

THE MARK NELSON EXPERIENCE (DECEMBER 1992)

Welcome to Volume One, Issue Ten, of **The Mark Nelson Experience**.

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The Mark Nelson Experience is available for the "usual" (circulation this issue is 40). This zine contains Hobby discussion¹ and will fold with the September 1993 issue.

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"No, there isn't enough news and gossip to fill a global hobby magazine." *Mike Siggins*
Electric Monk 31 (*August 1991*)

WORLD ZINE POLL — 1992

Every year I receive a number of requests from hobby members asking me to recommend 'overseas' zines. If they can tell me what kind of zine they are looking for then I can usually point them in the right direction. It turns out, however, that most people just want to see a 'good' zines rather than a zine, for example, which 'runs large multi-player variants'. In such cases I send a list of zines which I enjoy.

In **The Mouth Of Sauron** Volume V: #1 (*March 1989*) I listed my top ten zines and called this listing 'The World Zine Poll' and every year since then I have repeated the exercise. It's difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to read every British diplomacy zine; to read every diplomacy zine on the world? I'm glad to say that my original idea has caught on and last year Iain Bowen and James Nelson also printed their own 'Top Ten Zines'. After all, I can only recommend zines that I see and I only see a fraction of the diplomacy zines produced in the world. Furthermore I only recommend zines that I enjoy! Iain, James and myself read a differing selection of zines and taken together the lists produced last year provided a useful guide to diplomacy publications published around the world.

This year Swedish zine editor Per Westling has already published his own Top Ten listing and has nudged me into printing my own listing — Per's listing appears after my own.

The primary purpose of 'The World Zine Poll' has always been to promote internationalism, which is why I've always encouraged other editors to print their own listings. Looking through my previous listings I discover another purpose: it puts down onto paper which zines I like at the time I write the article. In doing so it acts as a historical record which charts how my tastes and interests in fanzines have changed over the years. How could I ever have claimed that *Electric Monk* was a worthy read? Yet I did so, it's there in black and white. And which of the ten zines that I recommend this year will I come to regret plugging a few years hence? You'll have to wait and see!

¹Actually it contains Crazy Markie writings about the Hobby.

THE FOURTH WORLD ZINE POLL: 1992

This is the fourth in a series of annual zine-listings produced by Mark Nelson. Previous lists appeared in: **The Mouth Of Sauron** Volume V: #1 (*March 1989*), **The Mouth Of Sauron** Volume VI: #1-2 (*March 1990*) and **The Mouth of Sauron** Volume VII: #III (*June 1991*).

If you want to produce a list of your top ten zines then please do so. Please send me a copy so that I can reprint it in **The Mark Nelson Experience** and send a copy to anyone who asks me for zine recommendations.

In last year's listing I commented that were several zines that could make it into the 1992 listing.

"Zines to look out for next year include **Been There Done That** if Tom ((Nash)) can produce it on a regular basis. David Hood's revamped **Diplomacy World** has an outside chance to scrape in if he can make the zine more lively and varied in content. The German **Europa 2000** has a chance with its wide range of letter-writers, although it may be too game-heavy to impress me that much.

Finally Harry Bond's **U-Bend** has a glittering future provided it can be produced on a regular basis. Since he has to face finals and the transition from student to full-time work this remains to be seen, but the potential is there. Hopefully he'll set up some international trades..." **The Mouth Of Sauron** Volume VII: #3 (*June 1991*)

Have any of these potential wonder zines made the grade and moved from also-ran to inclusion in the listing proper? Let's take a see at what's happened over the last 18 months...

Tom Nash folded and left the **American Hobby** after becoming disillusioned with the trend towards turbophreakism, his final issues contained some brutal **Hobby** commentary. **Europa 2000** has been mostly warehouse issues this year, the only thing of note being that George has moved from Germany to England to read **History** at Cambridge. When he produces the November issue of **Europa 2000** he will become one of a select band of individuals who have produced zines in two different countries.² Joy Hibbert's **U-Bend** has been the most disappointing zine seen in recent years. There is the rare moment of brilliance but the only reputation the zine has established is one for shoddy, second-class, gming.

Of last-year's zines five have been dropped from my list. I haven't seen an issue of the excellent **American zine Penguin Dip** this year so I've reluctantly removed it from my last. Steve Doubleday's favourite diplomacy zine (or is it?) **FTT** has produced two issues since my last listing but seems to have lost its spark of interest. Whatever merit **Electric Monk** had in previous years (and I believe that at one long forgotten moment it was an interesting zine) it has deteriorated rapidly. It seems impossible that the **Bears** could produce a more mediocre, less interesting zine but issue after issue, deadline after deadline, they manage to do it. If I believed that "*real zines are mimeo*" then **Electric Monk** would be the perfect example to illustrate why meaningless platitudes and clip artwork do not maketh a zine good. **Gallimaufry** remains the same as ever, which is almost all that needs to be said: as ever the potential is there, but it remains potential.

