

# *Matrix*

*The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association*

95p

100



*June–July 1992*

## Information and Contacts

### BSFA Membership

Still costs £12 (UK & EC), £15 (non-EC Europe), £18a/£25 air Australia, £25a/£40a US per year, but goes up to £15 per year on July 1, 1992.

### New Members

Jo Raine, 29 Thornville Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS26 8EW

### Membership Renewals

Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading RG6 1PL

### USA Memberships

Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred Street, Detroit, MI 48213, USA

### Matrix

Jenny & Steve Glover, 16 Avary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP (tel: 0532 791264)

### Media

Ian Mundell, 21 Radford House, 1 Pembroke Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, London W2 4EE

### Competitions

Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 0RG

### Information

Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB

### BSFA Publications

#### Paperback Inferno

Andy Sawyer, 1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT (tel: 051 336 3355) (to July 31, 1992)

#### Vector

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#### BSFA Awards

Nic Mahoney, 276 Lonsdale Avenue, Intake, Doncaster DN2 6HJ

#### Foreign Liaison

Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Road, London N15

## In and Out

### New & Rejoined Members

Ledger, Jan, 2 Chenies Cote, Okewoodhill, Dorking, Surrey RH5 5NB  
Shakespeare, Martin S, 88 Filching Road, Eastbourne, Sussex BN20 8SD

### Changes of Address

Nesa Sivagnanam, 5 Montague Burton Flats, 23 Devon Road, Leeds LS2 9BA  
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David Gilton 41 Armada Way, Admirals Reach, Chatham, Kent  
Gill Alderman, Cliff Cottage, French's Walk, COBH, Co Cork, Ireland

### Departed Members

Brown, Victor H  
Cumner, David, 117 Torcross Ave, Wyken, Coventry CV2 3NW  
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Rees, Stephen, 42 Meadowvale, Cadoston, Barry, South Glamorgan  
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Stinchill, Peter, 8 Barsby Green, Berwick Hills, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS3 7NX  
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Thorp, Dennis, 190 Horton Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 7QF  
Vine, Phillip, Sunmore, Holyhead Road, Menai Bridge, Gwynedd LL59 5RH

## Indeterminacy

### Tempora Mutantur

Since the last issue a lot of things have changed, for the country, for the BSFA, and for your editors. The changes that overtook the country in mid-April were the worst sort: a reconfiguration and reinforcement of the status quo, with Hope locked firmly back in the ballot box for an indefinite period.

When you chase out Hope with a pitchfork, it always recurs. Yes, great changes are afoot in the BSFA, and a casual glance may give the impression that we are head-to-wind with sheets flailing wildly as we stow all spare canvases in preparation for an oncoming storm, but amongst all the surface chaos things are getting done. Our coordinator has things well in hand, and the upcoming changes in personnel should bring with them a renewed draught of enthusiasm.

Successfully weathering the current financial squall, however, is only one of the reasons to be cheerful. This issue of *Matrix* has had more contributors than any since Jenny took over from Maureen Porter just over two years and fourteen *Matrices* ago. I hope we can keep this up.

The third area of great change for us has been in our home situation. *Matrix* 90 was produced under the shadow of shadows of expiry of my post at Leeds University and the Nice Council Man telling us yes, there was an unusually high level of asbestos dust in our house (and several hundred others in the area) but there wasn't that much, really, and they didn't see why they should bother doing anything about it. Some of you may also have heard a rumour that we were quitting the editorship of *Matrix*, but that was predicated on a career change that (if successful) would have had us dividing our time between the UK and the CIS.

### The Lost Worlds of *Matrix* 100

Burns' line about the best-laid plans of mice and men seems to apply to *Matrix* editors in spades. We've been looking forward to doing something special for *Issue* 100 since first Jenny counted up the months and realised that it wasn't that much after the two years she'd originally said the code edit *Matrix* for.

The original plan was the "traditional" one in which all previous editors and regular columnists would be mugged into producing one more piece on what it was like in their day or on how things have changed since. It wasn't that long before we discarded this one as a) old hat and b) unworkable (that may have been the summer when it seemed I wasn't able to turn around without bumping into an ex-editor either of *Matrix* or *Black Hole*).

Plan B was far more fun. Instead of the boring old retrospective, we decided we'd include some articles from *Matrix* 200, which just happened to have fallen down a time warp. Unfortunately, although we spoke to several people about this sort of article only one converted enthusiasm into paper and ink. Just as well, really, because with the AGM Minutes, the section where the BSFA is going, and the massively expanded letter column, we simply wouldn't have had the space. It's a pity, though — we'd really like to do something with it like a sometime. Perhaps we'll use it as an occasional lighter-er...

### Just in Case...

Have you ever wondered just how all those time-travellers happen to be perfectly prepared to set up shop as resident magician in the 6th century (or whenever)? We can't do much about knowledge of history and language, but what everyday objects would you find most useful in the past? We're interested in two lists: one a list of ordinary items you could plausibly always carry with you, that would do for any era; the second a more specific shortlist (no more than a pound or so of material) that you'd take to a favourite time-period. There will be "a book" winging its way to the sender of the most interesting list.

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# Deadline 15th July

Collating  
7-8 August  
Applied Statistics  
Reading University  
Contact Keith Freeman  
(0734 666142)

## News

Laurie Mann, Jo Raine, Steve Grover, Kev McVeigh, Tommy Ferguson, Ken Lake, Nic Mahoney, Vincent Clarke, Eva Hauser, Victor Kutilov & Nicholas Vjunickov and your editors.

### BSFA Awards

These were presented by Dave Langford at Illumination, the British National Convention at Blackpool, at Easter.

Novel: *Fall of Hyperion*, runner up *Eternal Light*

Short Text: "Bad Timing" (Molly Brown *Interzone* 54), runner up "Floating Rocks" (Ian MacDonald, *New Worlds*)

Art: **Mark Harrison** (*Interzone* 48 cover), runner up Geoffrey Taylor (*Interzone* 45 cover)

Dramatic Presentation: *Terminator 2*, runner up *Red Dwarf IV*

The results of the voting are summarised in Nic Mahoney's article below.

### Nebula Awards

These were awarded on April 25th during the Nebula weekend in Atlanta.

Best Novel: Michael Swanwick: *Stations of the Tide* (IASFM; William Morrow & Co)

Best Novella: Nancy Kress: "Beggars in Spain" (Axolotl Press; IASFM)

Best Novelette: Mike Connor: "Guide Dog" (F&SF)

Best Short Story: Alan Brennert: "Ma Qui" (F&SF, *Author's Choice Monthly*, Pulphouse Publ.).

### Hugo Nominations

**Best Novel** Bujold, Lois McMaster: *Barrayer* (Baen); Bull, Emma: *Bone Dance* (Ace); Card, Orson Scott: *Xenocide* (Tor); McCaffrey, Anne: *All the Weys of the Pinn* (Del Rey, Bantam UK); Swanwick, Michael: *Stations of the Tide* (serialised in *IASFM* Mid December 1990 and January 1991) and Vinge, Joan D: *The Summer Queen* (Warner/Questar)

**Best Novella**, Kress, Nancy: "And Wild For To Hold" (*Alternate Wars* (Bantam Spectra) & *IASFM* July 1991); Kress, Nancy: "Beggars in Spain" (*IASFM*, April 1991 — also published by Axolotl Press); Rusch, Kristine Kathryn: "The Gallery Of His Dreams" (*IASFM*, September 1991) — also published by Axolotl Press); Swanwick, Michael: "Griffin's Egg" (St Martin's, Legend) and Willis, Connie: "Jack" (*IASFM*, October 1991)

**Best Short Story**, Bisson, Terry: "Press Ann" (*IASFM*, August 1991); Kessel, John: "Buffalo" (F&SF, January 1991); Landis, Geoffrey A: "A Walk in the Sun" (*IASFM*, October 1991); Resnick, Mike: "One Perfect Morning, With Jackals" (*IASFM*, March 1991); Resnick, Mike: "Winter Solstice" (F&SF, October/November 1991); Soukup, Martha: "Dog's Life" (*Amazing*, March 1991) and Willis, Connie: "In the Late Cretaceous" (*IASFM*, Mid December 1991)

**Best Non-Fiction Book**, Addams, Charles: *The World of Charles Addams* (Knopf); Blier, Everett: *Science Fiction: The Early Years* (Kent State University Press); Chalker, Jack L & Owings, Mark: *The Science Fantasy Publishers: A Critical and Bibliographic History*, 3rd ed. (Mirage Press); Gomoll, Jeanne, Martin, Diane et al: *The Bakery Men Don't See* (SF3) and Jones, Stephen: *Clive Barker's Shadows in Eden* (Underwood/Miller).

**Best Original Artwork**, Canty, Tom: cover of *White Mists of Power* (Roc Fantasy); Eggleton, Bob: cover of *Lunar Descent* (Ace); Eggleton, Bob: cover of *IASFM*, January 1991 (illustrating "Stations of the Tide"); Maitz, Don: cover of *Heavy Time* (Warner/Questar) and Whelan, Michael: cover of *The Summer Queen* (Warner/Questar)

**Best Dramatic Presentation** *The Addams Family* (Paramount); *Beauty and the Beast* (Disney); *The Rocketeer* (Disney); *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (Paramount) and *Terminator 2* (Carlock).

**Best Semiprozine** *Interzone* (David Pringle); *Locus* (Charles Brown); *New York Review of Science Fiction* (David G Hartwell, Kathryn Kramer, Gordon van Gelder); *Pulphouse* (Dean Wesley Smith) and *Science Fiction Chronicle* (Andrew I Porter).

**Best Professional Editor**, Ellen Datlow; Gardner Dozois; Edward L. Ferman; Kristine Kathryn Rusch and Stanley Schmidt

**Best Fan Writer**, Avedon Carol; Mike Glyer; Andrew Hooper; Dave Langford; Evelyn Leeper and Harry Warner, Jr.

**Best Professional Artist**, Tom Canty; David Cherry; Bob Eggleton; Don Maitz and Michael Whelan.

**Best Fan Artist**, Brad Foster; Diana Harlan Stein; Teddy Harvia; Peggy Ranson and Stu Shiffman.

**Best Fanzine**, *File 770*; Mike Glyer; *Foxfax*; Janice Moore & Timothy Lane; *Lon's Lantern*; George ("Lon") Laskowski; *Mimosa*; Dick & Nicki Lynch and *Trapdoor*; Robert Lichtman.

**John W Campbell Award**, Ted Chiang; Barbara Delaplace; Greer Gillman; Laura Resnick and Michelle Sagara.

The Hugos will be awarded on Saturday, September 5 at MagiCon, the 50th World Science Fiction Convention in Orlando, Florida, USA.

### Other Awards

The **Doc Weir** was awarded to Roger Robinson. It is awarded in honour of **Arthur Rose "Doc" Weir** who died in March 1961. He had come to fandom late, but had enthusiastically done everything he could including a lot of work for the BSFA. It is a free vote by all attendees at Eastercon and tends to go to someone who has worked enthusiastically in some area of fandom. Besides his work with Foundation, the series of Becons and the Drunken Dragon press, Roger also arranges the excellent competitions for *Matrix*.

The **Ken McIntyre** award was presented to Colin Johnston for the Illumination programme book cover. This is the second successive year he has won it — last year it was for the Illumination badge design. The award in honour of Ken McIntyre, who died of pancreatitis in 1968. Rog Peyton suggested that there should be a fanart award to preserve his memory.

### Eastercon Awards

Long Text: **Colin Greenland**: *Take Back Plenty*  
Short Text: **Sean Ellis** and others: *Quantum Choc-o-dynamics*  
Graphic: The "Milton Keynes" T-shirt by **Smitty**  
Dramatic: **Grant Naylor**: *Red Dwarf V*

### Silly Eastercon Awards

Most promising newcomer: **D West**; Most active fan: **Bernie Evans**; Most inactive fan: **Brian Davis**; Most fanciable fan: **Teddy**; Most talented fan: **Dave Mooring**; Most untalented fan: **Steve Green**; Most boring fan: **Nigel Richardson**; Most exciting fan: **Dave Lally**; Most excitable fan: **Pam Wells**; Fan most likely to succeed: **Bernie Evans**; Fan most likely to fail (in producing another copy of his fanzine): **Tony Berry**; Most chauvinistic fan: **Nic Farey**; Best bum in fandom: **Dave Mooring**.

The **Ditmar** awards were presented at Syncon in Sydney this Easter. Best novel or collection went to **Terry Dowling** for *Wormwood*; Best short fiction went to **Sean McMullen** for "Alone in his Chariot"; Best fanzine is *Eidolon*, published by **Jeremy Byrne**; Best fan writer is **Bruce Gillespie**; Best Artist is **Nick Stathopoulos**.

The **William Atheling Jr Award** for best criticism, also presented at Syncon, went to **Sean McMullen** for his work "Going Commercial".

The **Aelita** awards are being presented right now. It is the first home prize for the best SF book in Russia and refers to a Martian woman character in the novel of the same name by A Tolstoy. Other prizes will be presented at the Aelita festival in Ekaterinburg (formerly Sverdlovsk), particularly "Stan" for the best first book of new authors, and the "Great Ring", named after the name of the union of the starchy civilisations in I Efremov's *Andromeda's Nebula* and the "Golden Ball", which of course refers to A and B Strugatsky's *Roadside Picnic*.

### New Books

**Anthony, Piers**: *The Colour of her Panties* (NEL October £15.99 hb, £8.99 trade pb) Two trios of adventurers (three adults, three children) set out on different cases. Be warned that a 16th Xanth novel (*Demons Don't Dream*) has just been purchased by Tor.

**Aspirin, Robert**: *The Myth-ing Omnibus* (Legend September £8.99 pb) Collection of the first three humorous fantasies; *The Second Myth-ing Omnibus* (Legend October £4.99).

**Barker, Clive**: *Imajica* (Fontana August £5.99 pb)

**Banks, Iain M**: *The State of the Art* (Orbit September £4.99 pb)

**Bear, Greg:** *The Infinity Concerto & The Serpent Mage* collected under the title *Songs of Earth and Power* (Legend November £15.99 hb, £8.99 pb with a new introduction).

**Brown, Dale:** *Sky Masters* (Grafton August £4.99) Futuristic high-tech aerial warfare — China sets off the atomic bomb.

**Brown, Eric:** *Meridian Days* (Pan, August) Pan Original, 1st novel, following acclaimed collection of short stories, *The Time-Lapsed Man*. An out of the way planet with tiny population of artists scattered amongst few inhabitable islands; the altered who have changed their bodies to mythical shapes and the augmented who have boosted their minds with computers — the perfect place for Bob Benedict to escape the tragedy of his past in hopeless drug abuse, despised by and despising artists. But death and corruption can flourish even here.

**Campbell, Ramsey:** *Waking Nightmares* (Little, Brown July £13.99); *The Claw* (Warner July £4.50 pb); *The Nameless* (Warner July £4.50 pb); *Uncanny Banquet* (Little, Brown November £13.99); *Count of Eleven* (Warner November £4.99 pb); *Incaruate* (new edition Little, Brown November £13.99); *Obsession* (new edition Little, Brown November £13.99).

**Card, Orson Scott:** *The Memory of Earth* (Legend August £14.99hb £8.99 pb) First UK publication of first volume of five book series *Homecoming*, set forty million years in the future, and features search for the Lost Earth by the inhabitants of the planet Harmony; *The Call of Earth* (Legend January 1993 £14.99 hb, £8.99 pb) volume two of the *Homecoming* sequence; *Xenocide* (Legend August £14.99 pb) together with new revised editions of *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead*.

**Chapman, Charles:** *George Lucas: The Creative Impulse* (Lucasfilm's First Twenty Years) (Virgin October £19.99) Biography, film stills and the "full co-operation of the usually reticent George Lucas"; this is written by the Arts Editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. Look out for *Young Indiana Jones* on tv this autumn.

**Cherryh, C. J.:** *Helburner* (New English Library June £14.99) Chronologically directly after *Heavy Time* — Alliance does not yet exist, but Union does. Starring Ben Pollard who gets called in to see an old comrade, Dekker, just when he was hoping for a transfer to a nice Earth job.

**Clarke, Arthur C. & Benford, Greg:** *Against/Beyond the Fall of the Night* (Orbit June £4.99 pb); also **Clarke, Arthur C.:** *Garden of Rama* (Orbit October £8.99 C format).

**D'Amato, Brian:** *Beauty* (Grafton January 1993 lead paperback) A brilliant, grotesque and utterly gripping chit horror novel set amongst New York's beautiful people, desperate to maintain their looks with even the most radical forms of cosmetic surgery. Will aim to chit.

**Eddings, David:** *Seeress of Kell* (Transworld Corgi August £4.99 pb) Book 5 (final part) of *The Malloreon*. *Seeress of Kell* has already sold 15,000 plus copies in Bantam hb and trade pb editions and total David Eddings sales now stand at 2.5 million. Garion and companions travel to Kell and have some difficulty, as usual.

**Egan, Greg:** *Quarantine* (Legend £14.99 hb £8.99 pb) First novel set in the late 21st century at a time when the Earth has been enclosed for over thirty years by "The Bubble" — a mysterious sphere centred on the sun. Reality itself is questioned as the thrilling plot becomes entwined with the reason behind "The Bubble".

