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Writing Samples

1. [Are you the sore loser? Study finds how well Americans get along on game night](#) - SWNS Media, 2021
A typical example of the client-facing work I did for 72Point, this news copy was based on a primary market research survey sponsored by Z-Man Games, who served as the brand partner for this project.
2. [How Reactive Packaging Can Give Your Brand An Edge](#) - Suzy, 2019
As Suzy's sole content writer, I leveraged consumer insights gained from the company's market research platform to write B2B-focused articles like this one, and also edited submissions from a service of freelance writers.
3. [8 Things We Learned From The Black Panther Set](#) - Nerdist, 2018
A recap of a set visit I was invited on for the original "Black Panther" film, incorporating quotes from group interviews and details from my own notes during the event.
4. [Compass Points: Nikki Finch Soars in SECRET WEAPONS #0!](#) - Valiant Entertainment, 2018
At the end of every Valiant Comic issue is a brief editorial spread letting fans and readers know about upcoming projects, promotions, and other news. One of my duties at Valiant Entertainment was to lead the creation of these pages using the publication's signature tone of voice.
5. [Women Who Love 'Star Trek' Are the Reason That Modern Fandom Exists](#) - Revelist.com 2016
An example of a longform piece I did for a now defunct millennial womens' website, exploring the history of the *Star Trek* fandom in advance of the franchise's 50th anniversary.

Are you the sore loser? Study finds how well Americans get along on game night

Published to SWNS Media Group on September 6, 2021

One in five people have banned a board game for causing problems on Game Night, new research suggests.

And out of those who've brought down the banhammer, it's Monopoly that stands out as the most debated — and most forbidden — board game of all time.

In a recent survey of 2,000 U.S. residents, 20% say that their game nights with friends or family members are often or always disrupted by competitive or unfriendly behavior.

Commonly cited antics included someone quitting because they were losing (46%), someone accusing another player of cheating (44%), and two or more players getting into an argument (44%).

Thankfully, according to data reported by OnePoll on behalf of Z-Man Games, only 11% of respondents said they've witnessed a physical fight break out.

Still, these occurrences have consequences; not only have 22% banned certain games, but another 22% have had to ban a particular player from their game night.,

Thirteen percent even confessed that they themselves are the problem player “every time” or “most of the time.”

Age may have an impact, as boomers aged 57 and older were far more likely to say they're “never” the problem (71%) compared to Gen Xers aged 41 to 56 (57%), Millennials aged 25-40 (38%), and Gen Zers aged 18-24 (24%).

On the other hand, younger gamers were more likely to report having banned a player in the past — 32% of Gen Z and 24% of millennials compared to 11% of Gen X and 5% of Boomers.

This may be in part because Gen Z respondents were also more likely to prefer games where they work with a team against other teams (38%), particularly compared to Boomers, who prefer to compete on their own against other players (48%).

“Competition brings out the best in some people but the worst in others,” said Justin Kemppainen, Director of Brand Management at Z-Man Games. “This can manifest in small ways, like low-level grumping and sulking while playing, but it can blow up into shouting and strife, which can ruin a gaming experience. Looking beyond just competitive games could be better for your gaming group to avoid conflict.”

Despite the rise of social distancing, many game enthusiasts are finding creative ways to get together remotely, leading to only a 13% decrease in game nights last year compared to the previous average.

While many respondents agreed that in-person games are much more “intense” (52%) and “competitive” (42%) than remote ones, four in ten describe remote games as more “relaxed.”

In fact, half (50%) said that remote games are either just as or more fun than in-person ones.

And although winning is an important reason for playing games for 41% of respondents, only 29% are actively concerned with “beating everyone else.”

“Being on the same team and battling against a common foe in a cooperative game can create a sense of shared triumph during a victory or shared mourning in defeat,” Kemppainen added. “Better yet, any negative emotions get directed toward inanimate cardboard instead of people!”

But for three-fourths (75%) of people, winning isn’t nearly as important as the No. 1 reason for playing games: having fun.

TOP FIVE MOST-FREQUENTLY BANNED GAMES

1. Monopoly - 44%
2. Uno - 37%
3. Sorry! - 27%
4. Scrabble - 25%
5. Jenga - 24%

How Reactive Packaging Can Give Your Brand An Edge

Published to the Suzy Blog in 2019

The odds are pretty good that at least one out of every ten products you see in an average supermarket has a picture of a superhero, "Star Wars" character, or other popular pop culture icon plastered on the front. Many of those promotional images are the result of strategic partnerships between the entertainment industry and other business verticals, and are planned out far in advance of when these TV shows and movies are typically released.

