TELDREPORT MEDIA

A Trinity Universe™ Update

HOPE

SACRIFICE

GREETINGS COLLEAGUE -

Did you catch the latest episode of Tuna Sandwich? I didn't think so. You probably also missed last night's Retrospective broadcast, you presumably haven't downloaded the new cuts by Tau Dellux, and you aren't likely going to catch the Esperanza spectacle until it comes out for the home feed.

The everyday person, or "Joe Hologram" in the vernacular, leads a busy life in a universe that changes at an ever-increasing rate. He generally doesn't travel to exotic locations or brave life-threatening dangers. But thanks to the media, Joe Hologram can have such experiences from the safety and comfort of his home or at the local spectacle. Still, let us not forget that the media — both news and entertainment — is the lens through which we see the universe. This lens can be in focus or it can distort.

Since the dawn of news as an industry, the way information reaches the populace remains as important as the actual stories being covered. Vast leaps in technology allow a million times more information into the home than in the past. However, the question of what information filters down to the viewer continues to be as vital in today's multimedia universe as it was back in the days of newsprint.

But the news is not the only thing coming down the fiber. Entertainment of all sorts explodes into our lives, even when we wish we could avoid it. And for many, it is just as important to find out what happens to the computer-generated members of Strike Team Psion as what happens to real live psions in the field.

Entertainment uplifts us. It raises our spirits and lets us laugh, even when the universe appears to be crashing down around us. Aberrant War survivors still fondly recall the plucky troupes of actors who put on impromptu shows to cheer up those dispossessed by the disasters of war. From festival jugglers to cutting-edge Australian holosims, entertainers and storytellers bring us all together and ease our pain, if only for 30 minutes at a time (not counting advertisements, of course).

While Æon works to defend humanity, let us not lose sight of what matters to the everyday human.

And yet, for all of the wonders that technology has given us, there is a dark side as well. "Mind tripping" has become a new drug of choice, one that even the broad-minded Norça condemn. People use the wonders of interactive technology to isolate themselves from the rest of the universe. Honorable sports like baseball compete for air time with more brutal forms of competition, such as hoverjousting. That which can be used can always be abused.

My computer agent pulled up an old quote that sums up these sentiments: "All television is education television, the question is what is it teaching?"

— Nicholas Johnson

Ad Astra Neville Archer Director, Neptune Division Æon Trinity Hope · Sacrifice · Unity

General Media

restrial Office, Deputy • dedicated telephone line for • they had missed. For a high Kuffner

While looking at the * telephones. viewing habits and transmis- . must look to the past. Quite a ways back to the late-20th . century. In the old days, transmissions — video, telephone, computer — came * over different lines. A well- . w i r e dfamily had "cable"

television

Australian Ter- coming in on one wire, a view older programming Office Director Matthew , their computer, and then one , fee, they could download a or more lines for voice-only copy to their home com-

sion practices of today, we 21st century, cable access ming their video recorders to and telephone providers merged their services. The * missed an episode, they fledgling OpNet was soon . could download it and watch carrying voice, data and video through a network of * faster connections. A world- . wide data network allowing amazing levels of connectiv-

> ity was even- * tually created. . more While the of unlimited linkage, the here to stay.

holovisions). Experiments in downloading video had been going on for some time, but the Omni Broadcasting Corporation was the first network to offer fully programmable programming. Viewers could watch the current program, either through broadcast complete with commercials, or pay a small fee to

puter. They then no longer With the coming of the . had to worry about programcatch certain shows. If they it whenever they wanted. The other networks soon followed OBC's lead.

There was still a large demand for new programming, though time-shifting became commonplace. Holovisions themselves be-K u w a s h a came more advanced, with pulse taught · primitive agents making sugus the dangers gestions as to what the viewer might want to watch. Concerned parents also melding of data . breathed sighs of relief as the and video was greater control of the holovision allowed them to The OpNet • screen out what they didn't also changed the want their children to see. Of way people used course, it wasn't until the their televisions " next generation of holovision (the ancestors of agents that children couldn't run around the parental blockades with relative ease. With the partitioning of the rebuilt OpNet in the late-21st century, broadcasters had to partition their broadcasts as well. The upside was that programming became more and more tailored to the local audience. Yet, more repressive regimes used that as an excuse to prevent ideologically uncomfortable information from reaching the public. However, with the help of the Æon Trinity and the cooperation of the major broadcasters, most programming can reach the eyes and ears of the public.

Holovision versus Holosim - Dr. Kieran Baxter, The Technological Age, © 2110 Walkabout Press

In common parlance, every holovision program is a "vid." Technically, vids are either "holoshows" or "holosims." A holoshow features live actors on sets (virtual or otherwise), and holosims are completely computer-generated. Almost every holoshow exploits the advantages that computer editing and composition can provide, but most popular vids still use live actors. The human element adds to the show far more than expensive special effects can. Holosims that attempt to appear 100 percent lifelike do not fare well. Even cutting-edge holography has an unsettling effect when viewed over the long-term. Holosims that retain a more iconic feel tend to be more popular, especially with the younger crowd. Cartoon holosims are most popular with the young and the young at heart.

GENERAL MEDIA

Top o' the Heap — Dazyl Grenich, *Lifestyles*, © 2121 MMI

SOUDS

The numbers are in, darlings, and they're just what we expected. *Tuna Sandwich*, that charming little Sydney comedy set in a university deli, retains the top ratings. The weekly download takes more hits than an over-the-hill Pit fighter, and the repeat counters are positively *spinning*. The writing remains top-notch and the venerable Father Elmo can still squeeze a laugh out of a stone.

OBC's new holosim *Strike Team Psion* captures excellent numbers, even in the face of growing anti-psion sentiment following the controversial revelations of the Huang-Marr research. It's losing viewers in the FSA, but then you clever darlings knew it never really did well there, anyway.

A surprising number three is Rafat's syndicated fantasy drama *Gateway of God*, whose loyal (some say obsessive) on-line followers have brought it to the top of the ratings, knocking *Montressor!* out of its number-three spot. I don't get it myself, dears, but it takes all kinds. Top news magazine is still Warren Shaw's *Retrospective*. No surprise, I suppose. But it feels rather ghoulish watching a show whose dearly-departed host was replaced with a sim of *himself*, don't you think?