**Foster, Alan Dean:** *Codgerspace* (Orbit November £13.99 hb, £4.99 pb)

**Gay, Anne:** *Dancing on the Volcano* (Orbit December £8.99 C format); *The Bright of Azure Midnight* (Orbit December £4.99 pb)

**Gemmell, David:** *Waylander 2* (Legend October £14.99 hb, £8.99 pb) Thirteenth novel, direct sequel to *Waylander*, set in the Drenai world, continues exploits of Waylander the Slayer and his companions, including his daughter Mirel. Also *Stones of Power* (Legend October £15.99 hb £9.99 pb), an omnibus edition of his four bestselling *Sipstrassi* novels; *Dark Prince* (Legend October £4.99 pb) sequel to *Lion of Macedon*.

**Gentle, Mary:** *The Architecture of Desire* (Corgi July £3.99 pb) Simultaneous publication with her new Bantam Press hb *Grunts* officially described as "A Fantasy with ATTITUDE ... capturing all the dirty realism and grim comedy of sword/sorcery from the bad guys' point of view". *The Times* was enthusiastic about her writing: "intricate as filigree but as tough as wrought-iron".

**Green, Simon R.:** *Guard Against Dishonour* (Headline June £4.50) Crime busting cops in a city that knows no mercy: fantasy.

**Harris, Steve:** *The Hoodoo Man* (Headline June £15.99) Horror as boy grows up to be haunted by the "Gannex Man", evil alter ego.

**Herbert, James:** *Portent* (Hodder & Stoughton October £14.99) Breathtaking novel of world disaster. To be published simultaneously with **Stephen Jones'** *James Herbert: By Horror Haunted* (the ultimate fan's guide).

**Holdstock, Robert:** *The Fetch* (Warner September £4.99)

**Holt, Tom:** *Ye Gods!* (Orbit, June hb); *Flying Dutch* (Orbit, June pb £4.50)

**Hutson, Shaun:** *Heathen* (Little, Brown September £15.99); *Captives* (Little, Brown September £4.99 pb).

**James, Laurence:** *Dark Future 1: The Revengers* (Transworld Bantam August £2.99 pb) 1st in series of hardhitting post-holocaust survival stories for boys. 16 year old Rode is killed by warring tribe's raid on community's mushroom farm, his 4 friends swear to recover his "Totem". Also No. 2 in the series *Beyond the Grave* (Transworld Bantam August £2.99 pb) 4 boys go hunting for game to stock up for winter, stray into unexplored region, discover military installations that could make their community the most powerful in the world.

**Jordan, Robert:** *Dragon Reborn* (Orbit, June hb £15.99, £8.99 C format); *The Great Hunt* (Orbit, June £5.99)

**King, Stephen:** *Dark Tower 3: The Waste Lanes* (Warner December £5.99)

**Laymon, Richard:** *Dark Mountain* (Headline June £4.99) Classic horror.

**Lofficier, Jean-Mar:** *Doctor Who — The Universal Databank* (Virgin November £3.99) Third and final volume of complete "Who" reference book. Look out also for the New Adventures series of original Doctor Who novels, all published by Virgin, with a new series coming in August. Plus the scripts novelised and aimed at a children's audience, two releases per month as from July. Not forgetting **Rigsford, A. & Skilleter, A.:** *Doctor Who — The Monsters* (Virgin September £14.99), which is described as "a visual treat to delight Doctor Who fans and appreciators of SF art".

**McCaffrey, Anne:** *All the Ways of Pern* (Corgi September pb) AIVAS (Artificial Intelligence Voice Address System) revealed all the history of Pern and could offer the chance to get rid of the deadly Thread. Follows discoveries made at the end of *Renegades of Pern*.

**McCaffrey, Anne & Moon, E.:** *The Generation Warriors* (Orbit September £4.99 pb)

**Masterton, Graham:** *The Hymn* (Warner December £4.99)

**Miller, Ron:** *The Dream Machines — A Pictorial History of the Spaceship in Art, Science and Literature* (Kreiger Publishing Company, PO Box 9542, Melbourne, Florida 32902-9542, USA)

**Moorecock, Michael:** *Revenge of the Rose* (Grafton August £4.50)

**Preis, Bryon ed.:** *The Ultimate Frankenstein* (Headline June £4.99) Following on from *The Ultimate Dracula* (also from Headline), these 18 original stories plus one earlier classic celebrate the 60th anniversary of the first cinematic representation of Frankenstein's monster. Introduction by Isaac Asimov with stories by Katherine Dunn, Brian Aldiss, Michael Bishop, Kurt Vonnegut Jr, Mike Resnick, F. Paul Wilson, Philip Jose Farmer, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Benjamin M. Schutz, S. P. Somtow, Loren D. Estleman, Steve Rasnic Tem, & Melanie Tem, Esther M. Friesner, David J. Schow, Karen Haber, Garfield Reeves-Stevens, Joyce Harrington, Charles De Lint, George Alec Effinger and Leonard Wolf.

**Rankin, Robert:** *The Brenford Triangle* (Transworld Corgi August £3.99 pb)

Book 2 of *The Brenford Trilogy*, it appears that Rankin is set to become the Terry Pratchett of tomorrow. *Time Out* puts it more strongly: "Robert Rankin is to Brenford what William Faulkner was to Yoknapatawpha County!"

**Simmons, Dan:** *Children of the Night* (Headline August £8.99 C format) Dracula fights AIDS — mix of horror and modern medical drama.

**Steele, Allen:** *Rude Astronauts* (Legend January £14.99 hb, £8.99 pb) First collection of short stories. Also *Labyrinth of Night* (Legend, January 1993) — exploration of Mars.

**Shatner, William:** *Teklab* (Pan, September) 1st UK pub. An assassin calling himself the Unknown Soldier is at work in every international capital city, but victims all seemingly unconnected. Jake Carigan, searching for his son, goes to London with wisecracking Sid Gomet to find (among other things) teenage gangs roaming the ruins of Buckingham Palace. 3rd in series of Tek novels.

**Tilley, Patrick:** *Amtrak Wars 1 & 2 & 3* (Little, Brown June £14.99 each)

**Weis, Margaret & Hickman, T.:** *Death Gate Cycle 3: Fire-Sea* (Bantam July £4.99 pb) 3rd title in 7 volume fantasy epic, simultaneous publication with Bantam hb of *Deathgate Cycle 4: Serpent Mage*. Look for joint advertising in 200AD and Vox.

**Williams, Tad:** *Child of an Ancient City* (Legend November £12.99 hb, £9.99 pb) Novella written in collaboration with Nina Kiriki Hoffman and illustrated by Brian Froud, a dark Arabian Nights fab, fantastical and richly textured.

**Wingrove, David:** *Chung Kuo 4: The Stone Within* (Hodder & Stoughton December £15.99, trade pb £8.99); also *CK3: The White Mountain* (NEL



September £4.99). This series has been extensively discussed recently by SF readers. Tom Hutchinson, writing in *The Times* said "All human life is there: love, tragedy, joy and a sense of destiny being fulfilled".

## SF purchased by Book Clubs

Contracts signed by book clubs and licencing publishers and therefore likely to appear in the next year are:

BCA: Moorcock, M *Elric/Sailor Seas/Weird White Wolf/Vanishing Tower/Bane Sword/Storm/Port* (Grafton); Jones, Jenny *Lies and Flames* (Headline); King, Stephen *Dark Tower 1 & 2* (Little, Brown); May, Julian *Blood Trillium* (HarperCollins); Koontz, Dean *Watchers & Key to Midnight* (Headline); Tepper, Sheri *Beauty* (HarperCollins); Bova, Ben *Colony/Kinsmen/Millennium* (Mandarin); Cherryh C J *Helburner* (Hodder & Stoughton); Kerr, Katherine *Time of Omens* (HarperCollins); Pratchett, Terry *Small Gods* (Victor Gollancz) and *The Terry Pratchett Set* (Bantam Press); Donaldson, Stephen *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever* (Grafton).

**The Women's Press Book Club:** Charnas, Suzy McKee *The Vampire Tapestry* (The Women's Press).

**Reader's Union:** Stannard, Russell *Black Holes and Uncle Albert* (Faber).

## Airside SF

"Airside" bookshops are those found after passing through Customs & Excise and are therefore no longer legally in the UK. This neutral territory can sell books before the national publication dates — up to six months before. "There was a time when airport fiction meant Jackie Collins. That's not true anymore" said Graham Edmonds, the airports book buyer for WH Smith and pointed out that SF was stocked mostly at Gatwick and Manchester (for teenagers). TV tie-ins go well at Terminal 1 at Heathrow and *The Satanic Verses* was sold at all terminals without any problem, except for Terminal 3, because of the high proportion of Muslims. Logically enough, the only sort of book not stocked because of international sensibilities were air disaster stories.

## Obituaries

### Asimov: the hidden influence

Isaac Asimov died at 2.20am on April 6 aged 72 of heart and kidney failure. He was born at Petrovichi, USSR on January 2, 1920 and became a naturalised US citizen in 1929. A final novel *Forward the Foundation* will be brought out later this year.

Isaac Asimov is dead — but so what? [wrote Steve Grover]. His characters were thinner than any cardboard, and he churned out enough lousy fiction for three or four other hacks. In his non-fiction, he revealed himself to be smug, arrogant and supercilious and, after all, he couldn't even be bothered to make an appearance at Brighton.

But, and it's a big but, is there anyone reading this whose SF tastes weren't significantly affected and moulded by the Good Doctor?

Most of us don't read his work any more, and haven't for a long time, but we used to. Lots of it. Along with Clarke's and Heinlein's, his books have formed the core of early SF reading for decades. The very lack of depth and complexity that seasoned readers deride makes his fiction that much more accessible, and provides a bridge from Enid Blyton, Frederick Forsyth and Agatha Christie to LeGuin, Ballard and Dick. For this we should ever be ever grateful, and mourn his passing.

In *Starlog* magazine, many years ago, there was printed a plaintive letter from someone confused by the events in the film *Saturn 3*. How could the robot have killed and tortured as it did, the writer asked, when the Three Laws clearly prohibit such? That letter says it all about Asimov's influence, really, doesn't it?

### Asimov: an Appreciation with Distance

Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* was the second SF book I ever read [writes Tommy Ferguson] and it helped to change my life forever. His impact on the genre has had similar effects, with his work not only appealing to young fiction addicts but helping to move the cause of science as well. His SF books had a major impact on the genre: the Three Laws of Robotics and the *Foundation* series and his future history work all played its part in the Asimov myth. All of this makes it a real shame to have to say that he wrote some awful stuff as well.

As a young voracious reader (weren't we all?) it was the cover on the front of *I, Robot* that got me hooked; up until that time I had thought it was some weird stuff and would not even approach the shelf in the local library that contained it. Then one day I plucked up the courage and Asimov reached out from the pages

of the book and grabbed my life. Yeah, it was like that. After that I couldn't get enough of the man.

Over the years I learned about the *Foundation* series, about *Nightfall* and *Nightfall 2* and the great short stories and, of course, his multitude of Robot stories. *The Caves of Steel* is still my favourite. His tales from the Black Widowers was responsible for opening up the whole genre of detective fiction to me, something that a SF author should take great praise for. Getting into fandom, I began to appreciate just how widespread the man's influence was: everywhere he was mentioned as the be-all and end-all of Science Fiction. To a large extent, he was.

It wasn't only in our little self-contained Universe that Asimov moved as an Aurora Borealis however, but his non-fiction, the majority of his *Opus 200*, had a dramatic influence on the world around us. His popular Science articles helped introduce ideas and concepts from the world of science into many people's lives. His versatility didn't end with what he knew (that fabled advice to writers); he also wrote annotations on Shakespeare, discussions on the Bible, and a host of other seemingly weird topics. This shows us a man of immense talent, dedication and the great urge to communicate.

Then, like Heinlein and Clarke (the other two great names in the famous SF trilogy), he began to write some absolute drivel, hopefully just for the money. The third *Foundation* book, which even I — one of his greatest fans — thought was a duffer, should have been the end. Then he did two more works — thought was simply awful and not worth even comparing to a *Dallas* script. In recent years, he also tried to combine his Robot stories with the *Foundation* series into a future Universe, in a similar way to what Heinlein attempted with his later novels. It is curious that all of the "Great Three" seemed to attempt projects that to us mere mortals appeared both foolhardy and, in some cases, plain silly. Clarke's recent collaborations read very poorly and Asimov's attempts to broaden his fictional base failed dismally.

The other thing which really bothered me about the man, and this began even when he couldn't cough without me trying to transcribe it, was his collections. In recent years there have been at least three (possibly more) of the "Best of Isaac Asimov". Although he probably has enough fiction to cover those three books, the Science Fiction reprinted had all been collected before; plus or minus one story, of course, for decency sake. This really pissed me off as, until that time, I had been an Asimov completist. After buying one hard back collection too many, I got really hacked off with the whole concept of Asimov completism and sold all but the most important of his books to a second hand book store. It is a great pity that I haven't yet regretted it.

This is the sort of perspective into which we must place Asimov's career. It is an undeniable fact that he was the most influential writer of SF's Golden Age, even his contemporaries admit as much. Yet we must also look at what he had done throughout his whole life and career. As the song goes *You're only as good as the last great thing you did*. I am extremely hard pushed to think of the last great thing he did that didn't occur more than ten or fifteen years ago.

Perhaps time had caught up with him and then passed him by. He did what he did, made his mark and then settled back into other projects not linked with Science Fiction. Which is fine and even admirable, but why did he allow all those reprints, execrable *Foundation* sagas and trite "Isaac Asimov Presents"? As I said before, I hope it was for the money, because my idol will have fallen from a very high altitude if he placed any real literary value on most of his later SF work.

Or did I just grow too old for Isaac Asimov? Was my Asimov appreciation horizon set at twelve to fifteen? I truly think so. But then, I would never have known about it if it wasn't for Isaac Asimov. I'd be writing articles about train spotting and wearing a green anorak now. He will always be remembered as one of the great fathers of Science Fiction. But even fathers have their faults and can become senile. I shall always remember reading *The Caves of Steel*, *The End of Eternity* and *Foundation* with fondness and thanks for giving me Science Fiction.

### Eric Bentcliffe

Eric Bentcliffe arrived on the British fan scene in the very early '50s [writes Vincent Clarke] and his fanish enthusiasm sparked off the Norwest Science-Fantasy Club in '52. It soon had over 50 members, and Eric became the spokesman for those in the Manchester area who disliked London's monopoly as a convention site. His stand on this eventually resulted in the holding of the SuperManCon in Manchester in '54, one of the most reported British cons of the '50s, and to the general dispersion of cons, to cities outside London.

Eric was a prolific fanzine editor and publisher in the '50s, from an early '52) hektographed British prozine checklist through twenty issues of *Space Times* for the NWSFC, *Triode* (with Terry Jeeves and Eric Jones) which lasted with one

long gap from '54 to '77, *Waldo* from '59 to '83 and numerous others. He won TAFF in 1960 and produced a Trip Report, *Epiatiff*, within six months. He was in OMPA (the first British apa), a Knight of St. Anthony and was also an early columnist for the BSFA o/o *Vector*. He married in 1962, and his fanning inevitably diminished thereafter. Eric found it difficult to sympathise with many of the newer fans of the '60s and early '70s whom he said were "fanishly offensive" and one of his last fanzines, *When Yagvi was a Louse* in '82, was mainly reprints from the '50s and was heavily nostalgic.

"Whilst playing hunt the gallstone in my innards, they discovered cancer in my gall-bladder and had to leave it where it was ... How long I've got I don't know, don't really want to know for that matter, but I'm not planning on volunteering to do *Fancypodiatu 2*"

Thus Eric Benciliffe in June '91, a few phrases typical of Eric's sustained cheerfulness and how fanish affairs always had a place in his thoughts. He died on February 26, in his sixties.

Though not a part of the current British fan scene, he will be badly missed by old friends.

He leaves a wife and daughter.

[Vincent sent a number of Eric's fanzines which I read with great interest, and I was especially struck by his "File 13" column from *Vector 2*, Autumn 1958, which he helped Terry Jeves edit. Starting from the conclusion of a letter from a new member, "The point I have been trying to make is that fans seem to be fanatical about fandom and not SF, and if your Association has any similar tendencies it holds nothing for me", Eric takes the first recorded steps down a now-familiar path. In fact, the article is so relevant we have quoted it in our BSFA: Quo Vadis section below).

## SF Scene

**Arthur C Clarke Award** nominees are producing new books: **Stephen Baxter's** *Time-like Infinity* will be published by HarperCollins in November; **Pat Cadigan's** *Fools* is due in the US later this year; **Gwyneth Jones** is working on a second novel involving the aliens from her *White Queen*; **Richard Paul Russo's** *Destroying Angel* was published by Headline in May; the prolific **Dan Simmons** has two novels forthcoming from Headline.