However, our culture moves much faster than it did even ten years ago; these days, a viral meme can rise and fall over the course of a single 24-hour period. There now exists a unique opportunity for brands to capitalize on organic, unscripted connections between products and consumers – and to do that, they need to act fast and utilize the right tools to find out which trends are worth pursuing.

- When football superstar Marshawn "Beast Mode" Lynch was filmed eating Skittles on the sidelines of a 2011 Seattle Seahawks game, his lifelong love for the candy became a viral phenomenon. Identifying an opportunity to capitalize on the sensation, the Wrigley Company made two limited-edition packs – the "Seattle Mix" in 2014, and "Marshawn's Pack" in 2018 – and produced a Skittles-specific "press conference" with the notoriously tight-lipped Lynch. The good publicity ultimately generated a 19.2% increase in sales following the 2015 Super Bowl.
- If you've ever heard a man referred to as a "Human Dorito," you have the Avengers fandom to thank for it. Shortly after the release of "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" (2014), fans online began using the term to describe the triangular, athletic physique of actor Chris Evans. So when Frito Lay collaborated with Marvel on "Avengers: Age of Ultron"-branded Doritos in 2015, you can bet they made sure Captain America was prominently featured on a bag – which all but guaranteed that someone in the press (specifically, MTV News) would get footage of Evans himself eating them.
- No one involved with "Stranger Things" expected the supernatural series to be such an overnight success – least of all Kellogg's, which permitted the production to use Eggo Waffles prominently in the first season. After the show exploded, Eggo found clever ways to leverage their newfound spotlight, including offering free downloadable replicas of their '80s package design for cosplayers online (and, presumably, for nostalgic food packaging enthusiasts). Altogether, their efforts reportedly earned them over \$200k in paid media value, and sales rise noticeably every time a new season premieres.

It's clear that understanding how your brand fits into the larger culture is more than just a clever internet marketing ploy – it can translate to real, tangible growth for your company.

But is it truly worth diverting your attention from the day-to-day marketing strategies you need to implement for your business, and risking potential backlash if you miss the mark?

Just how interested are consumers in packaging that reflects trending cultural conversations, and can packaging enable brands to keep pace with the speed of culture?

What We Found

We tapped into Suzy's panel of one million consumers and asked 500 of them what they thought about the intersection of product packaging design and pop culture.

On average, 60% of the men and women we surveyed said that they approve of brands that make references when selling their products, compared to only 4% who disapproved. (The rest were neutral).

What do you generally think of brands that demonstrate knowledge of pop culture, news, and other trends when marketing their products?

- I strongly approve - 30%
- I slightly approve - 30%
- I feel neutral - 37%
- I slightly disapprove - 3%
- I strongly disapprove - 1%

As to be expected, most people like to imagine that they aren't susceptible to marketing gimmicks, so a plurality of our survey-takers said that packages with references on them didn't make a difference to them. However, about 7% more people said they felt inclined to buy them than people who said they wouldn't.

When faced with a choice between a normal package design and one that features a timely reference to something you already enjoy (ie: a TV show, movie, athlete, meme, etc), which are you more likely to buy?

- I'd buy the package with the reference on it - 31%
- I'd buy the regular package - 24%
- It doesn't make a difference to me - 40%
- I'm not sure - 5%

Next, we asked our panel what types of trend-makers are most likely to catch their eye. Not surprisingly, the entertainment industry came out on top – but just underneath them at 21% was internet personalities like YouTubers, Twitch streamers, bloggers, and other online influencers,

Which of the following do you think has the most impact on what you choose to buy?

- Entertainment (fictional characters, actors, comedians, directors, writers, etc.) - 26%
- Internet personalities (YouTubers, podcasters, bloggers, etc.) - 21%
- Sports (athletes, commentators, coaches, etc.) - 13%
- Musicians (rappers, pop stars, producers, etc.) - 10%
- None of the above - 31%

Finally, just for fun, we wanted to see what cultural trends people are currently excited about and asked everyone to pick their favorite three from a list. It makes a lot of sense that “Avengers” and “Game of Thrones” ranked pretty high. More interestingly, “Stranger Things” – and “Fortnite,” which became one of the world’s biggest gaming brands in 2018 (and which currently has its own “Avengers” tie-in going on) – didn’t register all that much in comparison.

Which current or upcoming cultural trend appeals the most to you right now?

