

1 to 1.5 pounds lean ground beef or pork (90% lean or better)

6 to 8 ounces mushrooms (Shiitakes or Crimini), sliced

1 medium yellow onion, diced

5 to 10 cloves of garlic, minced or crushed

1 to 2 tbsp fresh basil, chopped (or 1 tbsp dried basil)

1 to 2 tbsp crushed ginger (or 1.5 tbsp dried ginger)

2 Tbsp soy sauce or Coconut aminos.

Salt (or Trader Joe's Umami seasoning) and Pepper to taste.

Olive Oil

Warm Olive oil (start with 1 tbsp) over medium heat. Add mushroom, toss in the pan, and you might need to add a little more oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. After a minute or two, add the onion, a little more salt and pepper, and then toss until the onions are nearly translucent. Then add the meat.

Break up the meat, and after it's partly browned, add the garlic, basil, and soy or coconut aminos. Lower heat to medium low after all the pink is gone and cook for another couple of minutes.



Remove with a slotted spoon and put it into a bowl. This, you can eat with tortilla chips, or mix in a little bit of ricotta, or some shredded cheese. This usually makes 2 to 3 servings.







SO, for the first time in 8 years, WrestleMania was in California.

I pretty much only go to wrestling when it's super-close and fairly cheap. WrestleMania ain't cheap, and the other shows that popped up around town the same weekend weren't cheap either. Though, my Mom lives about an hour and a half from LA, so no need for a hotel, and my kids were going there for Spring Break. I made a plan to go to The Collective, a series of Indy wrestling shows, both US and Japanese groups, and then go to my Mom's and watch the actual WrestleMania shows on television with the kids (and Mom's kitchen with its beautiful flat-top) and then head home and enjoy the week without the kids until I flew back down to pick them up and bring 'em home!

I drove down a day early. I was actually staying with a friend, the amazing Derek McCaw, for the first night in Burbank. I drove down, stopping for breakfast/lunch (it was 10:30am-ish) at Split-Pea Anderson's on 101 in Buellton. I had the endless bowl of soup, with fixin's, and it was delicious and filling enough to keep me going for the next few hours. This was followed by passing through my favorite city in Central California, Solvang, and then on up and over to Santa Barbara on one of the most beautiful drives in all of California. I was listening to a cozy mystery at first, and then one of the Great Courses, this one on The Manhattan Project. I pulled into a gas station in Thousand Oaks and used the bathroom and changed to podcasts, which had me listening to the ultra-fannish Octothorpe, and then the LA-based Ghosttown. It was a story about LA in the 1980s, which was a time I spent in and around LA often.

I got in to Burbank early enough to do a little shopping. Derek lives around the corner from a shop called Blast from the Past. It's a combination comic shop, bookstore, and memorabilia store. I saw that they had a bunch of pulps, and not at bad prices. For 20 bucks, I got two Argosys, and two Railroad Stories, a gift to James that I still need to send his way. I left the store and drove a bit around Burbank, found a Rite-Aid so I could get





some Breath-Right strips, and then found a Hollywood Bookstore, which was literally in the same building as Blast from the Past, but I had somehow missed on my first visit. The selection of books was really good, with some very obscure 1980s titles, and a LOT of movie zines, and quite a few VHS and DVDs. Sadly, no actual films.

I met up with Derek and we caught up. He's an amazing guy, and I have to say that of all the people I know, Derek is likely the one person I would most like to make proud of me. He's human, and moreover, humane. We headed over to Zankou Chicken for dinner.

Now, I'm going to go on about Zankou for a minute. It's Mediterranean food - shawarma, chicken tarna, felafel, and other wonderful fare. Founded by Armenians in the 1980s, the restaurant has a bit of a darker history (founder Mardiros Iskendarian murdered his mother and sister before killing himself, a story you can read in my book, *Food and Crime*, coming out July 29th, 2023!) but the food is really good step-above-fast food fare. I got the mixed sish, lamb and beef, with rice and hummus and extra tanhini.

And garlic sauce.

Now, the famed garlic sauce is good. It's light and fluffy, and on its own is pretty good, but mixed with the hummus and a little tahini, and it's magic to dip the meat into.

And that's what I did. Heaven.

We ate, and headed back to Derek's. I conked out pretty early, probably by 930, and slept on a pull-out. I had to get up early.

On the second day, I woke up early. The first show started at 11, so I woke up at 6, then got a shower and headed to Bob's Big Boy.