Fire from Heaven — Cori Heisler with Alex Cassel, The Painful Truth, © 2119 MMI

All martines

PT: A surprising new Orgotek spin-off company is the hugely successful Lightbringer Entertainment. Its special effects have been stealing contracts from Lumen's Sydney partners left and right. Does that particularly bother you, Alex?

AC: Not really. I keep in touch with Corwin [Gamble, Lightbringer CEO]. We still get together and hang out when I'm "down under." And as for the contracts, well, if they can provide better bang for their buck, I'm in favor of it. It makes us work harder, which makes them work harder. Anyway, many of the contracts are on a per-vid basis, so it's not as if they're really stealing from us. It's just good, oldfashioned competition.

PT: Do you watch their work?

AC: Oh, in the few milliseconds a day when I have free time. Running Orgotek keeps me busy... but I have seen some preliminary sims from *Esperanza*. Lightbringer will blow you away. It's as if you're really there. Of course, I wasn't surprised that Corwin could pull that off. It's hard to forget an experience like that.



INGE

State of joys the Art

of options flow through the OpNet faster than agents can homes remember we need three alarms before actually waking up, our holovisions remember the sort of things . we like to watch. Much in the way news-sifters pull stories of interest, so too does the holovision agent recommend the sort of entertainment we like. If Dad likes the new Outback westerns, it culls those for him, while also remembering that Mom en-

films with Ford McCullough and that the kids love Hook Hammond. If the Today, more material is . family is in the mood for . transmitted in a single day something different, the than one viewer could watch agent can make recommenin a year. Thousands of chan- * dations or simply surf channels with tens of thousands , nels until someone likes what , they see.

Nightly, the broadcastsift through. Just as our . ers beam a small fraction of . their programming over the airwaves and upload their programs to the local nodes, allowing viewers to watch . them as soon as possible, or tagging them for later viewing. Thanks to the so-called miracle of holovision, viewers can tweak the sound, lighting and even the projec-. tion angle to watch the vid . from every way imaginable. They can stop, rewind, scan forward, pan around and skip

boring scenes. Some vids supply extra tracks, commentary or optional plot threads.

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The holovisions vary. The standard Steinhardt home unit sits in a corner of the room and projects a 12cm x 12cm x 12cm field positioned by voice command or by hand-held controllers. Ad- vanced units project larger images, come with more satellite speakers, compensate for ambient lighting and noise levels, and adjust the projections based on the location of the room's occupants. The serious holo-phile has a ceiling-projection unit, allowing for huge images and highquality sound. Holographic chambers, or "sim rooms," exist for the viewer with money to burn. As with other immersing simulation chambers, walls, floor and ceiling contain projectors and speakers, allowing for total immer- sion in reality-grade picture and sound.

OLYMPUS WELCOMES DANGER - Excerpt: Luna Sun Times © 7.17.2121 Eclipse Media

TRITON ARCHIVE .

Olympus residents have their

eyes peeled this week as Jake Danger: Aberrant Hunter comes to Luna. Cast and crew of the long-running series came up the well to film a special made-for-vid feature, Moon Hunters.

Security is tight around the project. The only details known about the story are that the hard-boiled monster-hunter follows a trail of bodies to Luna where a lycanthropic Aberrant plans a mysterious agenda. Series star Ellis Anson enjoys especially tight security on and off the set. Danger personnel refuse to comment on the rumor that Moon Hunters will see the live-action debut of Strike Team Psion's Dr. Sagar.

The ULPF is assisting in the project, announcing the sections of Downside that are to be cordoned off during the next two weeks of filming.



Live the Adventure!

You watch the show, now get your very own member of *Strike Team Psion*! Each action articulate comes with attachable "bioware" modules, individual equipment packs and a certificate of authenticity — so everyone knows that you're an official *Strike Team Psion* Junior Operative!

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Act now and, for just a new yuan more, you can order the Puppeteer Agent model, allowing your home computer to move the action articulate for you. Have *Strike Team Psion* fight the all-new Yog-Death cadre in your very own living room!



Coming to a toy store near you...

Action Articulate Basic Model [¥9.99] Puppeteer Model [¥15.99]

Æsculapian John Holt	[]	[]
ISRAn Sage	[]	[]
Legionnaire Montrose	[]	[]
Ministry Agent Lu Chen	[]	[]
Norça Juanos Palmero	[]	[]
Orgotek Operative Dr. Sagar	[]	[]
>>> Indicate quantity desired in t	the appropriate box <<<	

GENERAL MEDIA

News Media

Australian Terrestrial Office, Deputy Office Director Charles Cohen

SOMEONE IS ALWAYS WATCHING

There once was a time, or so I am told, that your private affairs were left just that *private*. Now, reporters are everywhere, asking about this, investigating that, always hungry for the scent of corruption. I suppose the reason is twofold: First, humanity is innately curious — a useful trait, and one of our better ones; secondly, there's money in scandals.

Since the start of the 21st century, the news media has tromped back and forth across the lines of privacy and decency that previous generations left uncrossed. While the media has exposed corruption and toppled corrupt regimes, it has also unearthed truths best left covered. In this fashion, the media does much of Triton Division's work for us, but they also get in our way, eager to uncover the next story.

Joe Hologram, whether in Manchester or on Mars, wakes up, gets a cup of his favorite morning beverage, and asks his home agent what's new in the universe today. Although it now quietly cooks breakfast and cleans the house, the agent was busy all night, surfing the feeds for the up-to-the-second stories that it provides its user, along with soy flakes and juice. The agent displays summaries, in-depth stories, or surfs for related topics all on Joe Hologram's command. It can link into the family's holovision and show vid feeds of current affairs or pull up encyclopedia files about who is doing what to whom and when, providing as much or as little detail as its user desires.



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The New Addiction — Dr. Miriam Vanayama, The New Reality © 2120 Rafat, Inc.