- “Avengers: Endgame” - 51%
- “Game of Thrones Season 8” - 39%
- “Star Wars Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker” - 24%
- “Stranger Things” Season 3 - 21%
- “It: Chapter 2” - 12%
- “Fortnite” - 12%
- NBA Playoffs - 11%
- “Beyoncé’s Homecoming” - 9%
- The regular MLB Season - 9%
- The first live-action “Pokémon” Movie - 8%
- NHL Playoffs - 7%
- K-Pop tours in the United States - 4%

Suzy™ Says

Business owners need every advantage they can get in the competitive world of agile marketing, and making sure you know what your potential customers care about beyond your industry is a great way not just to seem relevant and exciting, but to get your product out in front of them. However, ultimately the best method is to capitalize on trends just as they're really blooming, or maybe even before they start. Creating a “Stranger Things” or “Fortnite”-related package design, for example, just isn't going to have the same effect on consumers as it would have when both properties were first making headlines.

Of course, not every company has the cash to react quickly to memes, which is why it's so important for businesses to get smarter about how they find and identify gestating trends before they become fully-grown phenomena. That's where Suzy can help connect you directly to your target audience to test exactly what they're thinking about, and how they might react to the next big thing.

8 Things We Learned From The Black Panther Set

Published to Nerdist on January 24, 2018

Way back in 2014, when Marvel Studios first announced that its plans for Phase 3 included a film starring the first-ever black superhero in comics, *Black Panther*, fans were ecstatic. When the hero arrived on the scene in *Captain America: Civil War*, he completely stole the show. Now, at long last, Wakanda's gates will be open to outsiders for the very first time when *Black Panther* hits theaters on February 16.

In February 2017, Nerdist was invited to Screen Gems Studios in Atlanta, where the cast and crew of *Black Panther* was hard at work at a pivotal action scene featuring T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman), Nakia (Lupita Nyong'o), Everett Ross (Martin Freeman), Ulysses Klaue (Andy Serkis), and Erik Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan). In between takes, the actors were able to sit down with us and share some of the secrets behind what's shaping up to be the biggest MCU movie of all time.

At the start of the film, T'Challa is still in mourning for his father.

Black Panther may not have been the title character of *Captain America: Civil War*, but a lot sure happened to him anyway. His father, the King of Wakanda, was killed; he joined a giant Avengers airport brawl to hunt down who he thought was the killer; and then, when faced with the actual culprit, he ultimately chose not to pursue vengeance.

Now, T'Challa must return to his homeland, where he's not going to be able to solve his problems with only his vibranium claws. "It's shortly after *Civil War* has ended so he's still mourning. There's unrest in Wakanda," Boseman said. "So what he's dealing with, his being the king, is making the transition to filling the footsteps of his father. So it's probably going to feel like it's more about the political unrest than the superhero [stuff] initially."

Of course, he won't be completely out of his element. "He's been prepared for it his whole life. He's groomed, so to speak," Boseman said. "Like if his father had decided that he was going to step down, 'I'm too old, I can't do it anymore,' then that would be a different scenario. But because he died in the last movie, I think the transition has to do with that mourning process."

The action sequences are going to be especially intense.

While *Black Panther* will focus heavily on political drama, it certainly won't skimp on the action either – and director Ryan Coogler, who cut his teeth on the boxing scenes in *Creed*, approaches these kinds of scenes in a very particular way.

"I think one of Ryan's strengths is that he always finds the real moments, even in the sci-fi or larger-than-life atmosphere and environment. When it comes to boxing, he wanted real hits. He wanted it to look like if it was a brawl, it was gonna be a brawl, you know? We really took our

time with each punch; each punch represented a different line. So in a sense, we're having a scene and dialogue within the fight. That was something that I found very interesting with that attention to detail," Michael B. Jordan, who worked with Coogler on *Creed*, said.

With this film, "it's a different approach 'cuz there are a lot of weapons and you're also using a lot of hand-to-hand combat and stuff like that, so there's a lot more action, so to speak," Jordan added. "Just trying to find the realness in the larger-than-life Marvel universe. I think that's something he's definitely striving for."

"Ryan is an incredibly collaborative director, and he's very responsive to our needs, our suggestions. So it really feels like team work when we are all on set," Lupita Nyong'o pointed out. "He has the mind of a fighter in a way that I really need. Because sometimes I'm like 'I don't know what a fighter would do?' So to have someone who has that instinct has been very very helpful. "

Expect Shuri to be a total standout.

It's amazing to think that at the time of this set visit, Letitia Wright's role as Shuri, the younger sister of T'Challa, hadn't even been announced yet. Now, with only a month to go before the film's release, young girls are already sharing their cosplay of her on social media – and that admiration is only going to get more intense once everyone gets to know Shuri better.