Now, I love Bob's. When I was a kid, the family would head there for dinner before going to the movies at the theatres right behind the one on Winchester Blvd in San Jose. The Fisherman's Dinner, a friend piece of cod, three fried shrimp, a couple of fried scallops, and french fries, is my all-time favorite meal.

And is it any wonder that I'm a diabetic with high-blood pressure?

I got the Corned Beef and Hash, and coffee. So much coffee.

It was nothing special.

Actually, it was incredibly special.

So special.



It literally felt like what I would imagine my dad would have felt in the days when he'd get off from work early in the morning, swing by Bob's for breakfast and coffee. He'd be thinking about his kid, me, at home, just waking up and getting ready for school. I was thinking about the kids, then back at home, getting ready for the last couple of days before they went on spring break. I'm almost as old now as my dad was when he died. He'd have only been 26 when I was the same age as my kids, which is so strange to me. I think about Dad all the time, but never so much as when I'm thinking of my kids. He'd have loved being a grandpa. He's also have probably loved the corned beef hash, because he'd usually ordered them. I enjoyed breakfast and headed off to the Ukrainian Culture Center.

It may seem odd to have a series of wrestling shows at a place like a Ukrainian Culture Center, but the space is incredible and perfect for just this purpose. It's got high ceiling and a wide sort of rotunda. There's a beautiful precentium arch, and it's easily the most







beautiful place I've ever watched wrestling. There was a food window, though it wasn't open for the first show. I had a seat in the 3rd row, on the camera side, so the folks who bought the show on FiteTV could only see the back of my head.

It also meant that dives into the audience came right at me!

And there were a bunch of dives into the audience.

I knew exactly one of the wrestlers working the show, and in the main event. Santino Brothers Wrestling I believe it's a Southern California promotion and training school, and while the show was fun, no one really made a big impact. Willie Mack, a very large wrestler who does some incredible flying, was the one I had seen before, at the prior WrestleMania week in San Jose in 2015. His main event match was pretty darn good, and I'm glad I saw it.

There were a couple of really talented folks on the show. Killer Bae, Heather Monroe. She's got a great look, and she's fairly fluid in the ring. She's been around since 2016, and actually started at 26, about 4 or 5 years after a lot of modern wrestlers. There was also Bad Dude Tito, who looked kinda like a mix between Steve Dr. Death Williams and Rick Steiner from the 1990s. His match with Matt Vandagriff was probably the best wrestling on the show, and I'm glad there was more Tito later on!



The best discovery for me on the show was one of the refs—Scarlette Donovan. She's not only easy on the eyes, but she's got an incredible ability in the ring as a ref. She isn't a type you normally see, who appear to be trying to keep the match within the guidelines and are more along the lines of absent-minded authoritarians or dispassionate observers. No, she does it more as an involved, and concerned, member of the team trying not only to maintain control of the match, but to keep the wrestlers out of danger, in a way. The way she reacted to a blatant foul wasn't by getting in the face of the offender first, something you see from a lot of refs these days, but to check on the victim of the foul and then issue a warning to the offender. It's a much more interesting way to play the role, and it's completely unobtrusive! That's really what a ref should be and seldom is these days.

After the show, I headed down the way to Yoshinoya, a fast food place that's all over Hawaii (where I'll be in 10 days!) and SoCal, though all but one in Silicon Valley has closed. I got a rice bowl, full of thin-sliced ginger beef. It was tasty and filling, and would have to power me through the rest of the day!





# On The Mighty, Mighty Bosstones

I went to school in Boston.

I never fail to mention this, do I?

It was the early 1990s and Ska was a big thing in the city, with several of the best-known bands in all of skadom coming from Beantown. There was Bim Skala Bim, The Allstonians, Skavoovie & The Epitones, and the biggest fish in the pond at the time – The Mighty, Mighty Bosstones.

They'd just been the Bosstones until a 1960s band called the Bosstones piped up. They added the 'Mighty, Mighty' part and it honestly fit. Pretty much everyone called them The Bosstones still, much like Suede when they had to become The London Suede officially.

I saw them numerous times, often with other bands that I loved from the West Coast. Skankin' Pickle, Fishbone (and that was a great show!) NOFX, The Tantra Monsters, Hepcat, and even the wonderful souls that made up Rancid before they had broken bigger and brought the ska sound that made Operation Ivy such a big deal back in the 1980s.