Finally there is **Variant's & Uncles**. At the time I formulated this list in March 1992³ the typical issue of **V&U** was appalling reproduced and mostly seemed to be mostly made up of newspaper cuttings. Since then the zine has improved considerable and on current form it will be a contender for next year's listing. When it's good, it's very very good but when it's bad... When it's bad it's dreadful. Generally James is

²I believe that there are five others. Can you name them?

³OK, it's taken some time to publish it...

good on hobby news and general chit-chat and not so good on diplomacy variants. Iain Bowen has recently suggested that James should put out an issue devoted to bad variants. I was under the impression that that was exactly what he has been doing. 8-)

Zines which I considered including in my top ten include the aforementioned **Variants & Uncles**, the Canadian zine **Excelesior** and the American **Maniac's Paradise**. All of them have good chances to be included in next year's listing. But onto the Top Ten!

(10) **DIPLOMACY WORLD**: David Hood: *2905 20th Street NE, Hickory, NC 28601. USA*

Sercon and proud of it **Diplomacy World** has been turned around by David Hood. If you idea of mecca is a zine printing articles on diplomacy, articles on variants and then a few more articles on diplomacy with a demo game, hobby news and a cuddly toy thrown in then this is the zine for you. David also realises that there is more to the diplomacy hobby than diplomacy and its variants, and as the 'flagship of the North American Hobby' **Diplomacy World** should, and does, recognise this: recent issues have contained articles explaining some of the different types of games played postally.

(9) **Dolchstoß**: Richard Sharp: *Norton House, Whielden Street, Amersham, BUCKS. HP7 0HU*

Dolchstoß remains one of the best zines to play Diplomacy in, if you want to play an international game then this zine is particularly recommended. Aside from diplomacy **Dolchstoß** remains one of the best written and most interesting of all zines. Over the last year Sharp has provided a succession of different pieces of hobby trivia, the only hobby related items to be seen in the zine. Winner of the Zine Poll in 1992 and if Sharp wants to win it in 1993 it will do so.

(8) **STET**: Leah Zeldes Smith, *17 Kerry Ln, Wheeling, IL 60090 USA.*

There has been a SF zine on each of my Top Ten's since 1990, each year a different one and this year the honour falls to **Stet**. (Steve Doubleday contends that this is a diplomacy zine.) Issue 5 (*April 1992*) was a magnificent 96 page multi-coloured mimeod production. Although it contains a number of excellent articles the meat of the zine is its 54 page lettercolumn. An SF equivalent of **Foolhardy**? That isn't quite true but much of the letter column discussion in **STET** (merits of different fanzine publishing techniques, why are there so few people entering fandom, what will be the effect of email fandom on snail mail fandom, are email zines really zines, conventions, recruitment drives...) would not be out of place in **Foolhardy**.

(7) **Y Ddraig Goch**: Iain Bowen, *5 Wigginton Terrace, YORK. YO3 7JD*

Most knowledgeable fanzine critics, Action Man and Steve Agar agreed that with 2nd place **Y Ddraig Goch** was over-rated in the 1992 Zine Poll. And this year Iain Bowen has even gone so far as ask his readers to give him a lower vote than in last year's poll, he doesn't think that he has produced as good a zine this year as last year.

This may be the case (I think not). However **YDG** is one of the best zines pubbed in the UK. A reasonable letter-column (although not as good as one would expect), excellent hobby news (a rarity these days) and Iain's own editorials. No longer the angry young man, but the cynical hobby hack. It will be left to fan historians to muse over the reasons why there was such a dramatic improvement in **Y Ddraig Goch's** Zine Poll Performance between 1987-1988 and 1990-1992.

(6) **Lepanto 4-Ever**: Per Westling: *c/o Lindh, Drabantgatan 11, S-58346, Linköping, SWEDEN.*

The Swedish **Victorianna**? An interesting comparison. **Lepanto 4-Ever** contains a strong, diplomacy-orientated, lettercolumn and runs numerous articles on diplomacy and variants. There is a strong non-Swedish presence to the zine and it is a very easy 'first international zine' for someone to step into.

(5) **Victorianna**: John Cain, 76 Banool Road, Balwyn, 3103, AUSTRALIA.

1992 was the year John Cain decided to run down **Victorianna**, after fifty excellent issues. Although in its early days it was a **Beowulf** clone John quickly established his own identity. Regularly as clockwork, this zine manage to cater for both the local market and the international market and the letter column always contained contributions from numerous overseas types.