The **HarperCollins SF Newsletter** included photographs taken at the magnificent Tolkien Centenary Party in Madame Tussauds. This allowed such wonderful juxtapositions as M John Harrison and Barbara Cartland, and Mike Jefferies in seeming conversation with Kylie Minogue! Aside from the usual backs and liggers (and gatecrashing BSFA correspondent Kev McVeigh) notables such as Fay Weldon and Irish Murdoch were sighted in the crowds, and the less common sight of Joy Chant revealed that she is currently finding writing quite difficult, and hasn't published anything new for several years.

Edinburgh's Science Fiction Bookshop has become part of the Forbidden Planet chain and moved its bookselling premises to 2/3 Teviot Place, Edinburgh. Comics sales continue at the Cross Causeway site as before.

**Forry Ackerman** is still looking for a permanent home for his printed collection, although he sold his media SF collection to an organisation in Germany.

**Iain Banks** and Anne Blackburn were married on March 20 in Hawaii where they also honeymooned according to Steve Green. Congratulations. In a moderately recent interview with Chris Gilmore set in a farmhouse kitchen in Islay, Iain Banks mused that "The first manuscripts I ever produced were SF. And I was always fascinated by the passion the enthusiasts seem to have for the field. I've seen them come to blows over the most bizarre disagreements. Like medieval scholars fighting over the number of angels dancing on a pin". He describes his type of Science Fiction as "honestly deceptive" — the conversation then veered away from SF to fox hunting. His latest mainstream novel *The Crow Road* not only received reviews in most of the major papers, but was the focus of an overview of reviews in *The Sunday Times*. Most reviews seemed favourable and the novel spent several weeks high in the bestsellers list.

**Terry Brooks** joined Legend. John Jarrold has done a three book deal for Brooks with Teri Henry of Ballantine in New York beginning with the third book in the *Heritage of Shannara* series. *Elf Queen of Shannara* will appear in July '92 and the concluding title will appear in 1993. Terry Brooks is the author of the novelisation of Steven Spielberg's *Hook* (Arrow April pb).

**Storm Constantine** married Mark Hewkin on May 1st. The bride wore white rather than the expected (in some quarters) black. Her bouquet was caught somewhat reluctantly ("it hit me in the face") by Storm's editor at Headline, Caroline Oakley. When interviewed for *Interzone* by Stan Nicholls, she talked about the process of writing, "I like the revision process best. The first draft

hurts, it's like breaking rocks. It's horrible ... You've got this wonderful image in your head, an idea that's totally wordless and formless, and getting that into language is so hard". Concerning future works, she confessed to "a secret desire to write a magical reality/mainstream novel" after writing for *Midnight Rose* and the pleasures of working in a shared world atmosphere.

**Stuart Gordon**, who wrote several fantasy novels a decade or so ago, has just brought out *An Encyclopaedia of the Paranormal* from Headline and is now working on two books: an *Encyclopaedia of Mythology* and a guide to the history and walks (including suitable hostilities) of his Morayshire locality.

**Colin Greenland** writes to thank "the dozens and dozens of people who sent me that beautiful Get Well card from Illumination at Easter. I should also like to thank everyone very much for voting me an Eastercon Award for *Take Back Plenty*. Nevertheless, I do feel I ought to point out that *Take Back Plenty* has now got three awards (the worthy one; the official one; and now one just for fun), which is plenty of awards, honestly — but there are plenty of other books out there, some of which haven't got any awards at all — so I think you ought to start voting for some of them now. [See Nic Mahoney's article on the BSFA Awards and Kev McVeigh's *Empire Dreams* for details of how to go about this]. In case you're wondering, I've got M.E. (or post-viral fatigue syndrome, for short), which is absolutely bloody exhausting — I am getting better slowly, so most days I can work a little bit on revising *Harm's Way*, the story of Sophie, orphan of the spaceship yards; but I think it'll be a long time before I'm in circulation again."

**Jenny Jones** will move back to York this summer from the Highlands. The third and concluding volume of "Flight Over Fire" titled *Lies and Flames* is published in July. She is now working on a supernatural millennial fantasy set in Essex.

**Graham Joyce** has sold his latest novel to Headline.

**Patricia Kennealy**, author of *The Keltiad* series describes her main literary influences as "Rudyard Kipling for pace and narrative flow, the King James Bible and Lord Dunsany for style and beauty of language. And Frances Hodgson Burnett for soul". The sort of books she reads are Ursula LeGuin's *Earthsea* books, Somtow Sucharitkij's *Inquester* series, E F Benson's *Lucia* series, Katherine Kurtz and Anne McCaffrey, together with almost any mystery set in the British Isles. Her present project is *The Oak Above The Kings*, the second of the *Tales of Arthur*.

**Guy Gavriel Kay** has just sold Grafton his latest one volume fantasy, *A Song for Arbonne*, which will be a lead hardback this October — the other books of his bestselling *Fionavar Tapestry* (*The Summer Tree*, *The Wandering Fire* and *The Darkest Road*) will be reissued in June and July, also by Grafton.

**Katherine Kerr**, author of the *Devary* series, will be visiting Great Britain to do a string of bookshop readings, signings and events in June — watch your local bookshop.

**Ian McDonald** won the Philip K Dick Award for *Queen of Morning*, *King of Day*. The only previous British recipient of this award was **Paul J McAuley** who shared the award with **Rudy Rucker**. McDonald's new novel was recently published by Gollancz.

**Sean McMullen** encountered SF first professionally when he sang in a production of Poulenc's SF opera, *The Breasts of Therese* in 1973. In his Guest of Honour speech at Syncon in Sydney he postulated that artwork is possibly the first act of creation involving SF for most people. "Art is a way of capturing something of futures and other worlds, art is a way of personalising something as remote and inviolate as a tv series".

**Terry Pratchett** discussed *Small Gods* with Markman Ellis and said "Small Gods" had its beginnings a couple of years ago when, during some war in the Middle East, there was a report on tv showing a fountain running with blood. Some unspeakable religious person said what a marvellous thing it was to die for your God — and I thought this was exactly as far away from the truth as it was possible to be. So *Small Gods* is an attack on churches — but not on religion. But I hope I have offended bigots". Although his books tend to go on the bookshop fantasy shelves, Terry Pratchett doesn't altogether agree. "I shy away from the name 'Fantasy' myself" he adds "But I don't think my books are novels... I want to get back to an older type of story telling, or a modern version of story telling, where you can have Death as a character and people will believe it. If that's fantasy, then fair enough". When caught on a signing tour, he murmured "Oh God, how many more people are out there?", but was charming to all. At his "Trial" at Inconsequential, he reports that he was found guilty of everything, including 130 charges of using the same joke and the "fully impartial" judge was alternative comedian "Simo" Simpson who summed up by saying "Do you find him guilty as hell, or what?"

Kim Stanley Robinson will visit the UK to promote his new novel *Red Mars* for one week from September 21. *Red Mars* is the first of three books dealing with the terraforming of Mars, and may involve some of the ideas mooted by Ken Lake in a recent letter to *Vector* and which recently appeared in Robinson's 1987 novella *Green Mars*. An interview for *Vector* is being arranged.

Iain Sinclair has won the James Tait Black Prize for his novel *Downriver*, which has also been shortlisted for the Guardian Fiction Prize.

Dan Simmons has two new books appearing soon: *Children of the Night* (Headline August) about vampires among the orphanages of Rumania and *The Hollow Man* also coming from Headline a month later.

Janny Wurts admits "I get bored very easily and squirm when things get dull. So I began with [*The Master of Whitestorm*] by translating the grit and the sparkle of adventure. If I admit to the fact that away from writing I enjoy thrills, that in living I've always been hooked on fast pace and travel to exotic places, these things lent only impetus to the story".

## WSFA Press

Howska Waldrop once described Pat Cadigan as "another typical beautiful genius foulmouthed Supernom from K.C. whose works cause me to bite holes in my desk every time I read a new one". The WSFA press has just published *Home from the Sea* as the 1992 Disclave Guest of Honour book — it contains four stories ("Home by the Sea", "Dirty Work", "Dispatches from the Revolution" and "Fifty Ways to Improve Your Orgasm" with an author's introduction for each story, a complete bibliography of the author, a foreword by Mike Resnick and biographical data and will retail at \$49.95.

Other books from this press are *Through Darkest Resnick* with *Gun and Camera* by Mike Resnick with jacket by Todd C Hamilton. Limited edition of 500 copies, all signed by Mike Resnick. It contains thirteen short stories and non-fiction pieces including "Kirinyaga" and "For I have Touched the Sky". The non-fiction is from a variety of hard to find sources — such as the *Cincinnati Post*. All pieces have a brief introduction note by the author and costs \$35.

There is also *The Edges of Things* by Lewis Shiner with a jacket and interiors by Alicia Austin, introduction by Mark L Van Nanne and 600 numbered copies, all signed by Shiner, Austin and Van Nanne. It contains thirteen stories, four being published for the first time, the remaining specially revised for this publication, cost \$45.

All orders must be prepaid in US dollars and can be obtained from the WSFA Press Inc, Post Office Box 19951, Baltimore, MD 21211 0951, USA.

## Auction of SF/Comics

Phillips are to hold an auction on September 5 1992 of British and American comics and related material. This sale will also include a Science Fiction Book and Magazine section. Any interested parties, either to buy or sell, please contact Gill Atkins, Book Consultant, Phillips, 1 Old King Street, Bath BA1 2JT.

## Television

The latest children's SF tv is *Wysiwyg* aka "What you see is what you get" coming to the ITV screens in July. The series features an alien film crew which has come to Earth to make documentaries about various themes, such as leisure, fashion, school and science and each episode starts with a spoof of a programme — the first parodies *Blockbusters*, with actors, but a perfectly genuine Bob Holness. However, each spoof is interrupted by Intergalactic TV, presented by a central computer called Mer-Doc (Multi-Environment Redefinition Director of Operations and Channel Controller) and any semblance to the name of a media tycoon is said to be "coincidental". When Linda Hartley got shot in an Australian duck marsh, ending her career in *Neighbours*, she probably didn't quite anticipate ending up with the reporter Wysiwyg who is also a cameraman, sound recordist, director and transmission engineer (jobs anyone can do, so one is told)!

## Channel 4 Science Club

The Channel 4 Science Club provides members with the opportunity of attending events like the recent one on "Hawking's Universe" which cost only £5, issues a regular newsletter, sends out advance information on all C4 science programmes, offers cut-price publications and videotapes, all for £9 a year. Just write to Channel 4 Science Club (PO Box 4000, Cardiff, CF5 2XT) and it helps to give your daytime telephone number and state your own special scientific interests.

The "Hawking's Universe" event mentioned above had three lecturers exploring String Theory, the No-Boundary Hypothesis involving imaginary time and yonic flying and much more. Space here only allows two pointers: that gravity is not a force in space, but is the very nature of space, according to Hawking; and that Hawking only "abolished God" in the 17th century Newtonian "watchmaker"

sense, which is not how either physicists or philosophers think of God today anyhow. (Much more detailed notes are available to interested readers who send a stamped addressed envelope).

## Children's film/tv/video tie-ins

There will be a huge author promotion (promise the publishers) when four Thunderbirds titles: *Cry Wolf*, *Day of Disaster*, *The Perils of Penelope* and *Desperate Intruder* are published in June by Bantam at £2.50 each. The picture storybooks represent the biggest character licence of 1992.

Look out also (if inclined) for *Star Wars Vol 1: Heir to the Empire* by Timothy Zahn (Bantam £3.99), *Hook* by Terry Brooks (Arrow £4.99), *Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country* by J M Dillard (Grafton £3.99) and *Thunderbirds are Go!* by John Marrott (Bantam £9.99).

## Deafness & SF

A recent story in *Talk*, the magazine of the National Deaf Children's Society, shows a deaf girl able to communicate via sign language with the captain of a star ship, while her hearing friend merely thought that he was waving his arms about. It continues: "Nicola answered him easily and told him how frightened they had been. The Captain said he was very sorry for this but had thought he was near a planet that knew about spaceships. He even took them for a quick ride to the moon to make them feel better... Then suddenly Nicola realised they would be late for school and told the Captain the problem, saying that no one would believe they had met a lost space ship".

## Magazines

The US Small Press Market's monthly newsletter *Scavenger's Newsletter* is now available directly in the UK via the New SF Alliance. Six issue subscriptions are £10 or £18 for a full year (12 issues), further details of all NSFA publications from Chris Reed (c/o BBR magazine, PO Box 625, Sheffield S1 3GY).

Meanwhile, issue 20 of *BBR* was a special non-fiction issue offered free to subscribers as an interim gesture after the delays with the scheduled issue, now 21, which should appear shortly.

*Far Point*, which has included fiction from the BSFA's Jo Raine and Andy Sawyer, has announced the appointment of David Hardy as Art Editor from the June '92 issue (no. 5).

*Sequitor* is a new quarterly exploring the darker side of science plus society etc. and looking for material. Details from Box 480146, Denver, CO 80428-0146, USA.

Now there is a companion supplement to *The Pseudo-Nymph: an anthology of NSFA magazines* published last August, which included fiction by Dorothy Davies, D F Lewis, Peter T Garratt and illustrations by Kevin Cullen, Dreyfus and Nik Morton among others. It is *The Ante-Nymph* published in April which contains an article on SF and Independent publishing in the UK and a David Pringle interview. Future issues will include Chris Reed's ideas on a Free Market for SF, a sample article from *Flickers 'n' Frames* and more news of *Far Point*. More details from Chris Hart, 16 Walker Ave, Great Lever, Bolton BL3 2DU.

*Strange Brew* will appear as from September 1 and will include an interview (mini but exclusive) with Douglas Adams, a discussion of the major anti-Utopian novels, an overview of the disaster novel genre and at least four short stories. It will aim to present "intelligent fiction dealt with intelligently. Fiction about people, not abstract ideas. Fiction about how science interacts with society and not didactic explanations of obscure equations". Each quarterly issue will cost £1.95, but will also appear as a disc magazine on all the major computers, available through the Public Domain outlets. More information from Luke M Treddinick, 19 Speldhurst Close, Bromley, Kent BR2 9DT.

## Writing Competitions

Bridport Arts Centre Creative Writing Competition: original poem of not more than 40 lines or original short story 1000-5000 words. Closing date 30 June 1992. 1st prize £1000, 2nd prize £500, 3rd prize £250 in each category with up to 20 supplementary prizes awarded at the discretion of the judges. (No much time for the creative urge to strike, but take note that this is an annual competition, so look out for details next year). Write to The Competition Secretary, Bridport Arts Centre, 9 Pier Terrace, West Bay, Bridport, Dorset DT6 4ER.

**Serial Challenge:** Stories, which may be on any subject, must be suitable for either adults or children (or both), 8000 words, also suitable for serialisation. All entries will be considered for publication in future issues of *Words*. MS will only be returned if accompanied by sae (work will ideally be typewritten, double spaced, one side of A4 and entry of £5 per story must accompany each

submission). 1st prize £100 plus £20 for all entries accepted for future publication. Closing date 1st December 1992. More information from Serial Challenge, 23 James Collins Close, London W9 3PU. Cheques payable to "The Children's Hospice Appeal".

## Writers' Workshops

**The Cottage Guide to Writers' Postal Workshops:** This leaflet is compiled by Catherine Gill and is available from Croftspun, Drakenyire Croft, Cairnmore, Methlick, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 0JN price £1 post free. It includes an alphabetical list of postal writing workshops, including the BSFA's **Orbiter** series (which are now co-ordinated by Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JB). Another workshop which specifically covers SF/F is **Science Fiction Folios**, organised by Dorothy Davies (Ty Hydfre, 126 Marines Drive, Farningham, Oxon SN7 7UG); **Scribo** (Kay Sylvester, Flat 1, 31 Hamilton Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 4EQ) is apparently proposing to launch a SF/F folio soon.

## Catalogues

**Cold Tonnage:** 136 New Road, Bedfont, Middlesex TW14 8HT. (Tel: 081 751 3162). Large numbers signed hardbacks including Mary Gentle's *Grants* and R A Heinlein's *The Green Hills of Earth*. Back issues of *Locust* and *Foundation*, movie tie-ins, reference and a lot more.

**Special Collector's Catalogue:** "Trinity Cottage", 153 Old Church Road, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7TU. (Tel: 0275 8722471). Ken Cowley has a special Fredric Brown list available for collectors only. Good selection of classic SF/F/Horror, such as E G Burroughs's *The Mucker* (1963) £13; Donald Wolheim's *Terror in the Modern Vein* (17 horrific SF stories, 1955, signed by editor) £9 and Sarban's *The Sound of his Horn* (1960) £4.

Catalogues are also available from: **Andromeda:** 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham B1 1TA. (Tel: 021 643 1999); **At the Sign of the Dragon:** 131/133 Sheen Lane, London SW14 8AE. (Tel: 081 876 3855) and **Dreamberry Wine:** 233 Main Road, Manchester M14 7WG. (Tel: 061 226 2980).

## Minutes of the AGM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Science Fiction Association, held at the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, 4pm on Saturday 18 April 1992, taken by Carol Ann Green.

### Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the 1991 AGM were approved as printed in *Matrix* 94. Proposed John Rickett, seconded by Roger Robinson.

### Co-ordinator's Opening Remarks

Key McVeigh opened the meeting by remarking that "things are not so good". The BSFA seems to have been hit by a wave of resignations — some of them have been abrupt, others have given due notice, but it has still left us with some problems.