The Bosstones went through three phases – the early, the Metal Years, and the BIG TIME!

## The Early

When the ground-breaking compilation *Mashin' Up the Nation* was released, it introduced a lot of folks to a lot of great bands, including Gangster Fun, who went on for about 20 years doing great stuff. The song *Drums & Chickens* was a lot of non-Boston-types introduction to the band, and it's a good example of the early phase. It was the combination of



Hard Core Punk and Ska, with Ska actually providing the backbone of the work. That was a great phase, and songs like *I Hope I Never Lose My Wallet*, *Drunks & Children*, and the impressive *Where'd You Go* are all not just excellent examples of The late 80s/turn-of-the-90s Bosstones, but also of Third Wave Ska at the middle of the first phase. They were releasing on Taaaang! Records, far better known for Hardcore than ska, and one of the most influential small labels in the US at the time.

I never saw the Bosstones in this period, though plenty of show videos over the years. I'd say they put on a really good show, and the crowds were a lot more niche than when I started going to their shows in the 1993 timeframe.

## The Metal Years

The 1993 release of the EP *Ska-Core, the Devil and More* was the first obvious nod towards the fact that they were gonna be throwing more thrash into the mix. They had kinda hinted at this with the EP *Where'd You Go* in 1991, but in 1993, they released their biggest, and hardest and crunchiest, album up to that point – *Don't Know How to Party*. The album didn't get rid of all the ska sound, but there was a lot more metal. The horns were there, but really that was about it. It was pretty much the same for the 1994 album *Question the Answers*, though the song *Hell of a Hat* shows that they were at least still capable of giving us a more ska-based song, though the opening is a blaring blast of guitar and horns that settles into a standard, mid-tempo song, that only ventures into metal (and with a great line sung by the entire band as a chorus – 'sharpest mother-fucker in the join, other mother-fuckers stop and point').

This period led a lot of Ska purists, and Boston was full of them at the time, to look elsewhere, and especially to bands like The Allstonians and Steady Earnest.

This was also the period where they went to Mercury records, and started selling a lot of records.

## THE BIG TIME

The 1997 release of *Let's Face It* was huge.

This was their biggest record as far as sales go, and it coincides with the bands going back towards ska and away from the whole metal thing. The songs still have metal and hard core infused bits, but they were built as ska songs with, instead of hard core or metal songs cum ska. This formula was essential to the success of the band Rancid, the remnants of the seminal Bay Area Punk-Ska combo Operation Ivy, who returned to a ska sound with their second album. *The Rascal King*, a song inspired by legendary Boston mayor Curley, was a really good tune, but it was *The Impression That I Get* that was the big hit.

The follow-up, *Pay Attention* was stylistically similar to *Let's Face It*, but it lacked the emphasis. The three years of touring, including recording a pretty good live album at their New Year's show at the Middle East, and the album just felt flat. The band had a couple of departures, and it was clear that the peak had been back in 1997 and 98.

