

Fanboy-1 (Quantum 5)

(With apologies to Ken Hite and Kim Newman)

On paper Fanboy-1 is, if not a cash cow, at least a cash goat for Infinity. It's a world where most of the greats of science fiction, fantasy, and horror fiction have had more productive careers; the resulting works are valuable not only on Homeline, but in almost any timeline with a divergence point after about 1945. All of which leads to a certain reluctance to officially notice what might be faint warning signs.

Fanboy-1, 1993

Current Affairs

Infinity ruthlessly strip-mines the intellectual property of this timeline while ignoring subtly disquieting trends.

Divergence Point

1927: H.P. Lovecraft has his short story "Call of Cthulhu" published a year early, triggering a reasonably lucrative (and lifesaving) relationship with Hollywood.

Major Civilizations

Western (Diffuse), Chinese (Empire), Orthodox (Diffuse)

Great Powers

Substantively identical to Homeline's, circa 1993

Worldline Data

TL: 8

Quantum: 5

Mana Level: Very Low

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Infinity Level: P10

It is not precisely known why director Tod Browning decided in 1927 to do a silent movie version of a story written by a then-obscure horror writer from Providence; *Kutulu's Call* (starring Lon Chaney Senior, Henry Walthall, and Conrad Nigel) was not a particularly spectacular film, but it made enough for MGM to be willing to buy the rights to more of Lovecraft's work. HPL's work translated well to the black-and-white film era: although Browning himself never recovered from the critical panning of 1932's *Innsmouth* (mainstream America found his use of people with actual deformities for the Deep Ones to be a touch too realistic), Clarence Brown's winning of the Academy Award for Best Director for his 1934 *Charlie* (starring Gene Raymond and Franchot Tone, with Joan Crawford's role as Tone's love interest Asenath Ward gaining her an ironic

Oscar nomination) ensured that Hollywood would keep mining Lovecraft (and later, his circle) for stories.

The combination of Hollywood revenue (and a decade-long stint as, of all things, a comic book script writer) kept Lovecraft alive and productive decades after the equivalent death of his death in Homeline. This, interestingly, duplicated itself in the careers of other writers of science and horror fiction: to give the two most obvious examples, in Fanboy-1 Robert Howard died in 1969 of stomach cancer and H. Beam Piper in 1978 of old age. Interestingly, in Fanboy-1's current year of 1993, Randall Garrett, Robert Heinlein, and Isaac Asimov are still alive, and showing none of the symptoms of the diseases that eventually killed them in Homeline. Infinity's discreet research has confirmed that a successful career in certain writing genres seems to have long-term health benefits in this timeline, including a rise in literary productivity. Aside from this, there seems to be not much difference in Fanboy-1's history as compared to Homeline's; several sub-Saharan nations have slightly different borders and the Basque separatists are slightly more violent, but otherwise the timeline seems more or less on track.

More or less.

Outworld Involvement

Infinity does permit some tourism, but the real value in this timeline is its intellectual property, which provides a surprisingly robust revenue stream. It helps immensely that the works common to both Fanboy-1 and Homeline are typically identical; it makes it easier to market additional works by the same author as being 'authentic.' After all, anybody could have written the last Lensman novel; and on a few worlds, that book is available. But only on Fanboy-1 is it available as part of what Homeline would consider the Lensman 'canon.' Given that *Second Stage Lensmen* was Homeline's highest grossing film of 2025, this is perhaps more important than it might appear on first glance. Besides local consumption, there is a lucrative sideline in reselling Fanboy-1's books as 'lost works' on other timelines - particularly ones where the original author is safely dead. Original manuscripts of HPL's *The House of the Worm* alone have been resold for astronomical prices on three timelines - and merely reintroduced, for merely obscene prices, on half a dozen more.

Fanboy-1 is one of the few very low mana worlds found so far (it took two years of research to prove that it actually had mana, in fact), and it has only been within the last few months that anyone has been able to determine how the

mana is being generated in the first place. Enormously simplified, it appears that successfully pursuing a career in certain genres of literary fiction completes a symbolic ritual of health and well-being. Nothing particularly spectacular - but on Fanboy-1 genre writers tend to get over colds easily, not have cavities, respond well to chemotherapy, avoid strokes and HIV, and so forth. They also seem to avoid the worst mental effects of depression, substance abuse, and neurosis. Increased productivity is thus merely a side effect of the ritual - albeit one that generally tends to be profitable, given that seventy years' worth of healthier and more aggressive genre writers has earned them a more prominent niche in literary circles.

All of which would be academic, except that the mana generated from this seems to be fueling the creation of... odd... reality shards. Or even 'disturbing' reality shards, in a way that is hard to describe in an objective fashion. And the rate by which these shards create themselves may be increasing. It's hard to tell. (Possibly) unfortunately, Fanboy-1 is too lucrative to shut down over a suspicion, and not lucrative enough to trigger a too-good-to-be-true reflex...

Fanboy-1 is, despite the name, the only timeline found so far that is representative of a literary genre's idea of an

earthly paradise. Infinity fully expects to find more of this type, though. They usually do, once they find the first one.

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