A 16 year old girl "who's smarter than Tony Stark," (at least according to producer Nate Moore) Shuri leads the Wakandan Design Group and, as we learned in the trailer, is responsible for upgrading the Black Panther's suit. Her presence also adds an interesting dynamic to the Wakandan Royal Family that's rare in the MCU – that of the kid sibling. "It's not very often that you see a superhero with a little sister," Chadwick Boseman noted. "It's not unheard of, but it's an unusual thing, so I think it brings out a different part of [T'Challa's] character."

According to Boseman, Wright was especially good at embracing that familial bond. "A little sister can poke at you, and you're protective of her, but she still thinks she's your mother – all those different things," he said. "And [Letitia] has those qualities. I think she just makes you happy as soon as you see her. Everyday she comes in you're like, 'Oh shoot!' It just changed my attitude about everything."

In fact, all the women of *Black Panther* are badasses.

But Shuri isn't the only important woman in T'Challa's life – he's surrounded on all sides by strong, capable warriors and diplomats alike in the form of his mother, Ramonda, (Angela Bassett), and Wakanda's highly-trained fighting force of Dora Milaje, led by Okoye (Danai Gurira). Lupita Nyong'o's character, Nakia, also has a special role within the Dora Milaje that takes her outside of the country and into Nigeria; Nyong'o referred to her as a "war dog" whose job "is to spy around the world and report back to Wakanda, to keep Wakanda safe."

In a departure from their comic origin, the Dora Milaje are not meant to be potential wives-in-training for the King – they just kick ass. “I would say that what Ryan and [co-screenwriter] Joe Robert Cole have done with this film maybe deepened our understanding of the role of women in Wakanda,” Nyong’o noted. “The women as we meet them are departures from what we know of them in the comic books.”

Michael B. Jordan agreed wholeheartedly. “[Ryan]’s always very conscious of that, and we want to be as realistic as possible, a reflection of the time, of today. And I feel like Lupita’s character definitely exuberates strength and brains and brawn. I think you get a chance to see all layers of a woman, all different sides and shapes and colors – I feel like you get a full 360 view of what a woman can do, very very much so.”

You might end up rooting for Killmonger.

In the comics, Erik Killmonger is a displaced Wakandan native who seeks revenge on T’Challa for exiling him from his homeland. Michael B. Jordan wouldn’t confirm how his version of the character might be similar or different from that base point (“I guess I’m the best representation of America?” he pondered), but did note that Killmonger’s ultimate goal might not exactly be outright villainous. “If we do our jobs the right ways, hopefully Killmonger is somebody you guys can root for, too,” Jordan said.

Indeed, it seemed like Jordan found a lot to admire about his character while getting into his head. “I feel like Killmonger is very selfless,” he said. “I feel like he’s looking at the bigger picture. I think he’s always looking at the bigger picture, since he was really young, which is why he’s a great thinker and a great strategist, ‘cuz he’s had time to look at the big picture and try to figure it out. And to the best of his ability, I feel like he figured out – it makes sense to him.”

But does that make Killmonger a leader, or a hero? Jordan cautiously consulted with a member of the production crew before offering up this response: “He’s a revolutionary.”

Everett Ross is more than just the token white guy.

Black Panther has such an incredibly stacked cast that no one will blame you if you completely forgot Everett Ross (Martin Freeman) – is also going to be in this movie. Fans last saw him in *Captain America: Civil War* attempting to bring first Bucky Barnes, and then Baron Zemo, into custody (and on that note – sorry, Bucky fans, but Marvel’s made it pretty clear there’s no plan for a Winter Soldier cameo). In *Black Panther*, he’ll be working with T’Challa to bring in Ulysses Klawe (Andy Serkis), the now one-armed arms dealer who made his first appearance in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*.

“I think we’ve all seen the idea of the goofy white guy among cool black people going, ‘What the hell?’ I’ve seen that about four billion times today, so, I don’t really need to do that again,” Freeman said, still in Ross’s American accent. “I had early conversations with Ryan about that.

Both of us were very keen that that wouldn't be the case in this, you know? He has moments of comedy, he has moments of levity and there was humor there, but that's not his purpose."

After all, Freeman noted, the guy is a CIA operative who works with superheroes. "It would be slightly incredible for him not to be good at his job and not to be competent at this position that he's at. He's good at his job. He's well traveled. He's well versed in the ways of the world. Wakanda is gonna be a surprise to him. But, in terms of meeting diplomats, kings, that's not particularly fazing to him."