The Austrian diplomacy hobby has always been small and cliquey, difficult for an outsider to understand. **Victorianna** was the only Australian zine to try and overcome this image and since **Beowulf's** fold it was the main representation of Australia on the international scene. The only Australian zine which seems interested in taking over its role is the new zine **Popular Cooterly**. We will have to await developments.

(4) **NERTZ**: William Whyte, 107 Windmill Road, OXFORD. OX3 7BT.

NERTZ is the most variable zine in my Top Ten. Periods of periodicity are seperated by parameter regimes of intermitent behaviour — we seem to have no ability to predict when this bifurcation will occur. Similiarly the content of the zine is very variable. When it's good, it's very good but when it's bad it's uninspiring. On the whole the last year, at least the pre-ManorCon period, has been good. If you've never zine the zeen then you should do so, but it's very much the kind of zine you either like or dislike intensely. This is very much reflected in the Zine Poll Results, the zine has had indifferent positions from 1985 on, except for 1990 when it won the Poll under 'mysterious' circumstances. Ultimately **Nertz** suffers from poor quality of reproduction and the varying formats in which the zine has been produced. Fun, anarchic approach to Fandom? Oh yes, but a way to good results in the Zine Poll? It seems not.

(3) **Greatest Hits**: Pete Birks, 181 Friern Road, East Dulwich, LONDON. SE22 0BD.

No games. No waiting lists. And no issues since ManorCon... Hobby news? Yes! Letter column? Yes! Editorial? Yes! Frequency approximately monthly? Well until recently... Steve Doubleday considers this to be a diplomacy zine.

Greatest hits has been in every zine poll since 1975 and holds the British All Comers Record For Most Wins: 1979-1981 and 1983. After a period of production between 1986 and 1991 when it seems that Pete was producing the zine on auto-pilot it reached 4th position in the 1992 Poll, at which point several people complained that although it contains more hobby news than 90% of diplomacy zines it wasn't a diplomacy zine because it didn't run diplomacy. In the end it doesn't matter: it's an excellent zine.

(2) **Foolhardy**: Doug Kent, 54 West Cherry Street, #211, Rahway, NJ 07065 USA

Dick & Julie Martin's **House of Lords** was the first overseas zine that I contributed to and is one of my favourite zines of all time. If I have one regret it is that I never really gave **House of Lords** the prominence it deserved in my letter-hacking.

House of Lords placed 9th in 1989 and 8th in 1990 and its fold left a gap in the North American Hobby. But from its ashes arises a new zine, Doug Kent's **Foolhardy** contains many of the **HoL** contributors (along with some new faces) and is run in a similiar manner. A more caring compassionate version of **Hol**?

Foolhardy is a hobby discussion zine that appears quaterly. You want to discuss a topic? Send in a letter and wait for the sparkes to fly. Current topics of discussion include the role and value of diplomacy organizations, the influence of laser printers and dtp on publishing, why are there fewer novices entering the hobby and what can be done to turn the tide, tournament rating systems, how to run **The Zine Register** and much, much, more! Many of this topics should be of interest to non North-Americans and this zine provides an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas between hobby members.

(1) **Northern Flame**: Cal White, 1 Turnberry Avenue, Toronto, Ontario. M6N 1P6. CANADA

Northern Flame won the Runestone Poll in 1990 and 1991 but couldn't make it three in a row. It came top of my top ten last year and this year, will it make three in a row next year?

Excellent letter column, laid back editorials by a laid-back editor and some excellent columns contributed by outside writers. This zine has a heavy overseas presence and contains regular contributions from a number of Brits. There is variety in the contributors and in the topics discussed. With so much emphasis being placed on the letter-column this is a letter-hacks dream zine!

Just out of interest I'm including my previous three Top Ten lists for your erridition. All the zines are British except where stated: AZ = Australian, CAN = Canadian, SWE = Swedish, USA = USA and SF indicates a zine which Steve Doubleday considers to be part of the Diplomacy hobby.

1989	1990	1991
Mad Policy	Passchendaele (CAN)	Northern Flame (CAN)
Dolchstoss	Victorianna (AZ)	Victorianna (AZ)
Gallimaufry	Electric Monk	Electric Monk
V&U	Northern Flame (CAN)	Dolchstoss
Beowulf (AZ)	Dolchstoss	Lepanto 4-Ever (SWE)
Passchendaele (CAN)	V&U	V&U
Victorianna (AZ)	House of Lords (USA)	Penguin Dip (USA)
Northern Flame (CAN)	Penguin Dip (USA)	FTT (SF)
House of Lords (US)	Shipyard Blues (SF)	Y Ddraig Goch
Ode	Gallimaufry	Gallimaufry

Now for something completely pointless, but it was phun to compile it! Let's give 1 pt to the zine in 10th position upto 10pts for the zine in 10th position. Then we derive the following table which should not be taken seriously at all!

