

Sin City Has Spoken

Paul R. Potts

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This Week

I don't have a lot to talk about this week. I'm pretty tired and I feel like the kids have drained my attention this week. I've given just about everything I had to work, and time at home has been a blur of dirty diapers, messes, screaming babies, and fighting middle-schoolers. Thursday night was particularly bad and I got very little sleep. I plowed through Friday with the assistance of more caffeine than usual, but by the end of the day, when it was time to wind up the week and go to Costco to do the grocery shopping, I was pretty wiped out. And so it's been a low-energy weekend.

Work has been coming along. I found and fixed a critical bug in my bootloader code, and that's good. The team in China I'm working with is partially back at the office — some of the employees have had their quarantines lifted and are able to go in, and some aren't. It's become confusing because the people I've been working with for the last few months abruptly started delegating work to different employees, but no one really told me they were doing that, until new names showed up in the e-mail "CC" list. It doesn't seem like the new folks have been given the documentation I've been sending. Because of the time difference, we're communicating entirely by e-mail. At this point it might actually make sense to send me to China for a few days. But my employer is maintaining a complete ban on international travel.

We haven't watched much to speak of this week. We watched a few episodes of Neon Genesis Evangelion. We watched an episode of series 12 of *Doctor Who*, called "Fugitive of the Judoon." I should probably review it, but I'm not much inclined to, because it was really bad — again, incoherent, overstuffed, rapid-fire, but yet tedious and boring at the same time. And it screws with the show continuity so badly that I'm really left scratching my head and wondering "what were they thinking?"

Honestly, I wouldn't be shocked to see the current run of *Doctor Who* canceled after this season.

I managed to get the older kids out to Rolling Hills Park yesterday (Saturday) for a nice long walk in the sun and warmth, which was great.

***Sonic the Hedgehog* (2020 Film)**

The kids have been begging me to take them to see the new Sonic the Hedgehog film, so this afternoon I took them to a late-afternoon showing. It was... okay. This film gained some notoriety before its release because the first version of the Sonic character looked quite disturbing. They gave him realistic teeth and other features, and he fell right into the “uncanny valley.” The producers had to spend a considerable amount of time and money to try a different approach, and make him look more like a traditional animated character, with the usual infantilized features.

It’s... fine.

The kids had a lot of fun and I didn’t find it awful. It was a little slow, which is ironic given that Sonic is always racing off at ridiculous speed, and the plot unfolded in a pretty workmanlike and predictable manner. But aside from one brief fart joke, it isn’t overly disgusting, and its humor and story are pretty light-hearted. Jim Carrey plays Dr. Robotnik, in a role that is reminiscent of his earlier roles in films like *The Mask*. I always find Jim Carrey fun to watch when he gets to chew the scenery, even if most of the scenery is computer-generated. There are several sequences that are satisfyingly jokey references to the “bullet time” filming technique introduced in *The Matrix*. The use of music in the film is occasionally hilarious. There’s some mild violence, but mostly it’s quite a warm-hearted story, even if it isn’t very memorable.

Sonic is a major studio film, based on animated TV shows, based on a whole series of follow-up games, based on the original 30-year-old simple side-scroller. I never played the original, but I had a Sonic game back in the day on the Game Gear portable. It has a pretty thin premise and pretty two-dimensional characters to blow up onto the big screen, and there were a lot of fans to anger if they screwed it up. It was a perfectly competent effort, so I think the producers succeeded in not offending any fans, but at the same time, they didn’t do anything great, because they didn’t take any risks.

It sets up sequel, but I’m not sure it will pull in enough money to convince the studio to try again. If they greenlight a sequel, though, I think this is one of those rare cases where a sequel could wind up more creative and interesting than the original.

Politics

The political news that held my attention this week was the Nevada Caucus. But before I talk about that, I want to mention some news that most people don’t seem to have heard about.

Iowa

The Iowa Caucus is still too close to call. The results were updated. The

...updated results following a partial recanvass of more than 80 precincts showed Buttigieg leading with 563.207 state delegate equivalents (SDEs) — which are used to determine the winner and allocate national convention delegates — to Sanders’ 563.127 SDEs. The recanvass shrank the margin from 2.774 SDEs to just 0.08.