Andy Serkis has the Hulk to thank for his Black Panther role.

Most of Andy Serkis's most iconic roles are done via performance capture or motion capture, so it's a rare treat to actually get to see his whole human face for once. But as Serkis admitted on the set of *Black Panther*, he's only in the movie because his studio, Imaginarium Productions, trained Mark Ruffalo and James Spader in performance capture during the production of *Age of Ultron*.

"[Director] Joss Whedon said, 'Hey, this is crazy, why don't you come and be in the show?' And I thought, 'Oh, alright, that'd be fun,'" Serkis said. "So that happened and then, of course, when this came along, I knew that he was part of the Black Panther story. It's just really great being back."

Which isn't to say that the people at Marvel Studios didn't have *Black Panther* in mind when Serkis was developing the character. "We decided that Klaw, we would make him South African, a very strong Afrikaans, quite bullish, in a very... edging towards not being a politically correct person," he said. "It was quite a smart decision, I think. It gives him a real edge. Also, because of the relationship to Wakanda as well, a misunderstood African nation, it fits very well politically that he was of South African descent at a time when, of course, he grew up through Apartheid."

The cast knows how huge this movie is going to be.

It should be obvious that the hype for *Black Panther* is more than just talk – last week, pre-order ticket sales beat the previous MCU record held by *Captain America: Civil War* in under 24 hours. But even during filming, every member of the cast was fully aware of just how much fan expectation there is for their movie – with the exception, perhaps, of Chadwick Boseman, who intentionally keeps himself in the dark on the details ("there's a certain removal I have to have from it in order to play it," he said).

When asked which she thought was the more intense fan experience – being a part of *Star Wars* or being a part of *Black Panther* – Lupita Nyong'o didn't hesitate. "This!"

Compass Points: Nikki Finch Soars in SECRET WEAPONS #0!

Published in Valiant Comics, January 2018

As SECRET WEAPONS star Nikki Finch knows, life can come at you pretty fast – one day you're quoting Broadway musicals with your friends, the next day you're running across rooftops while a flock of pigeons cheer you on. And this January, SECRET WEAPONS #0 will reveal exactly how Nikki got to that point and then some.

Earlier this year, Nikki and the rest of Livewire's band of psionic misfits made their mark on the Valiant Universe in SECRET WEAPONS, which quickly became 2017's best-selling limited series from an independent publisher. And it's no surprise that their struggle to matter in a world that's dismissed them as useless resonated so deeply with readers. After all, who doesn't love rooting for the underdog? Especially when they're so gosh darned relatable?

So it's lucky that SECRET WEAPONS writer Eric Heisserer has crafted yet another amazing tale to share with us! On January 3rd, he's teaming up with comics legend Adam Pollina – who's returning to interior art for the first time in over a decade, by the way! – for an all-new standalone prequel in SECRET WEAPONS #0.

Set in the year before Amanda McKee first meets her new team of young psiots, the comic will explore how Nikki went from an ordinary high school student to a Harbinger Foundation recruit, to the badass bird-whisperer we now know and love.

But this isn't just any run-of-the-mill origin story – it's also loosely inspired by the viral second-a-day video challenge, which makes Nikki's story all the more powerful to witness.

Rest assured, you will definitely want to be Nikki Finch's best friend by the time you're done reading (and you might even get a little choked up, too!). And who knows? If SECRET WEAPONS #0 achieves success, maybe the rest of the team will get their own moment in the spotlight, too...

'Till Next Time,
Compass Points

Women Who Love 'Star Trek' Are the Reason That Modern Fandom Exists

Published to Revelist.com (now defunct) on September 8, 2016

These days the mainstream media has embraced “geek culture,” mostly because it makes a boatload of money for TV and movie studios. But there’s still one TV and movie franchise that still tends to evoke the stereotype of the pedantic, socially adjusted nerd living in his mom’s basement: “Star Trek.” Sure, J.J. Abrams tried to make it cool in 2009, but let’s face it: If you have an opinion about whether or not Kirk or Picard is the better leader (it’s actually Sisko, fight me), then most non-Trekkies will still assume that you need to — in the infamous words of Will Shatner himself — “get a life.”

That stereotype doesn’t hold true, of course, and not just because many “Star Trek” fans are productive members of society (some are even scientists and astronauts themselves) — but because unlike the classic male nerd archetype that most people tend to picture in their heads, the quintessential “Star Trek” fan is a woman. Long before becoming part of a fandom was as easy as starting a Tumblr account, female Trekkies (or Trekkers, as some older fans of the series prefer) not only dominated the “Star Trek” fan community but helped to create that community in the first place.