(1) Northern Flame	30	(2) Victorianna	28
(3) Dolchstoss	24	(4) Variants Uncles	17
(5) Electric Monk	16	(6) Passchendaele	15
(7) Lepanto 4-Ever	11	(8) Gallimaufry	10
(9) Mad Policy	10	(10) Foolhardy	9
(11) Greatest Hits	8	(12) Nertz	7
(13) Penguin Dip	7	(14)=Beowulf	6
(14)= House of Lords	6	(14)=Y Ddraig Goch	6
(17)= Stet	3	(17)=FTT	3
(19) Shipyard Blues	2	(20)=Diplomacy World	1
(20)= Ode	1		

This table is a measure of longevity. My five favourite zines of the past mumble, mumble years would be (in no order): **House of Lords/Foolhardy**, **Northern Flame**, **Passchendaele**, **Thing on The Mat** and...and? I'd have to think about #5. Maybe **Greatest Hits**. The first four represent pinnacles of fanzine production in the 1980's.

WorldZinePoll

By Per Westling

I've always been interested in fanzine polls and the thought of doing a world wide poll has crossed my mind, but of course, this would be even harder than an European one, and probably give a non-significant result. Instead I give you below a highly subjective view of what I regard as the best PBM zines in the world. (This idea originally came from Mark Nelson.) The zines are listed in reverse order:

10. *Trahison* — Always looks nice, which many zines with their own illustrators do, and full of articles, hobby stuff, etc. Would probably be placed higher if not the curse of irregularity (aka French Army in this case) had striken, or if my French was better.
9. *Interzine* — An impressive product, always on time. Give an excellent guide to the German hobby and is usefull for establishing contacts and getting news. Probably higher place if my German was better...
8. *Victoriana* — Sadly this has closed down when John went back to his studies. Was a good read, and a good window of the Oz hobby.
7. *Perelandra* — Excellent layout is one of my weak spots. Reprinted extracts from fiction makes this a good read. Have some unusual games (like postal Monopoly). A tiny letter column though. Won the latest Runestone Poll.
6. *Rösten från Avgrunden* — Well, this spot could have been given to *Gränslandet* or *Mu* instead, but what I like about this zeen is the humour and the well-written articles. It also gives the feeling of everything might happen although not as much as *NERTZ* did.
5. *Electric Monk* — Another zine with excellent layout. Always friendly (the typical family zine) and cousy. The letter column reflects this as well and often brings up unusual subjects. Recently the co-editors Andy and Madi got married (best of luck).
4. *Diplomacy World* — There is something called SerCon, "serious and constructive", which fits *DW* very well. Contains good articles about Diplomacy, both Strategic & Tactics as well as anything else. A variant or two to top it of and you get an excellent product in my book at least.
3. *Mouth of Sauron* — A zine that contains Bridge, SF and the Hobby. What more do you need?
2. *Northern Flame* — Mostly a long letter column, together with an article or two, some subzines and a few games. The whole thing is excellently produced by Cal. One thing I don't like, and which pushes it down to number 2 is the presence of Baseball and American Football...
1. *Diplomat* — This is SerCon as well, with Diplomacy, International Politics and History as main attractions. Has a very global staff of letter writers. Thomas articles about the ancient Europe as well as Germany today makes excellent reading.

Zines that would probably have been listed a year ago include *Dipsosis* (have lost much of its attraction), *MetaDiplomat* (running down to a fold) and *Dipsomania* (too irregular). Zines to watch out for, and which might be included in next year's "poll" are *Mu* (the new true-Diplomacy-zine made by the Upsala crowd), *Foolhardy* (a letter column only zine made by Doug Kent) and maybe *Gränslandet* (last years winner of "Svenska Fansin Pollen" made by Roland Isaksson).

Addresses to the zines above (where not given previously):

Trahison: Xavier Blanchot, 99, bd Raspail, F-75006 Paris, FRANCE

Interzine: Lukas Kautzsch, Seiterichstr. 5, D-7500 Karlsruhe 1, Germany

Perelandra: Pete Gaughan, 1521 S. Novato Blvd. #46, Novato, CA 94947-4147, USA

Avgrunden: Dan Hörning, Box 25006, S-10023 Stockholm, SWEDEN

Electric Monk: Madelaine & Andy Key, 144 Perrinsfield, Venymore, Lechlade, Gloucs. GL7 3SE, England

Diplomat: Thomas Franke, Haarenufer 12, D-2900 Oldenburg, GERMANY