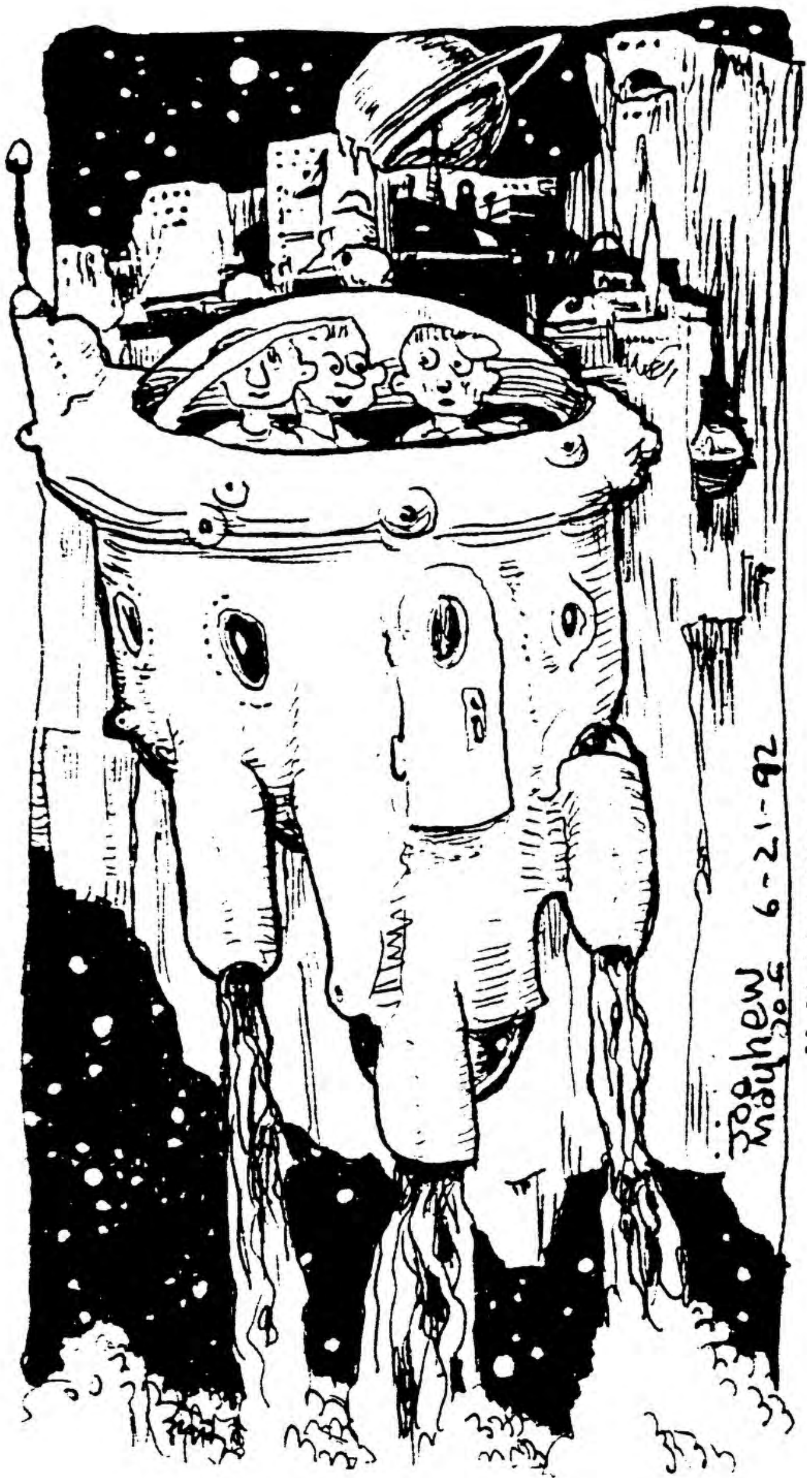
They lost their record deal with Island Records, and ended up recording *A Jackknife to a Swan*, a legitimately terrible album, on SideOne Dummy Records. They then took several years off, broke up, and returned in 2009 with a good album, *Pin Point and Gin Joints*. It was clear that their time in the sun was over, but they could still go. They released three more albums, all of them OK, and they released *When God Was Great* in 2021, which did really well in England. It's actually the best of their post-peak albums.

And also their last.

The band announced their break-up in 2022. Dickey Barrett had been making the rounds for years, including being the announcer for *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* for 18 years. Barrett, whose voice was a major marker of the band, had become a widely-known Anti-Vaxxer, and that was the straw that broke a couple of backs, it appears.

I still look back on the early phase of the Bosstones with a great fondness, especially the late 1980s stuff. It's a shame I didn't get to see 'em back then, but I'm glad for the dozen or so times I did manage to ride the plaid all night long.











OK, so that's this issue!

I don't know when, or even how, the next issue will come, but there will be a next issue. It'll have my look at The Buzzcocks (including a piece by Cardinal Cox!) and more on WrestleMania week and my love of Jay Haldeman!

There'll also be more art!

The art this issue? I used MidJourney to make the cover, and the art on pages 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 15 and 16. 6, and I took the pics on pages 7 to 10.

Bill Rotsler was on page 4.

Joe Mayhew did the piece on page 13.

Jose Sanchez did the Mothman image on page 14 and I love it!

Thanks to Henry Welch for both of those!

I'll be at BayCon briefly, and then probably no cons for me until October, and maybe not even until next year. We'll see.

The Drink Tank has a new issue out, on 21st Century Crime Fiction, and we're doing *What We Do in the Shadows* (Deadline—May 25) and *The Manhattan Project* (June 25) next.

Journey Planet has *Fictional/Mythical Musical Instruments*, and for the end of the year, *Jack the Ripper in Fiction!*

I'm psyched for those!

OK, enough of me! [Johnnyeponymous@gmail.com](mailto:Johnnyeponymous@gmail.com) for comments!