“It redefined the classic nerd to be much more inclusive. There were more women involved,” Stuart C. Hellinger, one of the organizers of the first ever fan-led “Star Trek” conventions, told Revelist. “The entire show was diverse in many ways, including the people that worked on the show. You had women writers and women story editors, and that wasn’t as common back then. A lot of different areas were opened up because of Gene [Roddenberry]’s vision, and a lot of the fannish community took that to heart, which is a very, very good thing.”

The framework that these women and men and wonderful weirdos put into place not only extended the legacy of “Star Trek” into what it is today, but became the basis for many aspects of fandom that modern people take for granted.

"Star Trek" fans are responsible for the first — and most successful — letter writing campaign to a TV studio.

While it’s now a ubiquitous staple of American pop culture that gets a movie at least once every couple of years, “Star Trek” didn’t always start out that way. The original series floundered in the ratings when it first began airing in 1966, and was already in danger of cancellation by the end of its first season. Series creator Gene Roddenberry approached fellow science fiction writer Harlan Ellison to organize a letter writing campaign among his colleagues (it was the only show on television at the time that would actually buy scripts from real sci-fi writers) and that kept them going for another season — but in order to really succeed, he needed fans to take the helm.

He found just such passionate fans in the form of John and Betty Joe (Bjo) Trimble, a married couple he’d met at the 1966 World Science Fiction Convention in Cleveland (also known as

Tricon). The three became friendly, and Roddenberry even invited them to watch the show film on set, which is where they learned that “Star Trek” was once again on the chopping block.

“By the time we got home, we’d mapped out a basic plan of action,” Bjo recalled in a 2011 interview with the official Star Trek website. The pair sent newsletters to addresses they got from science fiction conventions, bookstore owners, and even from “Star Trek” fan mail that Roddenberry sent them (according to William Shatner’s memoir, “Memories,” Roddenberry went so far as to steal those addresses from the studio mailroom during late night raids). Each newsletter asked the recipient to write a letter according to certain guidelines and pass the information along to ten more people.

In an issue of the fan-made magazine Spockanalia (more on that in a second), series writer D.C. Fontana claimed that NBC received over a million letters from fans; however, Leonard Nimoy and NBC vice president Mort Weiner both put it at around 110,000; and then-director of publicity programming Alan Baker said it was almost 12,000. Regardless, it was decidedly more than the studio could handle, and the show did get its third season after all — although some speculate that the network was attempting to appeal less to fans and more to viewers who owned color television sets.

In any event, the show’s third season became its most important, and not because of anything to do with its plot or characters — but because it finally had enough episodes to be considered for syndication, which, aside from the passion of the series’ fans, is what truly gave “Star Trek” its’ staying power.

For her part, Bjo Trimble became immediately known as “The Woman Who Saved Star Trek,” although she does prefer to share the credit with her husband, John. “All the news at that time was about Women’s Lib and ‘the little housewife speaking up,’ so the news media had little interest in a businessman,” she said. “Reporters focused on me instead of John. To my sorrow, John has seldom gotten even the fan credit he so well deserves for his part in making the ‘Star Trek’ we know now a reality for all of fandom.”

"Star Trek" enthusiasts also defined modern fanfiction and fan culture.

While 20th-century fans of pop culture didn’t have the internet on which to wallow around in their feels, they had another method of gathering to analyze, discuss, and even create fanworks for their favorite TV shows: the fanzine.

True to what the name suggests, fanzines were independent magazines that were often handmade and distributed; the practice goes as far back to 1940, when the term was first invented for the zine “Detours” (and, according to creator Louis Russell Chauvenet, replaced the “un-euphonious word ‘fanmag’”). Fanzines were especially popular among science fiction and fantasy enthusiasts, so it’s no surprise that “Star Trek” eventually proved an appealing subject for just such a publication.

The first and arguably best-known “Star Trek” zine was called Spockanalia; Although meant to be a one-shot, it ran for a total of five issues from September 1967 to 1970, as edited by Devra Langsam and Sherna Comerford. Much of what Spockanalia featured would be very familiar to modern fans, from in-depth analytical articles and theoretical essays about the nuances of Vulcan culture (the kids today would probably know this as “meta” and “headcanons,” respectively) to fanfiction where Kirk and Spock go on adventures together.

As was the case with other fanzines, Spockanalia was entirely a labor of love, drafted on a manual typewriter and copied with mimeograph machines. Even creating fanart for the zine was a laborious process — for one thing, they had to be ink illustrations because nothing else could be reproduced on a mimeograph, and for another, finding reference photos from the show itself proved to be incredibly difficult.