An ever-increasing problem these days is Information Addiction Syndrome. Due to the massive amounts of news available to the casual user, some individuals become addicted to information itself. They surf from one news story to another, following hyperlink after hyperlink for hours on end in search of their next "fix." Many spend large amounts of money purchasing better and better search agents, and in extreme cases, they become paranoid and reclusive.

IAS sufferers are generally middleclass individuals in mid-level professions with high-bandwidth access. They feel that they live at the mercy of a turbulent and confusing universe. Victims believe that by constantly keeping up with the news, they gain a semblance of control over their lives. They hope that, by searching the newsfeeds, they can find answers to the questions that plague them. Strangely enough, some sufferers have an uncanny ability to draw accurate conclusions out of the cornucopia of news they consume.

WHERE, WHEN, HOŴ, WHY

The growth of newsfeeds changed the way news is gathered and delivered. Some networks replaced their "talking head" news anchors with avatar programs, making sure that their reporters and interviewers did more than simply read a TelePrompTer and look good. The reporters in the field upload their stories, either in text, video or hypertext. Editorial engines edit them based on the news agency's policies, and they then index them for downloading. Some stringers upload their stories directly to newsfeeds, bypassing editorial entirely, though they rarely have the same hit counts that "approved" news services do. On the other hand, journalists of that ilk tend to be the most tenacious (and irritating).

Thanks to the advances in recording technology, anyone you talk to could be a reporter, or just someone who wants to make a killing breaking the next big story. Vidspecs and similar gadgets allow a single reporter to do the work of an entire news crew. They don't have to carry around bulky cameras or telescoping microphones. One look from them and you're being broadcast across the Solar System. Perhaps the only saving grace is that the bigger networks prefer 3-D technology and thus require more conspicuous hardware. Even so, technicians are working constantly to further miniaturize these devices. The technology developed by OBC to turn old-style flat video into 3-D holoshows sees regular advances as well. It no longer takes days or weeks to rebalance the show for holovision. Additionally, teams of reporters now use multiple customized vidspec cameras to surround their targets and thus integrate the images into holovision. On the flip side, inventors constantly develop new ways of obfuscating cameras, only to be stymied by developers whose scanners just beat their jammers.

A FOCUSED VIEW

The counterpoint to the newsfeed is the news magazine, found in both broadcast and chip versions. While feed readers tend to gobble information in numerous little bites, the news magazine allows for a greater focus, as well as for a more sedate atmosphere. Newsfeeds provide information in its purest form, but the news magazines offer context. Many networks have daily news magazines, but their inability to match the up-to-the-second response times of the feed reporters has caused their ratings to drop.

Despite this drop, many news magazines retain loyal followings. The most popular is Belgian historian Warren Shaw's Retrospective on OBC. Its relaxed, almost storytelling approach, as well as the high-profile subject matter, has kept the show at the top of the ratings for the better part of a decade. This factor is all the more surprising since the real Shaw died in 2117 and was replaced by an advanced computer agent simulation of himself. It stirred quite a bit of controversy at the time, but the SI construct of Shaw has proven to be just as compassionate and engaging as the man on which it was based. Yet, it's naïve to think that an agent can do the investigating of a real person. A large part of Retrospective's continued success is due to the extensive data the show's researchers provide — with enough furnished weekly on the hyperlinked background server to extend the show to three times its normal 60-minute span. The Painful Truth with Cori Heisler is Retrospective's only significant competition. Heisler's frank approach and physical appeal draw viewers looking for a more energetic (and live) attitude than the one Retrospective provides. Even so, it's well-known that Heisler is frustrated to be in second behind a computer program.

The Dead Talk! - Excerpt: floatparty 9.2117

Well, gentle readers, it finally happened. It's not like anyone thought studio execs had hearts (or functioning cerebral cortexes for that matter). But it looks like they've reached a new low.

As you all know, Warren Shaw just passed away. I liked the pretentious git, myself. Seems the OBC waterheads decided that the show must go on. Hey, not a problem. Happens all the time. But this grave-robbery is sicker than me after my annual Mardi Gras bender.

You see, Warren's back. The OBC megaminds have taken the past 10 seasons of the show and analyzed them with Allah knows what kind of gizmos and gewgaws. Why? To create some kind of "satisfactory intelligence construct" to take his place. A "SIC," eh? I sure call it sick!

A little birdie also told me that OBC weaseled psych profiles out of Shaw's shrink in return for huge stacks of cash. The result: *Retrospective*'s new host is 100 percent virtual, and the OBC muckymucks claim he's not going to give us the willies like other virtual actors do. Too late, twinks. My willies are pre-ordered. Sad thing is, I bet most folks won't be able to tell the difference.



Other so-called news magazines provide no real news at all, but they are no less important to the common human. These programs and chipzines focus on entertainment instead. They interview holoshow stars, cover spectacle and art gallery openings, indulge in gossip and human-interest stories. These chat shows provide comfort to those frightened by the wondrous and terrifying events happening in the universe outside their door.

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Of this ilk, Dazyl Grenich's Lifestyles has a large audience. To her credit, Grenich occasionally offers actual news and meets with many important figures. Still, it's generally "safe" news, and she confronts her guests with soft questions.

Marty Blake's HotSpot is an up-and-coming show that tries to present itself as a new Painful Truth. However, it seems to have more in common with Lifestyles, in its faux-investigative attitude and push for style over substance.



The Yi Conspiracy - Cori Heisler, The Painful Truth, © 2121 MMI

Don't get me wrong. I'm glad that the UN investigation of rogue psions --unearthed in the infamous Huang-Marr conspiracy - is in full swing. Delegate Philip Bacciocci's opening speech to the UN General Assembly was both rousing and inspirational. I agree that the pubic has "a right to know of any secret agendas among the psi orders."

Still, I think the UN needs its collective eyes checked or something. It's focusing all this attention on the Huang-Marr investigation, but it looks like the delegates have forgotten all about the Yi conspiracy.

Remember Y?? It was the jump ship that had the dubious honor of first contact with the so-called "Coalition" - and quite a first contact it was, if my sources are accurate! Well, Yi is still under maximum security quarantine somewhere in the Solar System. (Which also brings up the question of how you can hide a ship the size of a Leviathan.)

