



**NOTES FROM THE  
UNDERGROUND  
DECEMBER 2008**

## NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

*Notes from the Underground* is a bi-monthly newsletter published by Several Unlimited. Dues are \$12.00 per year in the US, \$16.00 overseas, payable September 1. Submissions of articles, reviews, and artwork are welcome. All written submissions should be sent online or typed. Please don't send original artwork by regular mail. The deadline for submissions is the first of every month.

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Erika

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## Meeting Announcements

The November meeting will be held at Jamie Ritchey’s house ([Map of 4729 Kinglet St.](#)). Because of Christmas, there will be no Video Party this month.

## November Birthdays

❖ Margaret McNickle      December 31

## Editor’s Announcement

Club Dues are due now. If you don’t want to write a check, use our handy PayPal link on our webpage.

Because of postage costs, we are sending out newsletters electronically. For a hardcopy, email [EEKfrenzy@gmail.com](mailto:EEKfrenzy@gmail.com). The PDF of each newsletter is also posted on the Several Unlimited website and on the Several Unlimited Yahoo group.

## Club News

### Prez Mez December 2008

*Dee Beetem*

Hi Folks!

I've just gotten back from Jennifer Hebert's Christmas.. As usual it was a great opportunity to catch up with fannish friends that I don't get to meet very often. We should all thank Jennifer for the work she has done to prepare for this event.

FYI: The Friends of Fandom home page (<http://www.cam-info.net/fof.html>) is a great resource for keeping track of other local fannish get-togethers, holiday or not. Margaret Davis maintains pretty exhaustive listings of the doings of the local clubs, fannish gatherings, cons, etc.

For our December meeting at Jamie's, don't forget Carolyn's request for towels, rugs, blankets, and so forth for the Houston area animal shelters. In addition, we usually put together a Christmas donation to the Humane Society or similar charities. Our deteriorating economy is pushing many pets into the animal shelters, so do give generously.

In the New Year, we are looking forward to:

- Steve's New Year' Open House
- An upcoming Several excursion being planned by Margaret
- Revving up the Several Unlimited fanfic archive

Are there any can't-miss sci-fi movies coming out this holiday season? What else might be fun?

### New Year's Day Open House

*By Steve Dial*

You are invited to my New Year's Day open house. No need to RSVP; just come if you can make it.

**Date:** Thursday, January 1, 2009 (When else would it be?)

**Start Time:** Probably between 12:00 noon and 2:00 PM; I shall e-mail the actual time later

**End Time:** Four (4) hours after the start time

**Place:** 6235 Cheena Drive, Houston, Texas 77096-4616

## News and Reviews

### Sci-fi's grand old man, Forrest J Ackerman, dies

By JOHN ROGERS Associated Press Writer

Dec 5th, 2008 | LOS ANGELES -- Forrest J Ackerman, the sometime actor, literary agent, magazine editor and full-time bon vivant who discovered author Ray Bradbury and was widely credited with coining the term "sci-fi," has died. He was 92.

Forrest James Ackerman was born in Los Angeles on Nov. 24, 1916. He fell in love with science-fiction, he once said, when he was 9 years old and saw a magazine called *Amazing Stories*. He would hold onto that publication for the rest of his life.

Ackerman died December 4, 2008 of heart failure at his Los Angeles home, said Kevin Burns, head of Prometheus Entertainment and a trustee of Ackerman's estate.

Although only marginally known to readers of mainstream literature, Ackerman was legendary in science-fiction circles as the founding editor of the pulp magazine *Famous Monsters of Film-land*. He was also the owner of a huge private collection of science-fiction movie and literary memorabilia that for years filled every nook and cranny of a hillside mansion overlooking Los Angeles.

Every Saturday morning that he was home, Ackerman would open up the house to anyone who wanted to view his treasures. He sold some pieces and gave others away when he moved to a smaller house in 2002, but he continued to let people visit him every Saturday for as long as his health permitted.