“If you wanted a beautiful picture of a character so that you could draw it, you had to get a film clip,” Spockanalia editor Devra Langsam told the audience of “The First Convention And How It Resurrected Star Trek” at Star Trek Mission this past weekend. “When they did the episodes, they filmed them — it wasn’t digital, it was a physical film. And then they chopped lots of pieces out and threw them away, and Gene Roddenberry rescued them and gave some to Bjo [Trimble], who sent them out to people they knew, and they were able to make photos from these negatives. Otherwise, it would be very difficult for you to have a model to draw from. It was just not available.”

All of that effort proved to be successful; Roddenberry himself called Spockanalia “required reading” for his staff, and several cast members and writers, including Leonard Nimoy (who wrote the foreword to the first issue), contributed letters and interviews to the zine.

Spockanalia was also particularly noteworthy for discussing the sexuality of “Star Trek,” to the chagrin of some of its readers. Pon Farr, the phenomenon where Vulcans feel compelled to mate every seven years, was a particular subject of interest. When readers wrote in to complain about a pon farr-related story in Spockanalia’s third issue, the editors’ comments for issue 4 read (according to Fanlore):

The recurrence of the theme of sex isn't surprising. Sex is a recurrent theme of life. The recurrence of the theme of sex involving Spock is also unsurprising. We STAR TREK femmefans find him attractive and highly masculine. Some of us are articulate, and the result is predictable (and even logical.)

Over time, pon farr became a tremendously popular aspect of female “Star Trek” fandom; it also featured heavily in the plot of the 1967 fic “The Ring Of Soshern,” the first published fanfic, albeit privately, to feature Kirk and Spock in a sexual relationship with one another. While Kirk/Spock was maybe not as ubiquitous as you’d perhaps expect from looking at any part of the internet today (Bjo Trimble, famously, was not a fan), putting a slash mark between the two names became common shorthand beyond “Star Trek” fandom for fic that featured a romantic or sexual relationship between two characters (The “Starksy and Hutch” fandom in particular

also latched onto it in their zines). Now the term “slash” is used primarily to connote homosexual relationships in fanfic.

“Star Trek” fandom is also responsible for another popular term among fans: “Mary Sue,” which was originally used to describe a too-perfect, too-beloved fan-created character, and which first appeared in a satirical 1974 “Star Trek” fic known as “A Trekkie’s Tale;” In it, Mary Sue is a half-Vulcan 15-year-old Starfleet lieutenant who pilots the Enterprise so well she wins the Nobel Peace Prize, only to die tragically of a fatal illness as all the male crew members weep over her. The short 200-word piece was written by Paula Smith as part of a column for her fanzine, *Menagerie*, and the term “Lieutenant Mary Sue” quickly became shorthand within the zine for the exact type of character that Mary Sue ridiculed.

Spockanalia did not survive much longer than “Star Trek” itself, but the fanzine tradition that it helped to codify continued well into the early ‘90s and beyond — and you’d be honestly hard-pressed to find a single fanzine or publication that did not have a woman on its editing team.

"Star Trek" fans paved the way for modern fan conventions.

Science fiction conventions were not unheard of prior to the first “Star Trek” convention, of course — after all, Roddenberry met the Trimbles at just such a gathering in Ohio.

But the 1972 Star Trek Convention (or “Star Trek Lives!” as it was sometimes known, as the phrase was printed on all the program books) was not only the first convention to be specifically focused on one franchise, but it was also the biggest science fiction convention to date by a considerable margin — and it completely changed the game for the entertainment industry.

This convention was the brainchild not of NBC, the studio which then owned the rights to “Star Trek” — in fact they were so dismissive of the convention that they even refused to send news crews to cover it — but of “Star Trek” fans Joan Winston (who died of Alzheimer's in 2008) and Elyse Rosenstein (née Pines).

As Rosenstein recounted at Star Trek Mission this weekend, the two conceived of the idea while exchanging film for their “Star Trek”-themed slideshows. “For some unknown reason I turned to her and said, ‘Wouldn’t it be neat to have a science fiction convention for just ‘Star Trek?’ and she turned to me and said, ‘Yeah,’ we could invite 500 of our most intimate friends,” she explained. “If she’d said that it was a terrible idea, none of this would have happened.”

At the time, “Star Trek” fans were looked upon dismissively within the science fiction community, which was more literary-leaning and less interested in media like television and movies; the pair figured that a convention specifically geared towards the show would do a lot to bring fans together. In the summer of 1971, a group of young people (including “Spockanalia” creator Devra Langsam) who knew each other from Lunacon and from high school began to coalesce, and under Winston’s leadership, they set about trying to make their convention idea a reality.