### Accounts

Key pointed out that the accounts were not yet available for agreement due to personal difficulties suffered by the treasurer Brett Cockerill (marriage, children and moving home) which has led to him being unable to provide the accounts on time. The treasurer has resigned his post. Key said that Brett's service in the past had been reliable and that he would now be greatly missed. Key said that we would need to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting later on in the year to agree the accounts, probably at Novacon.

### Paperback Inferno/Vector

Andy Sawyer is resigning as editor of *Paperback Inferno* as from the August mailing. There is a need to re-assess *PI*'s role — either stay as a separate magazine or to become a part of the general reviews section in *Vector*. Merging *PI* and *Vector* would save money without costing too much to print one bigger magazine. If the merger was approved it would go ahead later this year under the general editorship at *Vector* by Catie Cary with Chris Ames retaining control of *Vector* reviews and a replacement for Andy Sawyer taking control of *PI* reviews. This would be one of the most important changes taking place in the BSFA for many years.

There were various agreements from the floor to this proposal and some discussion ensued as to the practicalities of the merger. David V Barrett

expressed the concern that if funds got really tight the increased size of *Vector* might drop and book coverage could be lost rather than expanded. Key pointed out that two magazines in one would save on collating costs. The present size of *Vector* would be increased from 24 pages to approximately 32 pages.

It was pointed out that there was a need now to keep a careful track on what books reviewed with Hardback, Trade Paperback and Paperback all available. Key said that closer links had been developed between committee members over the last few months and hopefully liaison between the reviews editors would limit cross-over.

The *Vector/Paperback Inferno* merger proposed by John Duffield and seconded by Sally Ann Melia, passed with one against.

### Focus

*Focus* is aimed at aspiring writers, but has not been doing much these last few years. It had drifted away from being a magazine producing fiction to articles on writing or by writers. Key suggested that at the moment, *Focus* as a separate and distinct magazine be suspended and that it should exist on an occasional basis as a sub-section of *Vector* with Market Reports and other such information published in *Matrix*.

It was pointed out from the floor that if *Focus* goes and *PI* and *Vector* merge, the BSFA would be down from 21 magazines per year to 12. However, it was stated that the quality and contents of the magazines were more important than their numbers.

Key said that the Constitution of the BSFA showed a commitment to encourage writers and that it would continue to fulfil this function. *Focus* would appear once a year at least to stress its existence within the BSFA.

One member pointed out that although not a writer himself he enjoyed the articles in *Focus* on the practicalities of writing.

Key pointed out that *Focus* would only be suspended and if anyone had any strong ideas on what to do with it, it could be resurrected.

That *Focus* be suspended — proposed David Bell, seconded John Duffield — passed.

### Orbiter

Sue Thomason is resigning as co-ordinator for the *Orbiter* groups. Key stated that Carol Ann Green would be taking over from the summer.

### General

It was pointed out from the floor that the BSFA tends to assume people know what is on offer in each of the magazines. Key agreed that there is this assumption, given that the BSFA has a captive audience.

There was then some discussion as to the information received by new members when they joined — Simon Bisson said he had only joined this year and although he had received a welcome letter it had been sometime after.

Steve Glover suggested the need for a new members' pack giving welcome information and an introduction to the BSFA. It was also discussed that this information should be repeated occasionally in *Matrix* — Key agreed to look into this.

### Membership Fees

Key said that although the full accounts aren't in yet, provisionally they show that the BSFA doesn't have much money. We are also owed a substantial sum of money by one major company — £500.

There are increasing outgoings — increased postal rates and the need to pay for professional collating later on in the year when we lose Keith Freeman's service. A quote for this has been requested from PDC who have given good service for printing — other quotes will also be requested. Key also pointed out that we needed to generate money in order to invest in money raising schemes e.g. T shirts, adverts, etc.

David V Barrett said that the BSFA had always had enough money in the past to keep our heads above water and asked what now caused money difficulties? Had there been a drop in memberships? Key replied that memberships were creeping up slowly and were now approximately 1000. He said that we had spent a large sum of money on an advert in *New Worlds* (£400 plus VAT) which was a good investment, hadn't brought many new members in yet, but adverts in books were one of the biggest recruiting areas for the BSFA. Key said that a continuing

exchange for one advert in *Vector* for one advert in the back of a Gollancz paperback had been negotiated.

Kev said the fees had last gone up at Liverpool two years ago and that the membership survey had indicated that many thought the fees too low. He proposed raising the annual membership to £16. There was some discussion about the amount and only three people voting for this. An increase to £15 was proposed by Nicholas Mahoney and seconded by Bridget Wilkinson, this was passed. The Standing Order fee was proposed at £1.50 under the membership fee of £15, making £13.50, proposed John Rickett, seconded Roger Robinson.

The new membership fees will come into practice after July 1 1992.

## Council

Two members of Council retired by rotation and were eligible for re-election.

**Jenny Glover** — proposed Dave Bell, seconded Bridget Wilkinson

**Kev McVeigh** — proposed Roger Robinson, seconded Nicholas Mahoney

Kev said that he hoped the council would be restructured along the lines proposed in his *Empire Dreams* column in *Matrix* 99. There were currently four places vacant — ideas for people for specific areas to be covered and offers of service were requested.

Kev said that the council doesn't actually meet at the moment, the committee meets intermittently — things are looking to change.

It was decided that people would be approached re council places and then brought up again at the EGM.

## Any Other Business

Roger Robinson outlined Foundation's position at the moment and asked that a proposal be put to the meeting that the BSFA library should remain attached to the Foundation library and to remain in this country — proposed Kev McVeigh, seconded David V Barrett. Passed *nem con*.

Bridget Wilkinson pointed out that there were approximately 4000 BSFA books, all now stamped and bookplated and asked for permission to remove BSFA copies in bad condition and put in suitable replacements — Proposed Bridget Wilkinson, seconded Roger Robinson — passed.

There was some confusion about life memberships — who was eligible etc. and Kev agreed to look into this for the EGM.

A vote of thanks from the floor for the good work the council had put in this year was proposed by John Rickett and seconded by David V Barrett. The meeting closed at 5.40pm

## Extraordinary General Meeting

The Extraordinary General Meeting referred to in the Minutes will take place at the Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham, on Saturday November 7th at 1 o'clock. All members welcome.

## Empire Dreams

### Kev McVeigh

Firstly, I must thank those of you who attended the BSFA AGM or contacted various proxies beforehand. It was most gratifying to see the basic changes approved by the AGM.

However, we now need to implement those changes. I'm looking for volunteers again. One significant requirement remains the mailing sessions. Although we hope to bring in professional collation as soon as possible, there remains the need for somebody to organise the distribution of mailings. Anybody with the use of a large room and a weekend to spare every two months should contact me.

We still need a Business Manager. If you can negotiate advertising with publishers and investigate costings for merchandise, etc., then you can do this job. One of the most vital BSFA roles, yet, once contact is made, probably the least time consuming of all, this could be your big opportunity.

And, of course, we always need people to type magazines, to supply news for *Matrix*, to write articles, artists and so on.

There is some good news however. We have three new appointments to announce:

Our new treasurer is to be **Elizabeth Billinger**, who describes herself as "part of the silent majority who just needed a push" and is an expert at "converting a carrier bag of papers into presentable accounts".

As part of the BSFA's commitment to new writers, **Carol Ann Green** will take over as Orbiter Administrator after her examinations this summer. Carol Ann also took mammoth minutes at the AGM, for which the Committee was very grateful.

**Bridget Wilkinson** is to join the BSFA Council as an expert on Overseas SF Fandom, particularly the rapidly developing East European groups.

Welcome aboard, all of you.

The Grafton paperback edition of Colin Greenland's *Take Back Plenty* bears an inscription announcing it as winner of the BSFA Award. Hopefully, Headline will now add this title to the long list of honours gained by this year's winner. Dan Simmons' *Fall of Hyperion*.

It seems to me that to further capitalise on this recognition, the BSFA Award needs a greater number of voters. This year's low turnout was our fault, but we are making slight changes in order to increase nominations for future years.

Nic Mahoney is organising an informal jury of nominators to produce preliminary recommendations prior to the usual nomination procedure. If you wish to suggest titles at any time, and would be interested in seeing other people's suggestions, please write to Nic. There is no need to feel that you must have read a lot of new SF, one book is enough, and the feedback may help you face that pile of books more courageously.

To get things moving, therefore, here are a few books and stories I've enjoyed so far this year: *Was*: Geoff Ryman (HarperCollins), *Hothead*: Simon Ings (HarperCollins); *Correspondence*: Sue Thomas (The Women's Press); *Lies and Flames*: Jenny Jones (Headline); *Voyage to the Red Planet*: Terry Bisson (Pan); *King of Morning*, *Queen of Day*: Ian McDonald (Bantam); "Next": Terry Bisson (F&SF, May); "Miss Ain't Behavin'": Jack Wainer (*Far Point* 4); "True Faces": Pat Cadigan (F&SF, April). OK, now it's your turn.

Finally, a personal note. I continually receive mail addressed to "Ken McVeigh". My name is **Kevin**, often shortened to Kev. Thank you.

## BSFA Award Results

### Nic Mahoney

The results of the voting on the BSFA Awards is as follows:

Novel										
<i>The Fall of Hyperion</i>	25	29	32	44						
<i>Eternal Light</i>	19	23	31	42	27	36	47			
<i>The Architecture of Desire</i>	19	23	28		24	28	36	33	43	
<i>Witches Abroad</i>	20	22			23	26		27	36	42
<i>Raft</i>	15				18			25		39

Short Fiction										
<i>Bad Timing</i>	15	16	16	19	37	29	40			
<i>Floating Dogs</i>	12	16	19	21		26	34	14	18	22
<i>Nothing Special</i>	12	12	13					18	18	19
<i>Appropriate Love</i>	14	15	17	19	26			17	19	21
<i>Crossroads</i>	10	10						11	12	
<i>In the Air</i>	13	13	16	20		24		13	13	17
<i>Colour</i>	8							9		

<i>Nothing Special</i>	24	26	28	35						
<i>Appropriate Love</i>	18	21	26	33	21	26	34			
<i>Crossroads</i>	12				16			26	38	
<i>In the Air</i>	14	18	20		22	27	30	29	32	42
<i>Colour</i>	13	13			18	20		21		29

Dramatic Presentation												
<b>Terminator II: Judgment Day</b>	30	35	36	44								
Red Dwarf (4th series)	31	36	37	43	39	40	50					
Star Trek: TNG	16	17	17		25	25	34	39	39			
Edward Scissorhands	12				20	21		32	32	51		
No Award	13	13			16			16		21		

Artwork												
<b>Mark Harrison</b>	19	23	31	38								
Geoff Taylor	9	11			19	23	33					
SMS (IZ 52)	10	12	14		12	18		22	36			
SMS (IZ 54)	8				10			17		35		
No Award	23	23	23	24	23	23	24	23	25	24		

Geoff Taylor's cover illustration for IZ 45 was also the cover of Robert Holdstock's *The Bone Forest*.

During the general election, there was a fair bit of discussion of different voting systems. In my view, the fairest of them all is the single transferable vote system, which has been used for the Hugobos and for the last three years of BSFA awards. In the first round of voting, the item in each category with the least first places drops out and has its votes redistributed to whatever was placed second on each individual ballot, which forms the second round voting. The item with the least votes drops out and the redistributed ballots go to the highest placed survivor on each individual ballot. This forms the third round of voting. The process is continued until one item has a majority of the votes. Subsequent rounds of voting decide second, third, fourth, etc. Ties are decided by considering the relative merits on the ballots of the two items which have tied. On each ballot, the higher placed of the two accumulates one vote.

The closest category was the Dramatic Presentation which was a straight fight between *Terminator 2* and *Red Dwarf IV*. One vote the other way around by any of the people who placed *Terminator 2* higher would have swung it. The novel was also close, but *The Fall of Hyperion* hung on to the initial lead it had in first place votes to edge out *Eternal Light*.

Molly Brown was a surprise winner in the Short Fiction category. The only other writer whose first published SF story was an award winner I can think of was Malcolm Edwards winning the BSFA award a few years ago for "After-Images".

The easiest winner was Mark Harrison in the artwork category, who has since written to me saying "It is very encouraging to receive the award because as a freelance working by oneself, one has no real feeling of anybody out there noticing what one is doing!" Clearly, he now has the feeling of having been noticed, as have all the winners.



## Information Service: SF mini-guides

### Phil Nichols

This has been a relatively quiet period for the Information Service but a relatively busy time for yours truly, and I must apologise to anyone who has had to wait a little longer than usual for a response to their queries. The service is free to BSFA members, but a stamped addressed envelope is appreciated if you expect a reply. I aim to respond to all letters within fourteen days, although a full answer to your question(s) may take longer. Questions from new members are particularly welcome, as are offers of help in answering the more difficult questions, or mini-guides. Please write to Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich B70 8PB...

IThis issue, due to a shortage of contributions, I've had to do some work myself, so here goes with a brief guide to:

### Ray Bradbury

For the best part of forty-five years it's been fashionable to say that Ray Bradbury isn't really a SF writer, yet his best loved stories — mostly written between about 1948 and 1960 — are frequently in the SF idiom, even if their concerns are human rather than technological. It's his manner more than his subject matter that sets him apart not only from the hard science/fantasy space opera of "golden age" SF, but even from the other writers in the "soft" SF mode who made their mark in the 1950s — people like Theodore Sturgeon and Richard Matheson. Bradbury has a distinctive voice, a style that unites a body of work whose content ranges from horror story to SF adventure, from detective story to whimsical fantasy. It's a style that is easily lampooned, but impossible to imitate.

Bradbury's best work has been in short story form. Published over an enormous spread of magazines, ranging from *Amazing Stories* to *Playboy*, most have been collected in books which seem never to go out of print and never to age. Personal favourites include "The Pedestrian" (a man whose only crime is walking alone at night) and "The Fruit At The Bottom Of The Bowl" (obsessive guilt overtakes a murderer) from *The Golden Apples Of The Sun*; "The Scythe" (a poor farmer finds he is the grim reaper) and "Skeleton" (you'll never feel the same again after reading this one) from *The October Country*; and "Kaleidoscope" (astronauts float apart in space after their ship is destroyed) and "The Veldt" (those lions on the holoscreen look too real ...) from *The Illustrated Man*.

His novels, though, are not to be neglected, although they frequently originated in shorter form. *The Martian Chronicles* is, in my view, one of the greatest works of SF, although perhaps best approached as a fantasy.

Bradbury's stories are often about the transformation of a character to a different (higher?) state: the critic George Edgar Slusser wrote at length on Bradbury's portrayal of the Calvinist elect; and the ending of *The Martian Chronicles* ("The Million Year Picnic") is one of his most touching transformations. *Chronicles* must be one of the few novels cobbed together from separate short stories to actually benefit from the "cobbling" process. *Fahrenheit 451* is a comparative rarity: a Bradbury novel that was written as a novel, although based upon an earlier (and very different) short story. It deals with a fireman whose job is to start fires, burning books. This novel also has a transformation, although I would argue that the action is stimulated by a sense of loss, something that is found in much of Bradbury's work, and which critics seem largely to have missed. That sense of loss is undoubtedly the driving force of his more recent novels, especially *Death Is A Lonely Business*.

Bradbury has also written poetry and plays, and a number of film and tv scripts. The plays frequently re-work earlier stories, as do all his scripts for the patchily produced tv series *Ray Bradbury Theater* (also known as *Twist In The Tale*). The life-affirming poems, instantly recognisable as Bradburyan, unfortunately often read as self-parody, and are perhaps best avoided. The visual media also have a tendency to turn Bradbury's works into mocking shells of their original greatness, even when the script is by the author himself. A few *Ray Bradbury Theaters* are worth watching ("A Sound of Thunder", "Marionettes, Inc.") but the production values frequently fall the scripts. Perhaps the best screen Bradbury is the film version of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, but even this is flawed.

One medium where Bradbury seems to succeed with some consistency is radio, perhaps because his poetic turn of phrase, which can make for unconvincing screen dialogue, fits better in the mind of the listener than in the mouths of most film actors. Bradbury has written plays for radio ("Leviathan 99" was a space opera re-working of *Moby Dick*) and has been successfully adapted both here ("Kaleidoscope", "Fahrenheit 451") and in the UK (*Dimension X*, *Bradbury 13* among others). Bradbury's style can really suck me into a story, and sometimes threaten to overwhelm my critical faculties. Now that's what I call a writer!

## Fire and Hemlock

Hidden below all the philosophical discussions about the dearth of fanzines and the letters (mostly in American fanzines) which tend to begin with "I have received only 257.5 fanzines this year and it's already January 6" are a whole load of queries which form the tail ends of more general letters. So here is an imported Agony Aunt to answer your queries.