"My wife used to say, 'How can you let strangers into our home?' But what's the point of having a collection like this if you can't let people enjoy it?" an exuberant Ackerman told *The Associated Press* as he conducted a spirited tour of the mansion on his 85th birthday.

His collection once included more than 50,000 books, thousands of science-fiction magazines and such items as Bela Lugosi's cape from the 1931 film "Dracula."

His greatest achievement, however, was likely discovering Bradbury, author of the literary classics "Fahrenheit 451" and "The Martian Chronicles." Ackerman had placed a flyer in a Los Angeles bookstore for a science-fiction club he was founding and a teenage Bradbury showed up. Later, Ackerman gave Bradbury the money to start his own science-fiction magazine, Futuria Fantasia, and paid the author's way to New York for an authors meeting that Bradbury said helped launch his career.

"I hadn't published yet, and I met a lot of these people who encouraged me and helped me get my career started, and that was all because of Forry Ackerman," the author told the AP in 2005. Later, as a literary agent, Ackerman represented Bradbury, Isaac Asimov and numerous other science-fiction writers.

He said the term "sci-fi" came to him in 1954 when he was listening to a car radio and heard an announcer mention the word "hi-fi." "My dear wife said, 'Forget it, Forry, it will never catch on,'" he recalled. Soon he was using it in Famous Monsters of Film-land, the magazine he helped found in 1958 and edited for 25 years.

Ackerman himself appeared in numerous films over the years, usually in bit parts. His credits include "Queen of Blood," "Dracula vs. Frankenstein," "Amazon Women on the Moon," "Vampirella," "Transylvania Twist," "The Howling" and the Michael Jackson "Thriller" video. More recently, he appeared in 2007's "The Dead Undead" and 2006's "The Boneyard Collection."

Ackerman returned briefly to Famous Monsters of Film-land in the 1990s, but he quickly fell out with the publisher over creative differences. He sued and was awarded a judgment of more than \$375,000.

## Websites of the Month

### 10 Christmas Songs I'm Already Sick Of (and 10 Geeky Alternatives)

<http://blog.wired.com/geekdad/2008/12/xmas-music-post.html?npu=1&mbid=yhp>

There's little wrong with the songs themselves, as they are classics for a reason. Instead the problem seems to lie with the limited aural palette from which we draw our Christmastime selections. Yes, Virginia, there is a wealth of other songs from which to choose. Here's a list of 10 traditional Christmas music offenders, and, since this *is* GeekDad, 10 slightly geekier alternatives.

#### "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" – Gene Autry (mistakenly attributed to Bing Crosby)

From his early days as a [Montgomery Ward pitchman](#) to his eventual absorption into popular culture, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer taught us all an important lesson: one of acceptance and personal pride.

Unbeknownst to all save post-punk rapper [MC Lars](#), Rudolph has an illegitimate brother who also saved Christmas. Hear his tale of woe in Lars's "[Gary the Green-Nosed Reindeer](#)" (2006 charity compilation *A Santa Cause – It's a Punk Rock Christmas Vol. 2*). It's that rare piece of Yuletide songwriting to reference Osama Bin Laden.

#### "Santa Baby" – Eartha Kitt

In 1953, jazz chanteuse and future Catwoman Eartha Kitt described to Santa the various extravagances she required for a merry Christmas. It boasted a sassy, sexy shot of seasonal consumerism that made it a runaway success, and has been covered by every man, woman and child on planet Earth.

Rather than break out this silky but well-worn number this year, why not toss something a little different into the mix? Wizard Rockers The Parselmouths' "[Voldy Baby](#)," for example, has a similar level of cheek coupled with uniquely geeky subject matter. It also uses the phrase "Floo Network" as a clever double entendre. Who can ask for more?

#### "The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)" – Alvin and the Chipmunks

Damn your black heart, [Ross Bagdasarian](#)/David Seville unleashed upon the weary world a holiday tune so undeniably syrupy to enchant

children (and repulse adults) across the breadth of 5 decades.