It's been over a year since Corina Falcone's famous leak of the Coalition "space ark" footage. Since then, the UN has done a spectacular job of covering up what happened to the jump ship and her crew. As yet, we haven't heard a peep out of anyone associated with the venture. Numerous families have tried to get word of their loved ones, but they receive only ominous reports about "guarantine" and "unexpected delays." Rumors have flooded the news vacuum, making already worried families even more panicked.

Come on, UN. Cast that "spotlight of justice" in the mirror for a change.

THE BACKYARD FENCE

In days gone by, neighbors gossiped with one another over the fences in their backyards. The fence turned figurative with the advent of global-communications networks — first telephones, then computers — but the gossip continued. Even with the blocks put on the OpNet to prevent another crash, humanity still lives in an age where the backyard fence stretches around the Solar System.

Trying to contain the rumors spread by traditional news agencies remains difficult. Keeping an eye on the gossip of billions of people is akin to holding back the tide with a sieve. Anyone with a camera can distribute incriminating images. Anyone with a computer can spread their lunatic theories throughout settled space. Unlike the media, rumor-mongers have no one but themselves to be responsible to.

While security agents monitor node-tonode traffic for Aberrant attacks and other tampering, very little filtering occurs of the data itself. Joe Hologram can post scandalous lies to an anonymous network board on Monday and have the rumors spread throughout the OpNet, even to LunaNet and beyond, by Friday. While not everyone believes everything they read, scandal-mongers still have plenty of eager subscribers. PUBLIC-RELATIONS DIRECTIVE #6

NEPTUNE ARCHIVE .

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Avoid contact with the media whenever possible. Æon doesn't do this for glory, and even the best intentions can be misread by an overly eager news hound. If you do find yourself in the public eye's uncomfortable spotlight, the best option is to say as little as possible. Unscrupulous reporters have been more than willing to advance their careers by transforming relatively harmless statements into anti-psion and even anti-Æon hype.

Fortunately, we have enough contacts in the upper echelons of the media to kill certain stories when necessary, but there's no need to risk things, especially in the current turbulent times.

When you must speak publicly, keep statements short and declarative. Think before you talk, and consider all of the interpretations of your statements. Avoid slang, as some vocoder programs may misinterpret them. Direct the conversation as quickly as possible to another topic. Above all, make sure that you put yourself and Æon in the best possible light. We are doing important work, and the court of public opinion is one we dare not lose in — not with so much at stake.

Diversions

Australian Terrestrial Office, Deputy Office Director Karin L. Kaminsky

My colleagues have left . me with the task of describing "everything else." This is by no means a comprehensive listing of all of the other . forms of entertainment we use to divert and renew ourselves from the grind of daily . life. There's simply too many options out there for that. We'll just hit the high points.

Humanity likes its privacy. We like times when we can be by ourselves and relax. With the wonders of the . OpNet, it certainly is possible for Joe Hologram to seal himself up like a notouch, keeping the rest of the universe . at a safe distance. Although Joe can enjoy entertainment in a solitary environment, it • is equally important as part of normal human interaction. We are a gregarious race, and spending quality time . with your friends is just as important to your mental health as eating a well-bal- * anced diet is to your physical health.

their homes, and for less than it cost in a theater. Further, advances in audio/visual · technology allowed home viewers a spectacle that rivaled the theater experience. The major motion-picture . studios, centered at the time in Hollywood on North America's West Coast, real- . ized that if they wanted to pack people into the theaters, they needed to provide something that the . viewer couldn't get at home.

Thus was born the spectacle. Theaters had one thing that home equipment could . not provide: size. The screen was bigger and the sound louder; the entire theater . could be designed to display the projection to the best possible effect. Producers * and directors worked with special-effects companies, design engineers, even psychologists. Their goal? To . make the pictures more sensational, the sound more earth-shattering, the entire * experience more immersing. The first spectacles generally came out in the summer, when rising temperatures chased people indoors and children were out of school. Hollywood churned out special-effects extravaganzas and loud action thrillers as fast as it could. The bigger, the better. As profits rose, so did budgets. Smaller movies with more of an emphasis on plot and characterization were shunted into correspondingly smaller, "art house" venues.

flocked to Hollywood and used it as one of their favored stomping grounds, second only to New York City. In those early days, the creatures contributed quite a bit to entertainment in general and spectacles in particular. Ironically, the Aberrants later ravaged the studios that had previously treated them like royalty.

By the 2050's, Hollywood was dead, and the industry itself did not recover until 20 years later. Fortunately, some studios already had satellite production lots in other countries, most notably the Australasian region, where costs were lower. OBC's then-chairman Kevin Chary decided to re-open old theaters with holographic technology. Like earlier spectacles, new ones offered a unique entertainment experience. Viewers once again flocked to the theaters to see something they couldn't see at home. Aside from continued advances in technology, spectacles haven't changed much in 150 years. Most critics concur that the plots of today's holofilms come second to the artistry, just like in previous decades. Spectacles are known for their emphasis on constant massive-sensory input. Subtleties of character and story are relegated to the home holovision or to live theater.

Spectacles

In the late-20th and early-21st century, the theater entertainment market faced increasingly tough competition from the homevideo market. People could buy or rent tape dupes of the flat-screen projections, or of "movies," shown in theaters.

It was a boon in many ways; consumers could watch movies as often as they liked and when they wanted to, in the comfort of

DIVERSIONS

Aberrants, with their tenuous grasp on reality,

Everything Old Is New Again - Warren Shaw, Retrospective © 2118 OBC

Archivists and archeologists excavating the ruins of old Hollywood have recently uncovered a treasure trove of flat projection films from the late-20th and early-21st centuries. Many of the film stocks have crumbled from age and the elements, but some reverse-engineered film readers can read the primitive optical disks.

Nothing remains of the studio that originally owned these films, so Lloyds of London was given permission to auction off the various rights. While many of the films will be interpolated into 3-D for holovision and theater presentations, wealthy collectors purchased a large number of them for theater display in their original flat format — for a fee, of course.

These plans have created a public stir. A citizenry hungry for the past wiped out by the Backlash pulse seems to feel that the old films to be a touchstone to more innocent days. Some studios are even considering making new films in the old style.