None of the members of “The Committee,” as they were known, had much experience organizing events, but they had attended other science fiction conventions in the past and knew what a con needed to succeed — panels to attend, a guest of honor, an art show, a masquerade (in essence, a cosplay contest), and a dealer’s room. As an employee of CBS, Winston also had contacts who could put her in touch with Gene Roddenberry and knew how to draft contracts for guests and vendors. Another Committee member, Al Schuster, helped them book space in the Statler Hilton, now the Hotel Pennsylvania.

Of course, they weren’t prepared for the sheer number of “Star Trek” fans who would be interested in attending their event. Most science fiction conventions had an average 300 to 500 attendees; the largest at the time, Worldcon, had maxed out at 1,200. So they created enough badges, programs and other material for 2,000 people, assuming that only half as many would show. Instead, crowds upwards of 3,200 arrived unexpectedly to the hotel at 8:30 in the morning on January 21, 1972, having heard about the convention from news outlets — all thanks to the committee’s publicity efforts, of course, which even included a local commercial.

By that Sunday, The Committee had completely run out of badges and had resorted to creating makeshift ones, which made it much more difficult to keep track of who’d actually paid the \$2.50 entrance fee. Someone even called the fire marshall on the convention that year, but when he arrived and saw how politely the hordes of attendees were behaving, he let them off with a warning. “‘Star Trek’ fans are some of the nicest, well-behaved, accommodating people I have ever met,” Rosenstein noted.

The convention’s first guests included both “Star Trek” alums and famous fans alike, such as actor Majel Barrett, series writer D.C. Fontana, science fiction novelist Isaac Asimov, and Gene Roddenberry himself, who brought episodes of the show and even a blooper reel to screen. Winston also worked her magic and managed to convince NASA to provide a display as well, and members of the Committee became friendly with many of the “Star Trek” cast over the years, including George Takei and Leonard Nimoy.

But although TV professionals were certainly present, the community of fans were the real stars. They’d show up with art unlike anything that anyone had brought to science fiction conventions before, like jewelry, hand-embroidered wallets, replica costumes (one year, a man even arrived dressed Spock’s ear) life-sized models of the characters, a USS Enterprise in a bottle, or even a perfect replica of the Enterprise Bridge. And although men were certainly enthusiastic participants, Committee member Stuart C. Hellinger noted to Revelist that it was women who created the majority of these works — especially the costumes, as they tended to have more sewing experience than the men.

The Committee continued to run successful events for the next four years, and by their fifth convention in 1977 the landscape had changed considerably. Al Schuster had split apart from the group to run his own “Star Trek” convention, and many other conventions of the same kind had sprouted up all across the country. Burnt out and exhausted, Winston and the rest of the

Committee decided that it was time to throw in the towel — after all, their “five-year mission” was over.

Their exhaustion was well worth the effort; in fact, it was most likely the driving force behind the staying power of “Star Trek.” After the series ended, Roddenberry continued to lobby Paramount Pictures to produce a “Star Trek” film, using the fans’ continued excitement for the franchise as leverage. After halting development on a film and even a second TV series, Paramount finally took Roddenberry up on his idea in 1979 with “Star Trek: The Motion Picture,” and continued to make more movies — and more TV series as well — with only a (relatively) brief 7-year hiatus between 2002’s “Star Trek: Nemesis” and the 2009 reboot.

Now with its third rebooted film under its belt and another series, “Star Trek Discovery,” on the way, the “Star Trek” franchise is a powerhouse of American media history. But it would never have made it that far if it weren’t for fans like Joan Winston, Devra Langsam, Stuart Hellinger, John and Bjo Trimble, and countless other average, everyday people who happened to share a fascination with Gene Roddenberry’s vision of the future.

"We never quite understood the scope of the people who were interested," Devra said at their Star Trek Mission panel. "All of us were working or we were in college, we were not people who had a job that was the Trek Con, we were people who had a job and then did the Trek con."

"None of us did this to make money," she added. "I think over the years I made about 12 cents an hour."

"The sense of community was one of the best things about fandom of that time," Hellinger told Revelist. "A lot of people stayed in touch, even if it was small groups. The ‘Star Trek’ convention brought a lot of people together in a very, very different way."

Now, we have the internet with which to communicate with distant fandom friends — but the passion, love, and optimism that early "Star Trek" fans shared with one another still exists today. All you have to do is seek it out.