**Q:** How do I get hold of a fanzine?

**A:** You have hit the nail on whichever part that hurts, because getting hold of a fanzine is often as tricky as deciding whether an egg precedes or post-dates a chicken. If you go to a convention or fan gathering, such as the monthly Wellington at the Waterloo Tavern, London (first Thursday), then your query might well have been "How can I enjoy a quiet drink without having a fanzine thrust into my paw?", but if you just sit down reading SF, take a break and read *Matrix* instead (as I presume you are now), *Critical Wave*, *Shards of Babel* or *Ansible* — this latter should have a health warning attached, the humour being ascribable but totally accurate). Each news magazine tends to mention the latest publications and quite often some innocent reader has encountered the editor, been brought a drink and asked, so casually, if they could produce a fanzine review by it, the latest, yesterday.

**Q:** When I get hold of a fanzine, will it be all about SF?

**A:** You have a talent for asking these deceptively simple questions. The fairest answer is to quote Leah Zeldes Smith's colophon in *Stet* 5 (and she borrowed it from the British *FTT* co-edited by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas) that it is "nominally a SF fanzine, which means that we rarely mention SF at all (although this issue contains whole paragraphs explicitly discussing nothing else)" *Stet* is a good discussion forum with a dollop of international correspondents, but for real SF, go for *Biological Androgynous Totally Holistic SF* or, when you catch your breath, the Bath SF discussion group journal. The group had a lot of trouble pinning down "cyberpunk" and settled for realising that it would be a book mentioning technical gadgetry (a lot of). So instead they each chose five examples, justified them and that is why the definitive cyberpunk includes Norman Spinrad's *Little Heroes*, George Orwell's *1984*, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man*. "Put cyber and punk together" adds Graham Bray "add Vincent van Gogh's palette and brush, and you get Greg Bear's *Blood Music*," and as if that isn't enough SF, there is an equally serious article on Dadapunk followed by a survival guide to Hay-on-Wye (hot tips are Addyman Books, Richard Booth's Bookshops, The Bookshop, Castle Street Books and the Hay Cinema Bookshop). For dazzling reproduction and 99% SF content, you may try *SF Commentary*, which seems to review every SF book going on either side of the Southern Cross — interestingly it also reprints reviews written for the *Canberra Times*.

**Q:** What's the Liberian Ornamental Chihuahua business with fanzines?

**A:** You've been reading the Bath SF Journal instant loc column which shows that they are human too. Just tick the box that says "We Venusians are allergic to legible writing" or else use those grey cells and write something reasonable. In *Stet*, Leah Zeldes Smith quotes Jessica Amanda Salmonson's early letters to fanzines which tended to start "Dear faneditor, Thank you for your zine. Let me tell you about my operation ...", and it only takes one fanzine plopping through your letter box to get you off on your private tangent. Response is the name of the game. The editor has put himself up here (females included, but it's cumbersome always to put s/he and so on — oh, to be a hermaphroditic slug) and has gone to a certain amount of trouble — he wants a response. And he's chosen you to give one.

**Q:** I don't know what to say ...

**A:** That wasn't so much a question as a whine. Open your mouth, turn on the word processor. Did you like the fanzine? Did the earth move? Why not? You thought *Vegetarian Dreams: Carnivorous Nightmares* was weird, self indulgent and you don't like onions a millionth as much as the editor apparently does? Okay, tell him. Though, since he is also a committee member of *Scone*, to be held in Glasgow this August, he might prefer letters to be written on the back of a £14 cheque, and beginning with the words "Yes, I wish to be a member of your Unicorn".

**Q:** Doesn't the BSFA ever get mentioned in fanzines?

**A:** Yes, yes and yes. John D Owen doesn't quite go to the lengths of David Wingrove in defending his work, but he wilted after seeing his *Shipyard Blues* described as "the Reader's Digest of fandom" and even a far more complimentary review by John D Rickett in the following issue of *Matrix* did not

raise his spirits. So *Shipyard Blues* is some seven months' late in appearing: the actual SF content is quite well-hidden, though Philip K Dick is quoted as saying in "Service Call" that "I always feared that my own tv set or iron or toaster would, in the privacy of my own apartment, announce to me that they had taken over". And the discussion "Robodicks" shows no sign of running out of steam — Gene van Troyer pronounces on Asimov's robots that they "seem to be more human than the so-called humans in his stories; they certainly seem to have more character".

But discussion on the BSFA is rife in Chuck Connor's *Thingumybob*. It all started with a letter from Mic Rogers querying the use of the BSFA. Leaving aside the question of why Mic, a long time ex-BSFA member, was writing to Chuck (another long term ex-member) about the BSFA at all, the resulting flood of letters has formed a backbone discussion with a peripheral worry about computer bulletin boards sucking off new talent, like a mega-vacuum cleaner.

**Q:** Okay, I'm convinced, I give in. But how do I get started?

**A:** Look for a fanzine, like the ones listed below. Write or telephone for one. Most fanzines are available on request, though the more cynical, poverty stricken or professionally minded editors may ask for cash, stamps and all editors, no matter how idealistic, would welcome something more than a casual "Sure, thanks a lot. If there's ever anything I can do ...". There is. Write to the editor and give your impressions. Start now. As soon as I can escape from this answer, I'll put a list of the fanzines mentioned. If you want more, write to one of the co-editors for suggestions.

## Fanzine Listing

- ☐ **Ansible** monthly news sheet by Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading RG1 5AU — send stamped A5 envelope minimum.
- ☐ **Biologically Androgynous Totally Holistic SF Journal**: published by the Bath SF discussion group (ie Ben Staveley-Taylor, Simon Bisson, Graham Bray, Steve Andrews and perhaps Martyn Folkes who appears to have died peacefully in meditation on 1.4.2078), 3 Arundel Rd, Bath, Avon BA1 6EF.
- ☐ **Critical Wave** news magazine edited by Martin Tudor and Steve Green, 845 Alum Rock Rd, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG.
- ☐ **Erg**: Article on J Fleming Gould, the pulp illustrator, reviews, descriptions of airplanes. (Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scarf, Scarborough, N Yorkshire YO12 5RQ — send 3 x 2nd class stamps or a dollar bill).
- ☐ **FTT** general fanzine edited by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH.
- ☐ **FantasyScope**: History of Detroit fandom, travelling Africa with the Resnick, which must have been more interesting than the article. (Roger Sims, 34 Creekwood Square, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246, USA).
- ☐ **Flickers 'n' Frames**: Great media snippets and Mike Ashley on electronic music (look out for Kitaro, Diam Karet and Arkenstone), well researched piece by Ken Cheslin on Robin Hood, brief but occasionally perspicacious profile of Iain M Banks. pity about the short short which bears more than a passing resemblance to Daphne du Maurier's "The Apple Tree". (John M Peters, 299 Southway Drive, Southway, Plymouth PL6 6QN).
- ☐ **Good News for the Myrmidons**: Nostalgic bitter-sweet memories and slightly back handed compliment to David Brin who has "single-handedly shot me back into the SF sections of bookshops, for which I'm quite grateful" with his new book *Earth: A Novel*. (John G Feetenby, 7 Urquhart Street, Aberdeen AB2 1PL).
- ☐ **Gotterdammerung**: Great DTP (apart from printing a couple of pages upside down), Bo Carton skates over the works of Harlan Ellison. (Tommy Ferguson, Mark McCann and James McKee, Flat 1, 26 Elaine Street, Stranmillis Road, Belfast BT9 5AR).
- ☐ **I-94** Nostalgic travelogues; of the letters I enjoyed Amy Thomson's recollections of driving home with a cute dyke who went topless, thereby attracting the attention of the cops and everyone else with eyes. It soon seemed seemed to forget political correctness and ask her to put the top back on. (Spike, PO Box 20132 Castro Valley, CA 94546, USA).
- ☐ **OtherRealms**: SF/F reviews, including a personal view of Robert A Heinlein, letters and the continuing saga of Laurie Sefton who is "not a nice girl" but writes well. (Chuq Von Rosbach, 1072 Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road, Bldg A107-503, San Jose, CA 95129, USA).

- **Shipyard Blues:** Beautifully reproduced, as usual, minimal SF content and long (but unusually for him, disappointingly superficial) article from K V Bailey. The meat comes in the letters. (John D Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell MK16 9AZ £2/3 issues).
- **SF Chronicle** edited by Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.
- **Shards of Babel:** European news magazine edited by Roelof Goudriaan, Caan van Necklaan 63, 2281 Rijswijk, The Netherlands.
- **Slubberdegullion 3:** Interesting, fascinating even, if you like the style. Otherwise, one may feel negative vibrations obscuring the meaningful message. (Nigel E Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG).
- **Stet:** Crossword with SF clues ("Columbus' hometown" is that SF? No, but "Where the Foundation wasn't" is). Mostly casual, comforting chat. (Leah Zeldes Smith, 17 Kerry Lane, Wheeling, IL 60090-6415, USA).
- **The Darling Buds from the Black Lagoon:** Authentic comments on M.E. equally authentic memories of Angela Carter. Available on editorial whim, but superb reading if you can get it. (Simon Ounsley, 28 Beckwith Crescent, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 0BQ).
- **Thingumbob:** descended from Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF.
- **Vegetarian Dreams, Carnivorous Nightmares** weird but general fanzine from Alistair Wheeler-Reid, "The Onion Abattoir" [for fairly obvious reasons], Basement Right, 12 Highburgh Road, Glasgow G12 9YD.
- **Yhos:** Plenty of letters with the (in)famous Harlan Ellison/Jerry Pournelle chilli incident gleefully related. John Waible comments that after the moon landing "SF became soap-opera as the tv cameras cut from the space hardware to focus on the faces of the astronauts' wives and fiancées. And the classic feelings of horror elicited by *Dracula* ... were surpassed ... by the horror/disgust prompted by the reality of Buchenwald and the bodies beneath John Wayne Gacy's house. Lovecraft couldn't touch these". (Art Widner, PO Box 677, Gualala, CA 95445, USA).

## Apas

If you like the thought of producing a fanzine, but are worried about the possible expense or lack of response, then you may like to investigate the wonderful world of **Amateur Publishing Associations**. Apas (for short) are groups of people who write regularly for motives which range from communication to improving their writing. Although members are mostly interested in SF, they do not always choose to write about it and each apa has an individual slant. Generally each member will write an article every month or so (possibly including fiction, artwork, comments on the last mailing etc). They will produce enough copies to send one to each member of the group and then post them to a central administrator. The administrator will send every member a copy of the articles that have been received that month.

## The Sodality of Holy St Bride and Companions of St Aelred

Martin Stewart

We are NOT a religious order. We are a writing group.

GAP (the Gay Amateur Press) was started in June 1988 to promote communication between Gay People in fandom. They tend to be isolated from each other and thus have no identity within the SF community. It is aimed at gay/bisexual men and women within the SF community, although membership is open to anyone who wishes to join. The apa runs on a monthly basis, although each member must submit at least one sheet of A4 every three months (to encourage people to take an active part). A small charge is made to cover mailing costs. While being primarily a writing group, we have held a number of social events and meet up at the Gay Pride March each year. For more details write to Martin Stewart (39 Rodney Avenue, St Albans, Herts AL1 5ST tel: 0727 837311).

## Other apas

- **The Organisation** (Tommy Ferguson, Flat 1, 16 Wellesley Ave, Belfast BT9 6DG) — monthly, minimum 18ppA4 or equivalent, 25 members, must contribute to one from three mailings. Contents general, some SF, computers, chat. Short(ish) wait list.

- **Pieces of Eight** (John D Rickett, 41 Forest Court, Snaresbrook, London E11 1PL) — monthly, minimum two sides for one mailing in three, 15 members. Contents general and pleasant, tends to the literary side, some SF. Currently no waiting list.
- **The Women's Press** (Moira J Shearman, Lilian Edwards & Jane Carnall, 2F1, 14 Harrison Gardens, Edinburgh EH11 1SQ) — 6 weekly, minimum two sides of written text or one side artwork for six mailings out of nine in a year, 36 members. Contents can vary enormously, but can be challenging and of high quality. Women only — and a rather long waiting list right now.
- **The Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA):** (Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA tel: (707) 935-1396) — quarterly, minimum eight pages a year, 68 members. An exciting place to be, high quality prose.
- **BWA:** (Amy Thomson, 4014 Latona Ave, NE, Seattle, WA 98105, USA) Bi-monthly, minimum one contribution in two mailings (or three, if foreign), 30 members, including at least 7 international, women only. Interesting slants on cultural attitudes, friendly, good prose.
- **DAPPER:** (Lynne Ann Morse, Caan van Necklaan, 63, 2281 Rijswijk, The Netherlands) New apa, Dutch-centred, but aiming for international membership, English language.
- **Apa 69** (Vijay Bowen, PO Box 1831, Brooklyn, NY 11202-0039, USA) Adults only, explicit discussions — waiting list at present. New members must satisfy Vijay that they are of age.
- **ANZAPA:** (Alan Stewart, PO Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005, Australia tel: (03) 429 8354) Bi-monthly, minimum contribution exists, 25 members. General, some SF, more literary.

[Anyone wanting more details on these, or other, apas, please write to Jenny Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP, UK — or contact Eric L Watts who publishes *The New Moon Directory*, a comprehensive list of apas \$3.75 from 346 Carpenter Drive #51, Atlanta, GA 30328-5030, USA]

## The Periodic Table

**Jean-Claude Vantroyen**, maverick SF columnist for *Le Soir* gives his definition of a SF con as "c'est un lieu et un moment où écrivains, anthologistes, fansineux et quelques lecteurs se réunissent pour boire chopos sur chopos, jouer le café du commerce des étoiles, s'enguirlander éventuellement et, accessoirement, réfléchir à plusieurs voix à la situation de la littérature de SF".

The **Eastcon** surplus (from the Blackpool Eastercon in 1990) was announced to be between £1500 and £2000. Apart from money already allocated to the con charity, Fans Across the World, and other fanish causes, the bulk will go to Friends of Foundation to assist in the search for a permanent site. £500 will be used to send someone, preferably Eastcon's Fan Guest of Honour Anne Page, to CostumeCon in the US, as a representative of Glasgow in '95. The committee felt strongly that the money should be spent in the furtherance of SF fandom in Britain.

**Sou'Wester** won the bid for the 1994 Eastercon (aka the British National Convention), with Mircon a close second, with about ten votes to Sou'Wester's 200-odd. The venue is the Midland Hotel, Bristol, but negotiations are not yet finalised. Guests of Honour are to be Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Barbara Hambly and Neil Gaiman. There will be a programme. Attending membership will cost £20 (half price for child, best £1), please contact Sou'Wester 3 West Shrubby, Redland, Bristol BS6 6SZ.

## To Sydney with GUFF

**Eva Hauser**, the Czech magazine editor who won the GUFF trip to the Australian National convention this Easter, writes to give her views. She also wishes to thank all BSFA members who voted for her, plus she apologises (quite unnecessarily) for her poor English.

It was really a unique experience to be the only European and one of five Northern Hemisphereans (along with four US fans) at this convention. Syncon in Sydney was a relatively small con: the number of its participants was slightly higher than one hundred. There about seventeen million Australian inhabitants, so I asked why there are no more people coming to the national convention. I was told that the distances within the country are enormous, so travel is expensive and demanding, and that some other cons clash, besides the media fans have their own cons.



Syncon was held in a Shore Motor Inn hotel in Artarmon, with lots of palm trees, sub-tropic flowers, with a shiniingly blue swimming pool and the warm and humid air coming from the sea coast, which was extremely pleasant. The Guests of Honour were Michael Whelan and Nick Stathopoulos, both excellent artists, so the whole con was orientated on the artwork. Large parts of the programme focused on slide shows, speaking about artists' individual experience with their work, what it is like to live with an artist and so on.

The art show was quite big. Michael Whelan's work is absolutely perfect in the concrete vision, in all details, and you must believe that his strange, alien creatures actually do exist, because it is so persuasive. Nick Stathopoulos assembles various artifacts, like wheels from clocks, feathers, egg shelves, leaves and uses them as part of his pictures.

There was also lots of opportunities of meeting Australian SF writers, such as Terry Dowling, who read a midnight horror story and signed at the book launching for his collection of stories *Wormwood*. Sean McMullen also talked on vampires and what natural phenomena could lead to the creation of the vampire belief.

The best part of the convention were the socialising events, especially the parties: because of the jet lag, I was very fresh after midnight and particularly enjoyed meeting Roger Weddall, Jan Weber, Gigi Boudville, Gerald Smith and Womble, Ron Clarke, Rex Thompson, Alan Stewart and many others. I also particularly enjoyed the excellent Australian wine, which I am not able to describe and you must definitely try it yourselves!

## Why should BSFAns go to a role playing convention

Contraption offers the opportunity to discover different styles of role-playing, from table-top, board-based games, through to live action. There will also certainly be something to fire your imagination, tempting you to invest in role-playing source books and scenarios. Many scenarios make inspiring reading, in their own right, even though true literary style is lacking.

The Contraption committee have gained con experience by attending SF cons over several years. We aim to bring as much of the SF con atmosphere to Contraption as possible without losing its individuality. The intention is not only to provide a convention for role players, but also to introduce their friends and a campaign, and sit and play all weekend. There will be some films, and some talks, especially the Guest of Honour speech, and this should be quite entertaining. **Steve Jackson** has been involved with games for over a decade, and in the past few years has even had a run-in with the US Secret Service. If all else fails, you can always migrate to the bar — there will even be real ale — and converse with the other bar things. It must be worth a try, mustn't it? Contraption (September 11-13, University of East Anglia, Norwich. More details from 4 Haddon Close, New Malden, Surrey KT3 6DP).