In other words, 97% of Pete Buttigieg’s narrow lead simply *evaporated*. The two candidate’s SDE counts now differ by only 0.004%. Yes — four *thousandths* of one percent.

The Sanders campaign has requested a partial recount.

The non-random bias in the direction of the errors discovered so far continue to suggest that there was fraud at multiple levels of the Iowa Caucuses, from precinct captains on up. It’s worth pointing out that the only reasons we *have* first-alignment and second-alignment vote counts reported, to cross-check against the aggregated numbers, is because Sanders pushed for greater transparency in Iowa after 2016.

Caucus participants were counted as they assembled into groups. This year, for the first time, they were *also* supposed to fill out cards, called “Presidential Preference Cards.” These look pretty simple; they just show name, address, signature, and the chosen candidate. They certainly aren’t deliberately obfuscated like the 2000 “butterfly ballot” that led to Jews in Florida supporting Buchanan. But from what I’ve been reading, it’s not clear whether caucus participants were properly instructed on when to fill them out and turn them in, whether they were diligent about doing so, and whether the cards were all properly sealed and stored. These cards will form the basis of the “recount,” basically an attempt to re-create the two alignment counts so that the precinct math worksheets can be recalculated.

There are a lot of variables. It’s not clear to me that a partial recount will really produce results that are any more trustworthy, but I’m curious to see how it turns out. It will also be very interesting to see if our ongoing disgust with this process in Iowa will result in any meaningful change. Will anyone be prosecuted for election fraud? Will Iowa lose its current first-place status, putting New Hampshire back in first place? Will Iowa switch to using an election, instead of its arcane caucus process, to allocate delegates? (OK, that may be unlikely). I have no idea.

Nevada

After the terrible 2016 Nevada caucuses, I was prepared for bad news. But it seemed like Nevada actually went pretty smoothly this year. I was deeply relieved to see Sanders win. Given the polling, any other outcome would have been very suggestive of fraud. As of Sunday evening, with 88% of precincts in, CNN is reporting that Sanders has 47.1%. At present, it appears that the only other candidate to even be considered “viable,” and awarded any delegates at

all is Biden, with 20.9%. Buttigieg has 13.6% and Warren has a startlingly low 9.7%.

I am feeling positive and hopeful about a presidential candidate for the first time since 1992, when I was in the election-night crowd, milling around in the cold in downtown Ann Arbor waiting to hear Bill Clinton speak — almost thirty years ago.

The web site 538 forecasts the possible primary outcomes. They currently say that Sanders has even odds to get the majority — more than half of the pledged delegates. They give him 7 in 10 odds to get a plurality — not quite 50%, but more than any other candidate. The other candidates' chances for either are laughably small.

The distinction is important. The DNC rules say that if he comes in with a majority, the superdelegates don't get to put their fat fingers on the scales. But if he has only a plurality, it could go to a second round of voting, and then the superdelegates *do* get to weigh in.

Most of the other candidates' strategies over the next few weeks will only make sense when you realize that their highest priority is not to win the nomination, or to beat Trump, and it *certainly* has nothing to do with “unity.” Their highest priority is to prevent Sanders from achieving a majority, going into the convention. Bloomberg, despite being a political outsider, also has the goal of stopping defections to Sanders, but from the right, not the left.

As I've mentioned before, if the convention is contested — it's going to be bonkers. It's going to be a situation like most of us have not seen in our lifetimes, but which is long overdue — the collapse of a major American political party.

The reactions of party loyalists and mainstream media pundits to Sanders' win in Nevada has been *remarkable*. Everyone who has spent the last few months shouting about “divisiveness” and “unity” is on the attack. Their overwrought rants have been soothing, tinkling wind chimes to my ears, and their crocodile tears a restorative cordial. We — Sanders and his huge coalition — are going to give them and their families free higher education and universal health care, even as they scream at us the whole time that we're Stalins, dragging them to a Gulag.

Have a great week!

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