These popular. A renaistrouba - • sance of live thed o u r s , ater continues to were a

ductions Verdi. Slapped-together hologram projectors provided the sets, scenery and amplification — all the troupes needed was a place to perform. They not o n

the present day. The cross be- connection of actor to tween a • audience member is a weltheater come presence, even now company that the network servers have and a circus. . thousands of hours of vids High-wire acts , ready on demand. Although and jugglers ac- most theater companies companied pro- have their performances of • available for download, tour-Shakespeare and ing companies routinely play to packed houses.

Music

Live music and dance experienced the same revival that live theater enjoyed. While many broadcasters mix music with holographic imagery, simple projections of the musicians plying their craft rate just as

Billy Parrot to Tour Sol System - Press Release © 1.19.2121 Stahu Recording Balladeer Billy Parrot has just

Live Theater

In the years following the Crash, broadcast technology was kept to a minimum. Old communication links were severed. The only real avenue for entertainment was the method people had used for centuries: the theater. Acting troupes, financed by charitable organizations including the Æon Trinity, brought hope and amusement to places devastated by the ravages of the Aberrant War.

cheered bowed spirits, but were a of source and news gossip for places just trying to survive. Even t h W society's reconstruction near the end of the 21st century, troupes remained

confirmed rumors that he intends to play at every planet in the Solar System. The "Space Happy" tour kicks off with a performance at MMC Orbital Station 1 on April 9, 2121, and ends outside Pluto's orbit two years later at a performance broadcast from his modified Nkumbe Industries Windjammer, Astral Dancer.

"I'd do a gig on Qinshui if the Dancer would get me there," said the exuberant Parrot. "Touring the system has been a dream of mine ever since my first trip off Earth. I'm just glad the folks at Stahu have been so good to me all these years."

Parrot plans to spend most of the travel time composing a new work, tentatively titled "Wanderer."

DIVERSIONS

highly. Audio-only channels on the OpNet are also popular. From anima's organic rhythms to bang's technological complexity to jump's retro sounds, music remains a way for people to relax (and for teens to annoy their parents).

Allineans 18

While teenagers can go clubbing past curfew, one new staple of the music indus- • try is the virtual club. People can don HUDsets and other sim gear and get something * close to the live performance. Some even prefer it to the actual thing. There are no lines, no smoke, and you can . program out the annoying table next to you. Additionally, a musical act can play an * "intimate" gig to thousands of . people, each in her own "private" virtual club.

Holidays

Some of the oldest forms of entertainment that continue through the years are festivals and holidays. In a universe that has more than enough troubles, humanity needs all the reasons it can to celebrate. People get together, let their hair down and party. Cos- . tumes change and reasons differ, but the end result is the same — we eat too much, drink more than we should and dance until far too late in the evening. Holidays that have been around for hundreds of years international ones like Christmas and Hanukkah as well as regional ones like Brazil's Carnival and Germany's Fasching - remain popular. Plus, there are a number of new reasons to celebrate: Landing Day, July 20th, mankind's first steps on the Moon; Revelation Day,

DIVERSIONS

INFEST '21

-Newsday holobrief © 10.12.2120 GN

Porter-Andersen, sponsors of the Innocence Festival, has yet to announce next year's location and theme. The 20thcentury-themed festival has been the most popular North American tourist attraction for the past few years, and sponsors are still reeling from the scandal of last year's tragedy.

The kitschy festival, originally designed as a salute to the glory days of the United States of America, went from merriment to panic when an assassin murdered actor William Rosdower, who was portraying U.S. President John F. Kennedy. InFest security caught the murderer, but only after more lives were lost. Although the InFest Management Committee hasn't yet declared which city it shall re-create, it has issued assurances that security is to be much tighter at the next festival.

The Innocence Festival grew out of 20th-century collectors' shows, where fans of a less complicated time bought and sold actual artifacts and reproductions of same from previous generations. Celebrities also appeared as guests at these shows, and amateur acting troupes put on skits taken from the television and literature of the day. Since its inception 16 years ago, InFest has become a multimillion-dollar industry. Margaret Nixon, an executive at Porter-Andersen and an amateur historian, thought of the official Innocence Festival after discovering family pictures of a trip to a reconstructed Old-West-era city. "Americans need to be reminded of the good old days," Nixon said at the first InFest. "We've lost touch with our history. There was a rich and vibrant culture before the damned Aberrants decided to use our cities the way my kids use their toys."

September 21st, the first public address of the psi orders; First Contact Day, March 23rd, humanity's first encounter with the Qin; Colonization

Day, October 19th, the day Chinese colonists arrived on Khantze Lu Ge.

NET-MAIL DIGEST Compiled by Triton Division Research >>> transmission <<</td> Date: 10:03:56 3.30.2121

From: Frother To: >>> illustrateds discussion list <<< Subject: Re: Night Shift #125 Security: none

Transmission type: textfile

They did it to me *again*. I swear I should stop buying the damn things. IC is gonna hear about this one, I tell you.

TRITON ARCHIVE

Captain Eclipse would *never* have betrayed the Shift. I don't care if his kid sidekick did get whacked! Heroes don't crack. Ever. That's the point. Gods above, can't they get anything right?

>>> end transmission <<<
>>> transmission <<<</pre>

Date: 10:04:06 3.30.2121 From: NuFan

To: >>> illustrateds discussion list <<<

Subject: Nova Knights Security: none

Transmission type: textfile

I was digging through my dead great-uncle's stuff and found some great illustrateds. The paper is a little flimsy, but I scanned 'em in without too much trouble. Uncle Stan kept 'em in great condition — sealed low-acid bags and all that.

Anyway, I put 'em on my home node >>> NuFan's Lair <<<. It's great late-C20 stuff. Guys with super-powers that (no offense to you, OzMan) make the Legions look like pikers.

Anyway, instead of "psions" or "Aberrants," they're called "novas." And they run around like STP or Midnight Avenger, stopping evil novas and saving people and stuff. They're wicked cool. There's some weird crap in the indica about it being some sort of licensed publication. The copyright's got to have expired by now, so you guys should enjoy 'em.