## Stone Scones?

Unicons are annual cons, traditionally held at places of higher education, with moderately cheap accommodation. Over twelve years or so, they've built up some programme traditions — anyway, **Phil Raines** describes the policy of this year's Unicon in Glasgow (there are rumours that next year's will be in Leeds, then the '94 Unicon in Cambridge).

In principle, Unicons are run for students — though they're increasingly been run for the ex-student regulars of Unicons — which means catering to student interests. As many people attending a Unicon are new to cons, they should be introduced to cons and fandom, as well as a diversity of sci-fi interests, including books, film, tv and (after last year's Magonicon in Bangor) music. So **Scone** (a title that makes more sense when you hear a Scotsman pronounce it) was put together with the idea of participation foremost. We're aiming for a small con, allowing a loose, friendly atmosphere where people can feel at ease without the distance and clique-forming that can occur at larger cons.

The programme should reflect these diverse interests: there will be panels, for example, on the resurgence of space opera, a debate on the decline of SF as a primarily literary medium, workshops, including one for writers (and scribes), readings, both cordon blue and turkey, a murder mystery that will run concurrently with the con and games, bizarre sci-fi variants on old favourites like *What's My Line* (efforts to produce a sci-fi version of *Mornington Crescent*, allowing for manoeuvres in hyperspace has sadly thus far eluded us). Tea and scones will be served.

## Worldcons pending

**MagiCon** (September 3-7, Peabody Hotel & others Orlando, Florida, details from MagiCon, PO Box 621992, Orlando, FL 32862, USA). Guests of Honour at Jack Vance, Vincent DiFate, Walt Willis and others.

Vincent Di Fate and Robert Reed, co-curator of the American Society of Illustrators are working together to present a major exhibit of historic speculative art, covering the period 1870-1970. Vincent Di Fate explains "We want to focus on artists whose names might not be familiar to Science Fiction fans, but whose art definitely is". The Retrospective will feature paintings by artists from Charles R Knight, the paleontologist who created the earliest scientific paintings of dinosaurs to Jack Davis who created poster art for movies like *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad* World and whose controversial comic art led to the establishment of the Comics Code.

Commander John W Young who was an astronaut on Apollo 16 and on the maiden voyage of Columbia, will be the keynote speaker after a banquet on Friday September 4 and will speak of his experiences in NASA. There will also be a lunch with the Hugo nominees on the Saturday. The Walt Willis Enchanted Miniature Golf Course is a 12 hole course, based on Walt Willis and Bob Shaw's *The Enchanted Duplicator* will feature miniature golf holes designed and built by Worldcon bids and fan clubs.

**ConFrancisco**: the 51st World Science Fiction convention (September 2-6, ANA Hotel, formerly Le Meridien & Nikko & Parc Fifty Five, Moscone Convention Center, San Francisco, USA, membership \$85 attending, non-human \$25, kids 7-12 \$30, more details from ConFrancisco, 712 Bancroft Road, Suite 1993, Walnut Creek, CA 94598, USA. Tel: (510) 945-1993). Larry Niven, Alicia Austin, wombat (jan howard finder) and Tom Digby are the Honoured Guests, with Mark Twain as Dead Guest of Honour and Guy Gavriel Kay as Master of Ceremonies.

Following the death of Terry Biffel, David Clark has agreed to assume the position of Chairman. He was the Facilities Liaison, and has previously worked with multiple regional conventions and hopes to continue Terry's dream of a true World SF con. The con is planning to run an auction to help pay expenses for Latin American professionals in the SF community, which will take place at MagiCon, the 1992 Worldcon in Florida (see above). This is not trying to compete with other fan funds, it's a one-off effort, trying to get new people involved with the idea of cultural diversity for the Worldcon. If you want to help make Terry's Dream come true, please send contributions of money, suggestions, offers of any other form of assistance to: Gay Haldeman (5412 NW 14th Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32605, USA). Suggestions for a writer/artist to be invited should be sent directly to Betty Anne Hull (855 South Harvard Drive, Palatine, IL 60067, USA).

**Canadian** (1994 World convention, attending membership \$60, details from PO Box 2430, Winnipeg, NB, Canada R3C 4A7). Guests of Honour Anne McCaffrey, George Barr, Barry B Longyear and Robert Runte.

Who will host the 1995 Worldcon will be decided at Orlando this September. The contenders are Atlanta and Glasgow. Atlanta aims to provide a Worldcon that WON'T secede from your memory. It costs \$5 for a supporting membership from Atlanta in '95, Suite 1995, 3277 Roswell Road, Atlanta, GA 30305.

Glasgow in '95 offers a city with over 10,000 hotel beds to suit any type of pocket. The con will be at the Scottish Exhibition Conference Centre, on the banks of the Clyde and the committee consists of Vince Docherty, Tim Illingworth, John Fairry, John Stewart, Theresa Renner, KIM Campbell, Karen Naylor, Henry Balen, Martin Easterbrook and Kathy Westehead. \$8 or £5 will get a supporting membership from 5 St Andrew's Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 2DY. The committee feels that SF is an international literature form and want fans to come from all parts of the globe.

## Contour Mapping

**Minehead Space Age Festival** (July 18-26 Exhibition Centre, Market House Lane, Minehead, £1/day, details from the Town Clerk, Town Hall, The Parade, Minehead TN34 3BN). **Arthur C Clarke** is hoping to return to his home town and the eponymous award should also be presented there.

**Hasticon: The Future Strikes Back** (July 25-26 Library, Hastings, £2.50/day, details from Hastings Arts, 53b All Saints Street, Hastings TN34 3BN). A SF con that's different with David Gemmell as Guest of Honour and other guests including Dave Langford and possibly Colin Greenland. Although only 60 people can get seats in the library, there is a great pub, *The Pig in Paradise*, two minutes' walk away, loads of B&Bs and a **SF Art Competition** with a prize of £50 from Hastings Borough Council. Details of this from Nexus, PO Box 1123, Brighton BN1 6EX, send sae.

Scone (August 7-9 Clyde Halls, Glasgow, £14 attending, details from Kenny Meechan, 80 Otogo Street, Glasgow G12 8AP, please make cheques payable to Unicorn 13). Room rates £18.80 single, £18.50 each in twin, but must be paid in advance. Guest of Honour Iain M Banks, Fan Guest of Honour Anne Page. The theme will be Fun and Games in SF and the committee have roamed the known and imaginary worlds for a feast of wonderful activities to satisfy the most fastidious of tastes. Your minds will be taxed, your sportsmanship tested and your sense of fun will be enriched. Nice to be warned in advance.

**ConTanime7** (October 2-4, New Cobden Hotel, Birmingham, £16 attending, details from Denzil Brown, 20 Field Ridge, Shaw, Newbury, Berkshire). Anime, all the latest releases both from Japan and the US. 48 hour video programme, art show, dealers room, panels.

**FABI** (August 8-9 Wolverhampton Civic Hall, details from The Creighton-Ward Mansion, 15 Fullers Court, Exeter EX2 4DZ). Thunderbirds Convention where one of the special attractions is an exhibition of puppets and models connected with the worlds of Gerry Anderson.

**ConCert III: The Third Stanza** (October 30-November, 1 King's Manor Hotel, Edinburgh, £17 attending, details from Lette Goldie, 97 Harrison Road, Edinburgh EH1 1LT). Ghostly goings-on, Alien encounters guaranteed plus Japanese (with translator) and SF/Horror emphasising the enjoyment and diversity of fandom. Special Guests are Peter Morwood and Diane Duane.

**"Who's Seven"** (October 30-November 1, Telford Moat House Hotel, Shropshire, £25 weekend, £20 for 2 days, £15 for 1 day, details from Henry Eggleton, "Valhalla", 137 High Street, Plaistow, Broadway, London E13 9HH). Blake's 7/Dr Who con. Guests include Gareth Thomas, Jacqueline Pearce, Jon Pertwee, Colin Baker, Peter Tuddenham and Sheila Wells (all subject to work commitments). Events include Gambit Banquet, plus the "Trial of Kerr Avon" (for the murder of Roy Blake). In aid of the Citizens Advice Bureaux and the PDSA. Come and make some new friends.

## 1993 conventions

**Hellcon** 1993 British National SF convention & 1993 European SF convention 9-12 April 1993 at the Hotel de France, Jersey, details from 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1LQ. Guests John Brunner, George R R Martin, Fan Guest of Honour Larry van der Pute.

The con will aim to cover both Western and Eastern SF. Dave Langford will do the newsletter and the con themes are Borders and Barriers (of literature and fandom) and Recreation in the Future.

**Smocon**: This is the first time this annual conrunners has been held outside the American continent. As it is a minority interest, there is normally a single programme stream with informal workshops and demonstrations, such as interrogation of prospective Worldcon organisers. (£20 attending membership, but £2 discount if you join Helcon at the same time, details from 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1LQ).

**Pentatonic**: The 5th Filk convention has Kathy Mar and Rhodri James (chairman of Illumination) for Guests (February 6-7, Rozei Hotel, Weston-super-Mare, information from 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol).

**Economy II: The Wrath of Khon**: Hatfield have announced Shoestringcon 14 for early 1993. The main feature of these conventions is that they are as cheap as possible. Details from Daniel Ives, PSIFA, Students' Union, Hatfield Polytechnic, Hatfield, Herts.

**Mexicon** V: Motto is "kicking over the traces" — participation is the keynote. £18 to Bernie Evans (121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, W Midlands B66 4SH). It will be held at the Hotel St Nicholas, Scarborough, with a superb view across the bay — room rates are £33 pppn single, £29.50 pppn double/twin — the dates remain the same, ie May 28-31, 1993.



## Noticeboard

**H G Wells:** I am a French student writing a memoir on HG Wells as Apocalyptic Prophet and intend to study the destructive imagination of works in four scientific romances — *The War of the Worlds*, *The War in the Air*, *When the Sleeper Awakes* and *The World Set Free* together with a few short stories like "The Sea Raiders". I would be very pleased for any help, such as bibliographical references or details of critical essays, also for a photocopy of an article published in *Science Fiction: A Review of Speculative Literature* by Tom Gibbons entitled "HG Wells's Fine Science: *The War of the Worlds* and the Book of Revelation" (1984). Thank you. Nicholas Aguilon, Quartier La Riviere, 83136 La Roquebrussanne, France.

**Louis Jacobs Book Service:** Thousands of US pb originals, 1st pb editions and hbs. Louis Jacobs, Neurological Surgery, 6245 N Inkster Road, Garden City, MI 48135, USA.

**Missing relations:** I urgently need to contact Anna and Stefan Mangi with their daughter Danka, last known living at 33 Lynthorne Road, Frizinghall, Bradford. Also if anyone knows anything about Mary R Martin (nee Robinson, born 15.10.28 in either Argentina or Dublin), Stefan Solowij (born 1909 in Poland) or Mary Robinson (born 1907 in Scarborough), please will you then contact me. I am desperate to find out about my relatives — this is all the information I have. Stephanie Wheeler, 4 Cecil Avenue, Skegness, Lincolnshire PE25 2BX (tel: 0754 762984).

**French native freelance translator:** I can guarantee an accurate translation from English to French of about 200 pages within 2-3 months including proof-reading. All translations will be true to the authors' style. Also export documents, commercial, technical or legal work from or into French. All work is automatically carried out of wp software, First Word Plus or First Word and recorded on disks. More details from Elaine Menetrier & Simon Wilby, 14 Dallington Close, Hershaw, Surrey KT12 4JG (Tel: 0932 244618).

**Typographic Newsletter Selection** font program for Windows/Ventura/WordStar 6 and Laserjet compatible printers. Unused competition prize, but unfortunately doesn't support WordPerfect 5.1 or my DeskJet 500. Open to best offer (RRP £80) or exchange. Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA (0865 71734).

## Clubs

**Cheltenham and Gloucester:** Anyone wanting to form, join or just turn up at a SF group in this area, just call Mike White on 0452 713666.

**Preston SF Group:** This meets the second Wednesday of the month at the Bear's Paw function room, Church Street, 8.30pm-ish and has a guest approximately every month. The next meetings will be July 1, July 15, July 29, August 12, September 9, September 23, October 7, October 21 etc. For more information, please telephone 0772 720766.

**Melbourne SF Club:** We cover Media and Literature in SF, Fantasy and Horror. Membership benefits include discounts to Alternate Worlds, Minotaur Books and Mind Games, as well as receiving our quarterly fanzine *Ethel the Aardvark*. And now we have up to 10% discount from Moviola as well. Write to Melbourne SF club, PO Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne 3005, Australia. \$15 couples membership; \$12 standard membership; \$8 *Ethel* membership. overseas subscription \$15 (all Oz dollars, of course).

**Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society:** has just debated a motion to cease smoking in the clubhouse. "For most of its life" reports Harry Andruschak "[it] has been a haven for smokers and a hell for sensitive non-smokers. The clubhouse has a very poor ventilation system, and in any case no ventilation system could handle such powerful shit as the pipes of Larry Niven and Marty Cantor, among others". The outcome is not known, though Harry suspects that "the measure hasn't a chance of a snowflake in hell of passing. Several of the smokers are Movers And Shakers in the club and have threatened to quit the club and take their marbles home if the motion is passed". Since then, the club have had more serious things to think about with the riots, though Harry continues later "The clubhouse was ok. Fred Patten and a couple of other fans came early in the evening (before curfew set in), held a quick meeting to keep the LASFS string of meetings intact, and stayed most of the night to guard the building ...

fortunately nobody seemed interested in looting and burning a Science Fiction clubhouse with a big science fiction library. Draw your own conclusions".

**Serbian SF club:** Serbian Fandom does maintain links with people despite war and nationalism. I would be interested in international contacts. Boban Knezevic, p.f. 19, 11070 Novi Beograd, Serbia.

**The Imperial College SF Society**, who also run the annual Picocon in March which featured David Langford and Brian Stableford last year, have produced a booklet *The Edge of Tomorrow*, a loose guide to London for readers of speculative fiction, written by Steve Brewster, Ginny Rose Cogman, Paul Davison, Matthew Hyde, Alex McLintock, Steve Newhouse and Michael Spiller. The top SF bookstore is Forbidden Planet in New Oxford Street (with the warning that it is right next to two banks, which "usually means a quick jaunt off to the cash machine"). Comics bookshops recommended are: Forbidden Planet as above; Gosh! (39 Great Russell Street); Paradise Alley (by Andy's Guitars in Denmark Street); Comic Showcase (76 Neal Street); Fantasy Inn (17 Charing Cross Road); Virgin (Oxford Street or Marble Arch); The Fantastic Store (Portobello Road); Meanwhile (6A Camden Road, Camden Town) and Mega City Comics (18 Inverness Street, Camden Town). It concludes by recommending the Friday matinee of *Return to the Forbidden Planet* at the Cambridge Theatre, near Covent Garden/Leicester Square tube, as all seats are £9.50 as opposed to £9.50-£20 approx. at all other times.

**Peterborough Sci-Fi Club:** presented a Fantasy Fair at the Cresset Exhibition Centre on May 17, reports Dave Bell. Those of us who have been to any major convention would have recognised the result as a dealers' room. It might also have looked similar, except for the goods on display, to a craft fair or a wargames show.

Unlike, for example, the last Eastercon, there was not much sign of written SF. *The At the Sign of the Dragon Away* Team were present, with offgo, and the *The House on the Borderland*, a local dealer, but books were not a significant part of the Fair. I felt slightly disappointed, though some of my other interests were well-served. It is astonishing to see how much material has been produced in association with tv and films, not just the toys. There were also games, and a couple of suppliers of wargames figures.

Afterwards, I spoke with Pete Cox [who is the local contact for the Peterborough group]. Over 800 people had turned up and it seems likely that another fair will be organised next year. There is also the possibility of working with groups in other towns and cities to arrange similar events.

While I couldn't honestly feel quite as optimistic as Pete about future events, and I doubt I would have travelled to Peterborough just for the Fantasy Fair, I had a pleasant day. If you could have been there, and were not, you might just have missed something you'd been looking for.

**Brum Group (BSFG):** Meet monthly at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday unless otherwise noted, in the upstairs function room of the White Lion, corner of Thorp Street and Horsefair/Bristol Street in the city centre. Annual subscription £9 per person, includes copy of monthly newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings. More details from Richard Standage at meetings or Bernie Evans (121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 4SH tel: 021 558 0997).