If you *must* play a dated, pitch-altered gift-giving ditty, why not 1980's "[What Do You Get a Wookiee for Christmas \(When He Already Owns a Comb\)?](#)" from Star Wars cash-in *Christmas in the Stars*, which, oddly enough, has nothing to do with *The Star Wars Holiday Special*.

### **"Santa Claus is Coming to Town" – Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band**

Never has The Boss sounded so commanding, so full of good will toward men, so utterly constipated. It's a fun track and all, but haven't we heard it enough?

Mash-up mastermind [Smash](#) combined the music of Chuck Berry and T.Rex's Marc Bolan under the moniker "Rudolph Loves to Boogie" for a [Get Your Bootleg On](#) Christmas Challenge way back in 2003

### **"We Three Kings" – Mannheim Steamroller**

*Mannheim Steamroller Christmas* sounds like such a great idea in theory; take Yuletide classics and rock them up a bit, ending up with something that sounds less like "modern contemporary" takes on old school Christmas tracks and more like elevator music.

"We Three Konami" from Doctor Octoroc's new release [8-Bit Jesus](#) imagines if the three wise men had been Solid Snake, Simon Belmont and a Contra commando. Yeah, it sounds like that.

### **"Sleigh Ride" – The Carpenters**

All moms love The Carpenters, and thus they are played on infinite repeat in every cinnamon-tainted home interior tchotchke shop in the civilized world. "Sleigh Ride" sure ain't no "Calling Occupants of Interplanetary Craft."

Try "Carpenters Christmas" by esteemed remixer [Go Home Productions](#) (of "[Rapture Riders](#)" fame) (available as part of the [Santastic II: Clausome](#) bootleg compilation). It layers Karen's silky voice atop the dancehall rhythms of Roots Radics with appealing results.

### **"Jingle Bell Rock" – Bobby Helms**

Pioneering musician and Rockabilly Hall of Fame inductee Bobby Helms released this song in 1957, and it has returned like an odd Yuletide curse practically every December since.

I much prefer [ComputeHer](#) and [8 Bit Weapon](#)'s chiptune/ vocoder

arrangement "[Jingle Bitz](#)." It's got a unique appeal that stays true to the retro chic of micromusic whilst still jingling all the way.

### **"Do They Know It's Christmas?" – Band Aid**

This landmark 1984 single has been widely parodied by everyone from *The Simpsons* to Pulp.

For those who are looking for a little charitable giving coupled with their holiday music, Potter fandom super-site The Leaky Cauldron has recently released its second annual [Jingle Spells](#) compilation. Last year's comp raised \$35,000 for First Book, and the Cauldron is looking to do the same this year for [Book Aid](#). *Jingle Spells 2* features the track "A Ministry-Approved Christmas" by Welsh WRocker [Peeved](#). He might not be Bob Geldolf, but he knows his way around a pop song.

### **"Feliz Navidad" – Jose Feliciano**

"Feliz Navidad" is recognized as one of the most-played Christmas songs in the world. Try to make it through the month of December without once hearing Jose chirpily wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

So why not find another song with equally hot brass, like The OneUps' "[Super Mario's Sleigh Ride](#)." Like everything from [Mustin](#) and Co., it distills the musical melody of videogames past into a perfect parcel of jazzy glee.

### **"Wonderful Christmastime" – Paul McCartney**

McCartney penned this popular Christmas ballad in 1979, when the synthesizer was finally coming into its own.

OK Go – whose delightful [Youtubery](#) and kinship with They Might Be Giants easily launched them into nerd stardom – and their 2006 cover of "Father Christmas." It's from that year's KROQ Christmas compilation, but it can also be found [floating about](#) the Internet.

## Calendar and Maps

<b>December 12</b> Several Unlimited Meeting	Jamie Ritchey 4729 Kinglet St, Houston, 77035 713-729-8639
<b>January 1</b> Steve Dial's Open House	Steve Dial 6235 Cheena, 713-771-6297

### 4729 Kinglet