>>> end transmission <<<

>>> transmission <<< Date: 10:31:23 3.30.2121 From: Lenny Howle, Triton Division To: Æon Council Subject: Another "nova" reference Security: DSE Transmission type: textfile

Found another pop-up cache of nova info. We spiked the node and hushed the kid. Unfortunately, the node logged a few hits before we sent the spike. We're going to have to track this one down.

Since we're on the subject, have you seen my budget increase requests? It's getting harder and harder to keep this stuff under wraps, especially with three-year-old hardware.

>>> end transmission <<<

the Aberrants' departure . used by people from all . from Earth. Granted, this holi- walks of life. The computer's in a single node can particiday has lost much of its many practical uses aside, it recent return, but many , a source of entertainment. people hold on tenaciously in appearance of the Upeo wa dedicated larly somber occasions.

11111111

tivals for the sake of a few _ puter or occasion-(hundred) yuan. Even so, there are plenty of people * willing to indulge in these . artificially generated holidays. From trips on Oman Jogos and L'Orbital, to the . more affordable Innocence to the OpNet) al-Festival, corporate-sponsored and -created fun is * available at all prices. The ers could connect to social engineering principles designed by 20th- and 21stcentury corporations remain . other players from true today: Fun is across the street or

Other holi- memory, processing power, sound and video. Textdays are more • versatility and more.

Exodus Day, Sep- gressed, computers became tember 7th, celebrates * small, commonplace tools * popularity with the creatures' • quickly found application as •

Computer games began hopes that the Aberrants' as simple, straightforward defeat is to come again. The . programs. They quickly be- . fall of the Esperanza and dis- came increasingly complex as developers Macho, both remembered * squeezed everything they * every August 17th, are simi- , could out of the machines. The , and form alliances or confirst computer games were flicts, shaping the destiny of The metanationals aren't " limited to either the player " a virtual world. These advenabove creating their own fes- · matching skills with the com- · ture interacts are immensely

> ally one player against another, using the same home computer. The Internet (a primitive precursor lowed the next quantum leap. Playother computers and play against across the globe. Additionally, which, like computers, was designed originally for military use — became not just linkages between discreet military bases or university mainframes, but an entirely new method of social interaction. Initially, users could only exchange simple text messages, but eventually chat rooms incorporated

 based games added somber affairs. As technology pro-, graphic interfaces and sound. And virtual-reality gear was added.

Today, groups of players pate in a new form of sim interface. Each interactive simulated reality game, or "interact," enables players to control personally created avatars in a pre-generated, responsive artificial environment. For a small fee, of course.

Avatar characters meet

TRITON ARCHIVE

BE THE FANTASY - interact advertisement © 2121 Wazukana

Adventure awaits you in the Borderlands!

Be a valiant dragon slayer, a potent mystic or a cunning burglar. The forces of good need a few more heroes. Choose sides in an epic conflict that will save the world of Ærth... or shatter it.

preprogrammed. Smaller, local festivals, like the Lafayette Crawfish Festival or . the Internet the New Athens Symposium, is more relaxed. No matter what the celebration, though, you can assuredly find a crowd willing to take part.

Games

The military designed the first computers - roomsized monoliths with the same capacity as a single etched chip today. These processing engines were difficult to use and painstaking to program. Still, our ancestors made great advances through the years, increasing

Heed the call!

The Borderlands is the latest fantasy interact from Wazukana that uses the popular H.U.S.H. reality-engine and is compatible with every interface from basic textfile conversion to holosim suit. Award-winning programmers Jay Driskill and Suda Heizo return with another experience that is truly better-than-life. The sim contains a stunning graphic interface and boasts a shaped seven-year plotline, guaranteeing fun and excitement for years to come!

Due to violence and mature content, the Borderlands is not recommended for children under the age of 12.

Spider's Web to Celebrate Big 5-0

- Newsflash © 2.8.2121 Genman Enterprises

The public sim known as "The Spider's Web" is celebrating its 50th anniversary online. The reality-only sim remains one of the most popular of its kind. Over 50,000 regulars and visitors are expected to log on simultaneously for the largest online party ever.

"It's a place where you can be yourself," says Carol Leisenring, age 15. "On the Web, you can meet folks you'd want to talk to, folks who only care about what you say, not who you are. There's a lot of freedom."

"There's an equal footing," says Angel N'dare, one of the first members of the Spider's Web and now a senior partner in the Spider's Web Consortium. "Our avatars don't reveal where we live, how much money we make or who we voted for. It's a chance to be the self we imagine ourselves to be, not the self we are forced into because of accidents of birth and privilege. All you need is a computer and a little free time. Online we are all equal, creatures of pure intellect."

Proxy Alex Cassel is to deliver the

 ters in popular vids or spectacles. This

- simulated universe
- is more tightly
- scripted than an adventure
- interact is, though a playercan change the plot along
- certain directions. An aspiring Hamlet can rewrite
- Shakespeare and run away
- with Ophelia, or a neutral
 child can feel the power of
- her favorite character in Strike
- Team Psion. Indeed, word is
- that OBC and Orgotek are working to adapt the Strike
- Team Psion interact so that
- the battlegrounds of Khantze
- . Lu Ge can be experienced.
- While many sims indulge in hyper-reality, there are just as many dedicated to reality itself. The OpNet
- allows people to communi-• cate with one another in a
- safe environment. Millions of
- users interact, via their ava-
- * tars, in virtual cafés, pubs and
- other simulated sites.
- Unlike interact games, public sims put certain re-
- quirements on avatars. While
- the Spider's Web puts strict
- reality requirements on each

celebration's opening address. Though he was not even alive when the Spider's Web first went online, Cassel has long professed to be a fan of the sim since he was old enough to connect. He even met his future wife Ellayne at a Web party.

popular with the young and give them power they do not yet possess, or the opportunity to express their own creative muses.

Each player directs his avatar via keyboard, voice command, HUDset, holosim suit, or holochamber (also known as a motion-capture cave). Interacts provide almost any setting imaginable. By taking on his avatar role in the sim universe, a player can protect the Earth from Aberrants, ride through the Old West, slay fantasy creatures, or even become a fantasy creature himself.