**Ghost Story Society:** Details from Jeff Dempsey, 2 Loze Road, Croxeth, Liverpool L11 6LJ.

**Drake SF & F Society:** When the DSFA decided to arrange a convention, they wanted to generate new club memberships and ideas, plus cater for people in the south west, remote from many con sites. They initially defined a convention as: "a chance for people who are interested in anything to do with SF or Fantasy (the sword and sorcery kind) to meet each other and talk to their favourite authors or writers in a friendly atmosphere. It is a place where they do not have to put up with the gibes of the close-minded, the image perpetuated by the media of freaks in silly costumes... or to be asked the old question *do you believe in UFO's?* to which the usual answer is *yes, but not within one hundred lightyears of Earth*". The DSFA are now planning the fourth Armadacon with Jan Pertwee, Adrian Cole, John Carrigan (a stuntman in *Star Trek: TNG*) and Mark Leville, a director at the local Barbican Theatre (all, subject as with media cons, to work commitments and health). There will also hopefully be a well-known author "to balance the writer/media and SF/Fantasy mix". (Armadacon 4, £20 attending, details from Steve Pritchard, 4 Gleneagle Avenue, Mannamead, Plymouth PL3 5HL tel: 0752 267873).

## The Reading SF Group Steve Rothman

The average *Interzone* reader is male, 28, a computer programmer, and comes from Reading, Berkshire.

The Reading University *Reading and Writing SF* course has been going for three years and attracts about 15 people.

The BSFA has about 30 members in the Reading area and its mailing operations are based here.

Reading probably has more "Hugo" awards per head of population than any other town in Britain — maybe even in the World. (They're all sitting on, or propping up, Dave Langford's coffee table).

Reading is clearly a centre of SF/fan excellence.

Strangely, there is little overlap between the *Interzone* readers, the writers, the BSFA members and the local fan group.

This group meets every Monday from about 8pm onwards in the ICL club, 53 Blagrove Street (just opposite Reading station). The ICL club was originally chosen because a majority of the group members were, or had been, employees of ICL, but now is used because it is quiet and rarely full. Admission to the club has never been a problem for non-members and new people are welcome. There is no formality to the group, it being a case of turning up, talking — occasionally about SF — and drinking.

Recently we have managed to organise a few less casual events like a cinema visit, a barbecue and a (hopefully) annual Christmas dinner and "awards ceremony".

Most of the regulars are likewise regular convention-goers and have attended, worked on or run/are running several recent/forthcoming conventions. We are now developing the tradition of holding a Reading group dinner instead of the usual meeting when most of us are at a con on a Monday. So far we've had a Chinese meal in The Hague and a Caribbean meal in Blackpool; there will probably be similar dinners in Orlando and in St Helier.

Anyone in the Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke (or further afield) area who is interested can simply turn up on a Monday, or contact me for further details. Steve Rothman (49 Burney Bit, Pamber Heath, Basingstoke RG26 6TL tel: 0734 700473).

## Media File

Look out for the **Elstree Film and Television Festival** (June 27-July 3, The Venue, Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Herts, about 90 metres from the Elstree studios). Items include "The Epic" and "Forget Me Not" episodes of *The Avengers* June 29; 2001 — *A Space Odyssey* on July 1 and a special double bill from *The Prisoner* series on Friday July 3.

## Do you want fries with that? A review of *Naked Lunch* (1991) and other Cronenburgers Ian Mundell

In the good old days of SF and horror film-making directors were forced back on their creativity in order to get around the strict moral codes of the censors, and by and large they came up with the goods. Now that almost anything goes, it is all too easy to show rather than suggest, and as a result subtlety flies out the window. So, it is interesting to see director David Cronenberg — a man who never shied away from exploding a head or two if he felt the plot called for it — put under some sort of restraint by his latest source material, William Burroughs' 1959 novel *The Naked Lunch*.

Cronenberg acknowledges that to make a literal film would have cost a vast amount of money and the result would have been bumped by every censor on the planet. Rather than a straight interpretation, he has made a film about the writing of the novel and Burroughs' state of mind at the time. This is not such a deviation as it might seem, since the relation between novel and life is quite clear. Much of the content of the book sprang from "routines" Burroughs used to perform for friends — some go further and say it was the only way he could interact socially — and much of the material was first set down in letters Burroughs wrote from Tangier to Allen Ginsburg in New York.

In the film, we see Burroughs telling these tales, and Ginsburg helping to compile the book from the letters and other (blood stained) pieces of paper. However, William Lee (Burroughs' alter ego in both his own books and the film) does not remember writing any of it ("I truly suspect a colossal con"). Instead he is living out a paranoid fantasy, most likely brought on by his addition to the insecticide pyrethrin and a number of other exotic drugs. This is where material from the book makes its appearance, with its corporate and governmental conspiracies, agents and aliens. However, unlike the book, this is put into a more or less coherent SF-thriller narrative: Bill Lee escapes to Interzone (a version of Tangier in the 1950s) after accidentally killing his wife. There he gets involved with a network of corporate drug dealers (pushing the black meat and mugwump jissom) and joins the bizarre social life of the city, which includes Tom Frost (modelled on the writer Paul Bowles, whom Burroughs knew in Tangier) and his wife, who resembles the dead Joan Lee.

Cronenberg has kept the plot very dream-like, with the cross-over points between hallucination and reality rarely intersecting. Because of this, the film drifts along rather than having the jump-cut feel of the novel.

Anyone watching the media coverage around the launch of the film would assume that Cronenberg has gone for the lowest common denominator and produced a rubberfest of hallucination and monsters. This is not wholly the case — it's just that the mugwumps and the cockroach typewriters are the easiest thing to focus on, and what people might expect to see, given Cronenberg's reputation and the book's content. What it misses is the way in which Cronenberg uses these monstrosities. Unlike many other horror films they are not their own reason for hanging around the set, they are very much essential parts of the plot, and they are made to work. The typewriters in particular play a key role, linking agents like Lee to the various factions in the drug conspiracy, and also having totemic value in the triangular relationship that develops between Lee and the Frosts.

The characterisation of Cronenberg as the king of visceral horror (or venereal horror, depending on who you ask) is a rather irritating misrepresentation which fails to take into account the degree of thought that goes into the plotting of his films. His use of special effects is both impressive and purposeful, yet he is not reliant upon them to deliver his message. *Dead Ringers* (1988) was almost free of gore and rubber, yet remains one of his most disturbing films. Similarly, *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970) — two early, low-budget SF films which have been on show in London in the wake of *Naked Lunch* — have no less impact for being devoid of special effects.

Cronenberg's next film is likely to be an adaptation of J G Ballard's *Crash*. You have been warned.

## Aliens: Special Edition Ben Wharton

How long is 17 minutes of reinstated footage worth waiting for?

It's been over a year since the announcement of James Cameron's original cut of his sequel to 1979's classic *Alien*, and a great deal of interest has come to bear on the cinematic differences between a desired vision and a commercial one in the intervening period.

But does more necessarily mean better? Could, as several noted directors in the first issue of *Projections* — a forum for filmmakers — suggest, commercial restrictions actually be a strong motivating force behind cinematic creativity?

When confronted with reducing their original cut, James Cameron and producer Gale Ann Hurd had to reappraise the economically shot production and throw the question *Is This Absolutely Essential To The Storyline?* at each scene. What went in the process was generally expository in nature: life at the terra-forming colony before the alien invasion; Newt's family discovering the derelict spacecraft; small sections of characterisation embedded in several sequences.

In other words, scene setting.

But what Cameron and Hurd might not have realised at the time was that without those 17 minutes of footage, *Aliens* became a far more tightly plotted, claustrophobic, and suspenseful piece of story telling.

For without the point of view switching from Ripley's to others and their own situations, the audience became hooked to Ripley's personal journey and relationship with the alien. She is the character that in the end made the difference.

*Aliens'* predecessor was an altogether different creature. A number of highly realistic characters in a very subtle ensemble piece, the group dynamic is what created the drama. If, however, you have essentially cardboard characters moving around your hero (as you do in *Aliens*), you don't want to give them more

screen time to (a) emphasize the weaknesses of the writing and (b) dilute the strengths of your leading player. And that's what happens in this "new" and "improved" cut.

There are a few sections of restored footage that do add to the original, notably the deployment of remote sentry guns in the complex's tunnels to ward off the first two waves of alien attacks and the swapping of first names between Ripley (Ellen) and Hicks (Dwayne) moments before Newt's rescue sequence begins. Unfortunately we non-laser disk owners cannot choose which of the footage to retain for our own personal cut, and must therefore suffer in the knowledge that Newt is a convenient surrogate daughter for Ripley whose own daughter had died during Ripley's 57 year trip back to Earth.

*Aliens: Special Edition* is a must for *Alien* fans and I certainly don't regret buying it, but if I had to choose between them as the only version of a sequel to one of my favourite films, I would choose the original, however ironic that choice might appear.

## New addition to the Shekley Museum: A review of *Freejack* (1992, Geoff Murphy)

Ian Mundell

Somewhere in the Hollywood hills is an intriguing series of documents — notes, synopses, draft scripts and story-boards — that tell how three men got from Robert Shekley's novella *Immortality, Inc* (1959) to the movie *Freejack* (1992). Part of that treasure trove is probably a letter from a lawyer at Warner Bros whose fear of litigation is such that he urges them to credit Shekley's novel because the phrase "spiritual switchboard" has seeped across from one to the other. Plagiarism suits are in vogue at the moment, but with *Freejack* there is really no need to be nervous.

*Immortality, Inc* tells of a man whose mind is lifted out of his body at the time of death, 1953, only to be planted in another corpse 150 years later. He is reborn into a world where life after death is scientifically documented and, given the wherewithal, it is possible to guarantee the mind's passage into the hereafter. The spiritual switchboard is a means for minds already en route to the other side to communicate with those left behind.

The novella is a sort of mind-gym where Shekley works through the possibilities of having mind transfer and an afterlife — the effect on religion, how the dishonest might take advantage and where it might eventually lead the human race. It's too formulaic to be great literature, but the thought processes are in good order and Shekley creates some intriguing situations.

*Freejack* on the other hand gives us a chase. Alex Furlong (Emilio Estevez) crashes his racing car in 1991; his body and mind are snatched forward to 2009, where the former is intended to play host to the mind of a dying industrialist. The spiritual switchboard is the mechanism by which the mind is held between leaving one body and inhabiting the next. However, Furlong escapes with mind and body intact, only to be pursued by Vacendak (Mick Jagger, and not the worst thing in the film), a mercenary in the pay of the industrialist. Corporate conspiracy and interminable car chase ensue as people from Furlong's past turn up and get involved.

Although without the detail of Shekley's scenario, the scientific advance supposed to have taken place in *Freejack* is about the same — only in 18 years rather than 150. As a consequence the film's bones are infirm and it limps along leaning heavily on its action sequences. That said, it does have a visually interesting finale inside the switchboard, which tells you where most of the production budget went.

Once secured for posterity, the cache of documents which will link typewriter to movie camera might be donated to a museum dedicated to the rough ride Shekley has had outside the SF cognoscenti. With a number of other writers he is credited with setting the tone of *Galaxy* magazine in the 1950s, writing off-beat short stories, with a sense of intellectual playfulness that shone out against the SF stodge being brought out by some of *Galaxy's* contemporaries, yet when Douglas Adams came along in the late 1970s with *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* — stories with a similar flavour — he was hailed as the bringer of a new kind of humour. Without wishing to denigrate Adams, it is fair to say that Shekley had covered much of the same ground. The other movies that have been made from Shekley's work — including *The Tenth Victim* (1965) and *The Prize of Peril* (1983) — have been undistinguished if not unfaithful, and have largely sunk without trace.

*Freejack* goes further than doing Shekley no favours — it might actually do more harm to his reputation if people who see the film assume that the line of humour that runs through it — a poor knockabout in the Schwarzenegger mode,

with one-liners and hero-villain banter — is Sheckley's humour. That would add insult to injury.

## Skywatching Mark Ogier

A few days before some national media took great delight in reporting an apparent near miss between a jet airliner and a "UFO", I discovered a film on Sky Movies that attempted to convince us that, yes, aliens are responsible for all these sightings, and what is more they want to be our friends. So, was this near miss in the skies over Britain the first proof that our friends from "out there" are about to make contact? Nah! It was probably a balloon.

Still, if Whitley Streiber had been in the UK then listening to the radio or reading the papers, I'll bet his pulse would have quickened at the thought that maybe, after all these years, his alien friends had decided to let all of us in on their existence.

For those [one or two? — ed] unfamiliar with Mr Streiber, he is a writer who has made a reasonable reputation for himself with books like *Wolfen* (or was it *The Howling?*), but has really found fame with his claim that he was once kidnapped by aliens, and has been in touch with them ever since. The book he wrote about his experiences, *Communion*, was turned into a film starring Christopher Walken, and is an attempt to treat a subject that is often ridiculed as fact.

Adapted by the writer, the film is a bizarre affair, to say the least. The scenes between Streiber and his wife and son tend to suggest that here is a man who is not entirely on the same planet as the rest of us (good qualifications for a horror writer, I suppose). So when he starts seeing little blue men in the bedroom, one wonders if this is simply a manifestation of deeper psychological problems than a genuine Close Encounter.

Of course, Hollywood being Hollywood, the film has to be seen to have a satisfactory conclusion, and to aid this the impression is given that Mr Streiber is not the only person to have seen these aliens. I found it a bit hard to swallow that as soon as he agreed to group therapy to try and come to terms with his experiences, the rest of the group all described their contact with the self-same aliens that Streiber has encountered. Ok, so I have not read the book on which the film is based, but I can't help but wonder if all of these independent witnesses profess to have seen the same thing, why hasn't a proper study been done of their experiences? Or maybe it has, and I've just missed it — or, and I read to use these words, this is supposed to be yet another example of the "great UFO cover-up"?

If you can cope with the off the wall nature of this unusual film (in which Walken is perfectly cast and gives a great performance), it provides a lot of food for thought. Frankly, I only wish I could believe it.

On a safer ideological note, April saw the first screening of what I can only describe as a "green SF" movie, *E.A.R.T.H. Force* (the initials are not explained and appear to be a pointless acronym) was a pilot for the US tv series that I think had a fairly short run.

The plot has the owner of a nuclear power station faced with the threat of a melt down, trying to avert a crisis by "persuading" four of the world's experts on nuclear physics, zoology (?), surgery and marine biology to help him prevent the crisis. When you learn that the four include Buck Rogers himself, Gil Gerard, perhaps your suspension of disbelief will begin to melt down itself.

But, to be fair, to a non-nuclear scientist such as myself the battle to save the planet seemed realistic enough. It had a couple of elements I was unhappy with, but I assume the writers did their homework and that the science was at least partially accurate (I'm probably being hopelessly idealistic here. This is American tv, after all).

Once the heroes have saved the plant, they join forces with a mercenary to recover 2kg of Plutonium stolen at the start of the film. This involves much leaping out of planes, scuba diving and lobbing of bombs, but provides several relatively exciting moments.

Predictably, the movie ends with our heroes agreeing to stay together to fight ecological crime and/or irresponsibility.

But I suspect the series will be a failure, if it hasn't failed already. One of the film's biggest weaknesses (apart from Gil Gerard, who is, to be kind, a little on the wooden side) is that the writers clearly feel they have to put both sides of the argument on nuclear power, with the result that here and there you get a few minutes of dialogue that sound like a college debating society meeting. I can imagine the American viewer tiring of this even faster than I did. A nice try, but the ultimate "green" programme remains to be made.

Of course, if we really cock up the planet, either through pollution or the increasingly unlikely option of a nuclear war, we will have only ourselves to blame and will have to live in whatever world we create.

One such world is glimpsed at the start of *Hardware*, a robot on the rampage story that boasts some impressive photography and one or two gory moments. Based on a story from 2000AD, the plot involves a woman's boyfriend presenting her with the head of a robot for her birthday. This was purchased from a nomad, whose sole aim in life is to wander the Earth wastelands (desolate after some war) and pick up tit-bits. This is a future that is every bit as grim as that of *Blade Runner*, but here everything is covered in dust and sand, rather than rain. Unfortunately for the sculptor heroine, the head is far from dead and it is not long before the "Mark 13" pulls itself together and begins pulling everything and everyone apart. Cue a couple of tense moments as the heroine is trapped in her apartment with the rampaging robot and a Peeping Tom neighbour has his eye firmly on her rather than her assailant.

It's all rather fun in a visceral sort of way and although it is highly derivative of movies like *The Terminator* or *Demon Seed*, it provides enough thrills to keep you awake. But it is hardly what I would call good SF. That is, I regret to say, absent from the two satellite film channels (and all the other channels on Astra). But those who have grown up watching movie makers consistently fail to make a serious SF movie are probably quite prepared to put up with the second rate stuff in the vain hope that, one day, a serious SF film that does not rely on violence or flashy special effects finally comes along.

## Anime: Fist of the North Star Geoff Cowie

*Fist of the North Star* (aka *Hokuto no Ken*) (Toyoo Ashida/Toei) Island World Communications Manga Video MANV 1001. 112 mins. PAL, cert 18, English dialogue, £12.99

This is the second Anime (Japanese animation) release from Island World. The Toei Animation *Hokuto no Ken* was based on graphic novels (manga) by Buronson and Tetsuo Hara. It's set in the future where nuclear war and pollution have left the Earth a barren desert devoid of vegetation. Ruthless outlaw bikers, super-powerful mutants and warlords prey on the few ragged human survivors huddled in the wrecks of cities. Ken, the *Fist of the North Star*, has been chosen as a saviour, but his efforts are thwarted by his mutant rivals Jagi, Raoh and Shin. Ken soon loses his fiancee Julia and fights to rescue her.