Another popular form of interact is the dramatic one. Avatars are generally charac-

participant, just as the Wild

- West reality filter casts each user in a 19th-century North American West persona.
- While public sims are socially oriented, lacking high adventure seen in interacts, the human drama remains. Participants develop long-lasting relationships with one another through optic lines.
 They even reveal intimate secrets to sim-mates, things kept from their families, friends and co-workers.

Media Players

— Excerpt: Free Enterprise Report: A Closer Look © 2120 Rafat, Inc.

This update covers major players in the entertainment business who've shown increased influence of late. For a more comprehensive list of media organizations and key figures, see the annual *Free Enterprise Report*.

Asian Media Syndicate: As expected, the Asian Media Syndicate has a lock on China. But AMS' influence wanes the further one travels outside the Chinese sphere of



control. Some AMS entertainment vids leap the Great Wall to non-Asian markets, but the programs' narrow focuses and pro-China biases tend to turn away most non-Asian viewers. AMS' greatest influence on the media is as a training ground for talent. Numerous Asian Media Syndicate producers, directors, anchors, writers and technicians have left for better-paying, Western-based megameds. Eclipse Media: This megamed is the primary source of entertainment on Luna. Eclipse Media started as the Moon's first news channel, but its profits rose with the steadily increasing Lunar population. Greater financial reserves enabled Eclipse to diversify into other forms of entertainment. Its music channel was the first to broadcast Muzzein bang, and it has since capitalized on its growing popularity. Entertainment



options offered by Eclipse remain focused on the Moon and its people. Its news service is confined to the Lunar sphere, though it sends field reporters down the gravity well to cover stories of relevance to selenites. Eclipse's entertainment programming is also rapidly gaining attention in Australia, both as a place to find new talent and for competitors to quash.

Federated Broadcasting Network: This network is a division of the Federated States of America's Office of Recreation. All Nordamerican nodes are required by law to carry the FBN, and some viewers even tune



carry a slanted view of the news, making sure to place the FSA in the best possible light. This matter isn't that surprising considering the Federated States' fascist tendencies. However, rumors abound that the government's secretive Central Security Agency is the true motivating force behind the FBN, often using the network's resources to promote its wellknown anti-psion agenda.

Global News: Global News is considered to be the best source of hard news in the system. Its reporters are not flashy like OBC's news crews or opportunistic like MMI's teams. However, they get the job done better than anyone else. GN's reporters are supremely dedicated in the search for truth. This courage and objectivity has



earned Global News every one of the few interviews Proxy Solveig Larssen has given. GN news servers are updated as fast as its reporters can file stories, with viewers tuning in just as frequently. GN's chief news rival, Genman Enterprises, does better in the news-download business of chipzines and newsflats. However, it's hard to ignore that the GN computer network aboard the GNOMC satellite is the third-largest repository of data on humanity. As such, GN spends vast amounts of money making sure the satellite can be defended in case of attack. It's a well-known fact that Global News employs psions - not only anti-Aberrant strike teams, staff- and field-reporter security, but also clairsentient reporters and empathic interviewers. **Enterprises:** Genman This organization's main business stems from its news servers. Cutting-edge search engines filter the vast sea of news data to billions of people daily. While major entertainment

houses and news magazines consider the connect charges and search fees a pittance, Genman still pulls in millions of yuan



every month. Additionally, Walkabout Press, Genman's publishing arm, gives it an entry into the book market — a solid, if not flashy, enterprise as millions of people still prefer hardcopy to projection. Genman reporters are considered trustworthy, with an emphasis on solid reporting, not flash. In fact, Genman investigators are often willing to let other agencies scoop them, making up for the initial lost story with deep background that faster agencies tend to skim on. Genman's private databases are also the most complete and secure of any news agency.

Kostbaar: *Lifestyles* has dubbed Kostbaar the "Proxy of Fashion" for his knack of knowing, predicting and starting trends. Though his talent was recognized prior to 2114, it wasn't until the *Esperanza* crash that



Kostbaar emerged as the icon he is today. The yearly Gala of Fashion, held in the Paris Opera House, was destroyed when the orbital station debris shattered the city. Among the millions killed were virtually all of the world's top clothing designers. Kostbaar had skipped the show, reacting to a perceived snub by these same designers. With their deaths, Kostbaar was alone at the top. Many of the newer fashion elite consider him a flake with a colossal ego, but it's worth noting that Kostbaar still has his finger on the pulse of society. Anything he says reaches millions (if not billions) of people.

Lightbringer Entertainment: Lightbringer Entertainment started when a team of Lumen photokinetics broke off from Orgotek in 2115 to start their own entertain-



ment/special effects company. Corwin Gamble, Lightbringer's CEO, already had a long and varied career in Orgotek. But the lead developer, Eric Harriman, is generally considered the "bright boy" behind the Lightbringer. A reclusive and somewhat eccentric genius, Harriman provides the technology that his partner Gamble markets around Australia's major studios.

Morris Media, Incorporated: MMI prefers to make its mark with big splashes in the spectacle markets and with holoshow broadcast specials. MMI owns numerous theater chains, allowing greater horizontal control of the market. The holoshows the megamed produces tend to provide sideNew Sudamerican Media: The New Sudamerican Media Group might as well be called "Papa Norça's Back Pocket Press Agency." Although generally a progressive broadcast agency, NSM has shown itself to



be extremely protective of the Norça Order. Reporters are known to badger competitors who portray the Norça in even a remotely bad light, and NSM editorials don't hesitate to blast other anti-Norça broadcasts. There are rumors that Norça members often pose as NSM reporters to cover their activities, but this may well be idle speculation by the paranoid. Aside from that, the NSM group has possibly the best sports coverage in the system. Of course, considering how many years it's been since someone other than Brazil has won the World Cup, is there any wonder that



ways marketing for the spectacles it produces. The most notable of these programs is the infotainment show *Lifestyles*. MMI also markets holoshows based around personalities, like the investigative-reporter-turnedmagazine-show-host Cori Heisler. it would turn out that way?

OBC: Although not as old as Global News, OBC was the grandfather of the OpNet broadcast. It was the first to switch to the dual broadcast/download format common today. The so-called "family server" is currently at the top of the ratings with comedies



(Tuna Sandwich), action shows (Strike Team Psion), and news magazines (Retrospective). One of OBC's greatest assets is its cuttingedge technology. This equipment allows for high-quality production values for low cost, and it enables reporters to remain competitive with rival megameds, despite OBC's tendency toward conservative investigation. Recent reports claim that the Ministry for Psionic Affairs has had dealings with OBC's board of directors; the purpose and extent of these discussions remain unknown.

Orgotek: This metanat does not currently own any broadcast channels, but the resources and technology developed by its Lumen and Tekne divisions see increasing use in the entertainment industry. Its advances in the arts of holography, as well as the lucrative services provided by photo- and technokinesis specialists, have made



Orgotek the latest darling of the entertainment industry.

Rafat Incorporated: Rafat has remained in the "hungry" third-place slot for almost a decade. Rafat's programming executives take risks, sending out dozens of new shows every season, few of which last past the sixth episode. However, many Rafat shows gain **Stahu Entertainment:** Stahu made its start in the music industry, which remains the corporation's bread and butter. It started diversifying its broadcast channels, from the audio feeds and music-video channels to



other youth-oriented shows. The programming coming out of Stahu is technically competent, but the crossover from music and performance art to other forms of entertainment remains elusive at this point. However, Stahu maintains a comfortable profit margin, owning seven of the top-10 music channels.

Unlimited Studios: Famous for the fabulous spectacles it churns out every year, Unlimited Studios has admitted that the goal of every new vid it produces is to blow the





"cult" status and survive on dedicated fans' regular download routines. Others, like the relatively huge success *Gateway of God*, show notable success through standard broadcast advertising and download fees. Rafat's news agency is the most aggressive of all the networks, willing to risk much in return for greater gains. previous one away. Unlimited's mission statement is to turn complacent viewers into ravening fans who'll rush to the ticket lines the moment the next Unlimited Studios spectacle is announced. Unlike its competition, Unlimited does not release vids for home feed until they've completed their run in the theaters.

Gray Irade

— Recorded testimony of Steven B. Pensver, 3.15.2121

Right, so I just talk about the markets and you cut me loose? Right. Let's all relax, then, yeh? Stop waving that thing around before it goes off and you see how handsome my spleen is.

Okay, okay. First off, I s'pose you're wondering what "gray trade" means. It's like "black market," yeh? There's the real black market, too, but that's for the *really* nasty stuff. Stuff that I don't touch, I might add. I never—

Oh, right. Yeh, well, first there's the good old "gray and wet." Any twink can go down to the plain brown nodes and pick up a little of the hot stuff for his wet-suit. Hell, even I was doing that when I was a kid. It was criminally easy to get around those parental lockouts. The hard part was finding some credit lines so Pop wouldn't kill me.

So then I got my first wetsuit. That girl on *Eclipse After Dark?* I blew my seal seven times with her. Very nice. Yeh, right, "offtopic."

Well, once the twink's worked out the kinks in his wetsuit with five or six dozen SI's, he tends to get a little... anxious. Adventurous, yeh?

That's where I come in. I mean, you can't just download a sim where you get to bang the whole *Tuna Sandwich* cast, yeh? There's



laws against that sort of thing. "Misrepresentation of iconography" and crap like that. So, what I do is take some regular wet-sim, spend a few days replacing Miss Right-Now with Miss Wouldn't-Do-a-Nude-Scene-Because-of-Her-Image and, ba-da-bing ba-daboom, I get Tuna Sex Sandwich. Clever, yeh? Sells a shitload, believe me.

Folks like me also move a bunch of those SI dolls from Nippon. Ones that do the tricks that you can't tell your shrink about. Hell, some folks even set up their toyfriends in apartments. Treat 'em like they were real people. Makes sense, I s'pose. People talk if you have a Do-Me Doll in your rumpus room. It's pretty common to switch out heads on the dolls, too. Famous ones and custom designs.

And since you asked, no way do I touch wet-kid stuff. I may be a bastard headed for hell and all, but there's no need to go to the front of the line, yeh? But it's out there, plenty of folks look for it. And when you have demand, quick enough you get someone happy to supply. You feel like giving out a nice beating, I know some folks who do move the black stuff.

Back to what I know, sure. Big things right now in the gray market are those Nihonjin mind-trippers. Perfect thing for the little man in the Skinner box who spends more time talking to agents instead of people. The folks in Nippon sure groove on 'em. Just put on a happy hat, plug it in, and a low level electric field gooses you straight in the pleasure center. It's not as good a buzz

as the freaks who actually get the implant wire, but I don't move that gear much. Hard to find a gray doctor who's got steady enough hands, yeh?

All that's pretty soft, like I said. I do move a bunch of the bloody stuff, too — demand, yeh? Pit-fighting is huge right now, and the vids sell like nobody's business. The only rules are: no weapons and the last one standing wins. Started out in Yeltsingrad, but I hear it's all the rage in fringe colonies and even in both the Americas. Nations founded on conquest - go figure. Anyway, I got vids coming in from down Buenos Aires and Chicago. And a lot of the frogs work off their frustrations in this nasty little dive in Nice.

I saw this one vid, dunno if it was a sim or not, but they had this Aberrant. No shit! But it had this collar on it, right? The announcer said something about it being enough explosive to blow France up a second time. So they dump in five or six guys, pumped up to the gills and armed with all kinds of crap. Swords. Spears. Nets. Even one of them things that looks like that symbol on your shoulder — a psi, yeh? Trident, that's right. So the gladiators just lay into the squid. And, of course, it rips off their arms and beats 'em to death. Glad I hadn't eaten before that, you know.

Those're the high points. My shop has all the goods. So can I go? Hey! Come on! We had a deal here!

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AUTHOR DEDICATION

To Heather



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http://www.white-wolf.com; alt.games.whitewolf and rec.games.frp.storyteller PRINTED IN CANADA. From: Æon Trinity, Neptune Division To: All Æon operatives Transmission type: textfile Encryption: DSE

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