This is a very violent piece of Anime — blood spurts, limbs are lopped off and large numbers of combatants slaughtered. There isn't much of a plot but there is some rock music on the soundtrack, and there is an ecological theme of sorts. Despite the 18 certificate, the script is very childish: it's not clear why Island World released this naff item rather than the many much better examples they could have chosen instead. The best part of the tape is the *Akira* trailer. True, some of *Fist's* visuals are quite appealing and so is the violent action if you like that sort of thing; it's to unreal to be really revolting.

Verdict: best rented after a night of lager and curry.

Island World are reportedly releasing *Project A-Ko*, *Dominion*, *Legend of the Four Kings*, *3x3 Eyes* and *Crystal Triangle* over the next six months. (*Project A-Ko* and *Dominion* are both outrageously funny and well worth getting).

A lot more Anime has been given licensed release in the US recently, so if you have some disposable income, you can rent or buy a PAL/NISC dual standard VCR, order the tapes from the US or a few specialist UK outlets and watch them now. For best results, use a big stereo tv with the sound turned up. *Dominion Acts 1 to 4*, *Bubblegum Crisis 1-17*, *Bubblegum Crash 1-11*, *Project A-Ko 1*, *Madox-01*, *Riding Bean*, *Gumbstar*, *Dangaio*, *Appleseed*, *Black Magic N-66*, *Robot Carnival* and other titles are all available for about £35. Most are subtitled rather than dubbed. Laser discs are promised soon.

## Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea Barbara Davies

Nostalgia ain't what it used to be — especially when it comes to '60s tv programmes. Channel 4 has been running *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* repeats at Sunday lunchtime for the past year-and-a-half, and the run seems nowhere near its end. There were 110 episodes (4 seasons) made between 1964 and 1967 — no wonder it seems to have been on forever.

Before the re-runs, my memories were fond. I used to watch the series on a small b/w tv and several images had remained etched on my retinas: the weird plankton, expanding rapidly and bursting its way through the water-tight hatches, engulfing any unlucky, and expendable, crew member that got in its way; the

gigantic squid, tentacles wrapped around the submarine, *Seaview*, sending bolts of electricity through the hull.

Unlike other series of that time, the leading actors did not engender undying passion on my part (just as well, really, because my wardrobe door was fully covered with pictures of The Beatles and Ilya Kuryakin). My best friend managed, to my amazement, to have a crush on Lee Crane (played by David Hedison) — but what other choice was there? Admiral Nelson (Richard Basehart)? Come on — get real!

Time has not been kind to *Voyage* ... Ok — so the last three seasons were made in colour and it does show off those nice red wet-suits and the yellow flying-sub to perfection. But the cold light of modern day has revealed the wrinkles for all to see: wooden sets, and even more wooden performances. Every week the crew rush from side to side of the control room to indicate the turbulence affecting the *Seaview*, but though the exterior shot shows an almost vertical submarine, the interior remains resolutely horizontal. Then there's the makeup: the crew must have used some amazing underarm deodorants since they often appear with sweat artistically sprayed on their chests and backs and nowhere else — perish the thought!

Despite the number of episodes, or perhaps because of it, the plots leave everything to be desired. Week after week sees the crew trying to destroy the latest underwater monster: a giant squid, a giant mutated plankton, a gigantic jellyfish, monstrous fish-men, a giant whale — most of them roaring and shrieking as clear as day under all that water, not a glub, glub to be heard. Then there are the plots about the evil Superpower, unnamed but with foreign accents, out to destroy the West. And what about the ghostly sea-captain coming back to haunt the *Seaview*, or the were-wolf virus that infects the Admiral?

So — it's all good clean entertainment, the teenagers will love it. And I did. But wait a moment. Notice how all the scientists are evil; sometimes they even invent the menace, and they certainly prevent the *Seaview* from destroying it immediately (thus raising the excitement levels enough to last for a whole episode). And notice how most of the said evil scientists are foreigners. Then there's the military element and the toys for the boys. Whenever something new is sighted, Crane's instinct is to blow it to smithereens first and ask questions later; and since the monsters and aliens are all hostile, we're in there cheering him on with his torpedoes, missiles and laser beams.

Was *Voyage* ... a product of its time? It seems to be a part of the early 60s that got overtaken by the events of that decade. Certainly, a couple of years later, overlapping its least season, came *Star Trek*, which espoused very different values.

And after *Voyage* ... what will Channel 4 show next in its cult tv slot? *Department S* would get my vote. And would my fond memories of Peter Wyngarde and Joel Fabiani stand up to the cold light of day? I'd like to think so, but who knows? This nostalgia is not all it's cracked up to be.



## WriteBack

Letters are welcome on any subject whatsoever, including SF. Please write to Jenny and Steve Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP

### Magazine Chain: Broken Links

W R Johnson, 18 East Dene, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 7RF

It is with regret that I must withdraw from the magazine chain. I signed up for three titles (*Weird*, *MOF&SF* and *Asimov's*) in late 1989 and although I sent you a £10 cheque, I have only received three *Weirds*. I think that makes them about the most expensive non-antique *Weirds* yet.

Considering the list, I figure it that someone on the list must be a thief. I mean, let's face it, whether it is done through laziness or forgetfulness is not important, keeping magazines that don't belong to you is thievery. The only other alternative is that they have all been lost in the post. But that would mean that somewhere we have a very selective postman who loves SF and has X-ray eyes to see through the white packets.

I do not wish to cast any slur on the administration of the chain, but it is a fact of life that shiteheads get into every sort of human activity and a SF society is no exception, so may I suggest that when people post the magazines, they obtain a receipt of posting, which costs nothing and may help to establish their veracity.

I do hope that this letter will stir a couple of consciences, though, frankly, I doubt it.

### The BSFA: View from the Members (and others)

Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF

The volume of the reply to Mic's piece tends to indicate that, like Ken Lake says, you only get your 1% to react, as the rest are all happy, mindless, passive consumers.

"Pish, tosh and bollocks!" you may well say, but I would then have to counter with the comment of why is *Paperback Inferno* without an editor and why, oh why, is *Focus* not being salvaged? Wallflowers and snapdragons (in the most Lewis Carrollian sense as well).

But what sparked me off into scribbling this to you was Peter Tennant's mind-numbingly ignorant letter in *Matrix* 99. His comments said *Focus* "should be dispensed with. It appears so irregularly that I doubt it will be missed". So what has Petiekins done to remedy the irregularity? Smoothed his backside to the bone in contemplation, no doubt. Then comes the classic: "[what] the BSFA has to offer is more appropriate to people like me, who are interested first and foremost in SF as a medium of entertainment and/or artistic expression, rather than those, like Mic, who are heavily involved in fandom. The BSFA's failure to reach such people is the reason it hasn't grown to its full potential, I believe". I sincerely hope that he doesn't mean the BSFA's failure to reach fandom, does he? Talk about the tail wagging the dog, or what?

Liz Counihan, bless her little white cotton socks, claims to read SF, which is fine by me, but "without the BSFA, I would not have heard of ..." makes all the monies Messrs J Barnicoat & Co. and the people they also front — you know, the people who advertise publishers' availability lists in the backs of paperbacks, a total waste of time and ink, doesn't it? There again, for Liz (one amongst no doubt far too many) the BSFA is nice and safe and you don't have to put anything in — such as effort and the like — to take all you can out of it, do you. In her own words about conventions "I find conventions rather intimidating affairs (lots of large noisy people who all know each other) so I don't go to many" thus she condemns while, at the same time, admitting that she doesn't do much to try and understand.

Let's face it, if things don't come up to Peter or Liz's respective front doors, knock and say "Please, please, pretty please?" then they're not going to do anything.

To be honest with you, Jenny, when you said people had been writing in about it, I had expected something a little stronger than this. Let's face it, there was more reaction in the pages of *Thingumbob* (see fanzine listing) from the older ex-members than there was in the official magazine of the organisation itself!

That, coupled with the fact that you're dropping one, possibly two, magazines — even if it is under the guise of merging the information, does that mean that the remaining mags will be allowed more pages per issue? Perhaps. Perhaps they might be accidentally reduced — this indicates to me that the BSFA is carrying more dead wood than both Epping and even the New Forest put together.

Dr J D Stephen, "Dalsert", 43 Alva Street, Kirkcaldy, Fife KY1 1PN

I noticed in the last *Matrix* that there has been a poor response as regards nominations for the BSFA award. Apart from the fact that this could mean members were not sufficiently enthused by any fiction last year to consider nominating anything it might also signal a difficulty in obtaining books etc. I had considerable trouble before getting a copy of *New Worlds*, for instance.

This is not my main reason for writing, however. While not nominating anything I would have been perfectly happy to vote in the final ballot. This would have been subject to reading at least some of the nominated works, of course. But I received my mailing (with the final ballot form) on 20/4/92. The instructions were to return the form by 17/4/92 or take the form to Eastercon — except it finished on 19/4/92 and I wasn't going anyway. Either way, there is no possibility I could have voted this year. This isn't really good enough.

The April mailing is too late for the final ballot form. Had I attended the Eastercon I would not have had a large amount of time to read the stories/novels up for the awards, even if I'd had, say, a month's notice.

Perhaps the February mailing is a better time for the form. It allows more leeway to the voter. I realise that this would mean the nominating process would need to be earlier too. Perhaps nominations could be submitted at any time during the year to the award administrator, and a notice to this effect (plus a reminder in October and December?) published in every *Matrix*. This would create extra problems for the administrator, I know.

Or should we be even more iconoclastic? What is so sacrosanct about Eastercon? I am not a con-gor myself (though I am considering breaking the habit of a lifetime and attending Scone in August) so I do not see the necessity for the BSFA award being linked to this event. Ending the Eastercon/BSFA award connection could solve the difficulty at a stroke.

This has always bugged me a little. I know it is the big con that "everyone" tries to go to, but Easter is not a holiday everywhere in the UK, as was. I suppose the presumption in making the link and having the con at Easter in the first place but there is a problem with announcing the award at Easter — especially if Easter falls early.

Peter Tennant, 9 Henry Cross Close, Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 7LQ

Enclosed with my mailing was a ballot form for the BSFA 1991 Awards, and a request that this be returned to Nicholas Mahoney before April 17th. But I only received the form on April 15th, leaving it to the tender mercies of the Royal Mail whether my vote would count or not. So much for encouraging members to vote. In the circumstances I decided not to bother. I appreciate the need for deadlines, but in future can somebody exercise a little common sense and make them feasible.

Tim Robinson, 225 Osborne Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3LB

As the Labour Party found to its cost in its battle with Militant, apathy is the breeding ground of corruption. I write with great concern regarding the BSFA award and its administration. I received my ballot paper in the mailing postmarked 13 April, which arrived on 16 April. The warning note on the bottom of the paper reads: "Completed postal ballots must reach me before April 17th". In effect I must go to Eastercon, or lose my voting rights.

I should like to question how deliberate this timing was?

I understand that printing book covers with BSFA AWARD WINNER flashes affects the sales of those books, and therefore the money an author receives. Thousands of pounds are involved. It is clearly essential that the ballot is administered in a way that precludes entryism, that is to say a small clique dominating the ballot in favour of writers who are their friends.

I was astonished to discover, and believe other members to be unaware, that a tiny handful of votes have been sufficient to send the award to its recipient in past years. (Amazingly, far fewer than a hundred).

I would like to make a plea to other members that stricter reporting back of the procedure and results of the ballot ought to be introduced. These reforms would prevent the kind of "steering" I suspect is presently going on.

I believe it is necessary to:

(a) explain to the membership via *Matrix* at least two months before the award is made how the nominations have been arrived at, and who, by name, is responsible for administering that process. How is it that Best Novel contains only the five nominations we see when many more books were published in the genre? It is clear, for example, that the BSFA politburo hates David Wingrove, but surely his novels are major works of British SF and his current volume should not have been arbitrarily excluded from the ballot, as were the last two. Who chose the five that do appear? And by what process? If that process is not fully democratic, why not?

(b) the BSFA must ensure plenty of time for members to cast postal votes. Only officers, and the most committed/financially able members are liable to attend Eastercon.

(c) we must have a foolproof, independent count of the votes, with random confirmations by phone if necessary. Ballot papers ought to be kept for a period afterwards so that totals may be checked by anyone interested to do so.

(d) Figures must be published after the ballot is counted, showing in precise numerical terms the absolute number of votes cast for each nomination, and the percentage of paid-up BSFA membership this vote constitutes. This would bring to light the scale of popularity implied by the award. For example, if novel X won with 54 votes in its favour, and the BSFA has, say 1000 current members, we could see that 5.4% of the society endorsed the award. That 200 votes, say, were cast for the best novel would mean 27% of the membership who voted endorsed the winning book, but the absolute scale of the result is of greater interest.

Finally, it must be admitted that the BSFA continues to decline in membership in an environment infinitely more oriented toward SF than it was twenty years ago. It will continue to decline until members feel they are being included in decisions, and not marginalised by a small group who are uninterested in the democratic running of the Association.

[Dr Edward James also wrote to Nic Mahoney on similar lines. See Kev McVeigh's and Nic Mahoney's pieces for how next year's award is to be run].

Pamela Palmer, 2 Priory Farm Cottages, Wormegay Road, Blackborough End, King's Lynn PE32 1SQ

I joined the BSFA last year for *Focus* and the general support for struggling writers. There may be problems with this magazine, but please don't ditch it. It could be great. And it signifies the BSFA's commitment to new writers.

It would be wonderful to have a BSFA input to the regional arts and literature festivals as suggested by Kev McVeigh in *Matrix* 99. This influence could extend to the already existing writing courses around the country.

Everywhere I go, writing circles, literature festivals etc., there is a real interest in Science Fiction in all its forms, but few people seem to know of the BSFA. Unfortunately, when I show them *Vector* and *Matrix* etc., they are GOBSMACKED at the size of print and their initial interest wanes rapidly.

The opportunity is there. GO FOR IT!!

Margaret Hall, 5 Maes yr Odyn, Gwynedd LL40 1UT, Wales

My main reason for writing is to bemoan the apparent demise of *Focus*. I fully sympathise with Cecil Ruess's problems with the production of *Focus*. (I was once involved with it myself as assistant to Sue Thomason. It is a time-consuming and sometimes thankless task). However, the existence of *Focus* was one of my reasons for joining the BSFA, so I have felt the lack of material aimed particularly at writers of SF. I actually first heard of the BSFA from the *Writers' and Artists' Year Book* and joined in the hope it would help my writing. I therefore did come to SF fandom via the BSFA and despite what Mic Rogers says, I had passed through university and lived in London for a year without ever coming across the phenomenon of Fandom. It's not a case of lacking the will to find out and join in; you have to know something exists before you can even start to look for it!

But to return to *Focus*, I do feel very strongly that something should be done to provide a good service to beginning and semi-pro writers. Like any specialist magazine, *Focus* always had the problem of providing basic "how to" articles for beginners, along with more general items for every writer. Every year new budding writers join the BSFA, wanting to know how things should be done, yet the editor balks at printing yet another article telling the writer to use white A4 paper and double spacing for MSS. It might therefore make sense for the BSFA to publish a booklet on "How to Write SF" (perhaps compiled from the best and most appropriate articles culled from past *Focuses*, along with newly written material). There are indeed general "How to Write" books around, but SF and Fantasy do have their own special needs. The BSFA booklet could be sold to new

members and also at conventions, through SF societies etc. thus possibly also attracting new members as well as making a small profit.

Publishing news, markets for fiction, advice of this nature would fit happily into a section of *Matrix*. Articles by or about authors, pieces about how writers get their inspiration and develop ideas, would fit in *Vector* as they would be of interest to everyone, not just writers. I think the main problem with *Focus* is that the ones who should be writing it much prefer to be writing their own fiction. To do a one-off article for *Vector* is one thing, to give up all your writing time to produce magazine after magazine is another.

David Gillon, 41 Armada Way, Admirals Reach, Chatham, Kent  
I'm one of those non-fan fans. Kev McVeigh mentions, people whose only contact with fandom has been through the BSFA. SF has a structure that extends beyond the writing, it is only through the BSFA mailings that I'm aware of that, aware of the things that concern us — hell, without the BSFA, I would have missed the Wingrove affair, that was worth the membership fee on its own. What I'm trying to say is that the BSFA has an important role to play here, it lets those of us who lack the contacts, ability or confidence to plunge into the mainstream of fandom, play our own part, and fandom as a whole, the BSFA in particular, can only gain from that.

Moving on to the magazines, Kev's suggestion that *Focus* be put on hold is a sad one, but perhaps inevitable. Looking back through the handful of issues I've received in my time as a member, what strikes me as Paul, as worthwhile retaining even if *Focus* must be laid to rest? Hmmmm! As useful as *Focus* on finding a place in the US market, Jenny Jones on her first novel, useful encouragement for those of us still at the hopeful rather than the professional stage, a few useful suggestions from various workshops, market listings, market listings, market ... You probably get the point. Market listings have already overlapped into *Matrix*, perhaps someone out there could collate a bi-yearly column, workshops would seem to have a natural home alongside con reports and *Vector* could probably pick up the non-news articles that had more than passing interest without particularly suffering for it.

#### Peter Tennant

Once again, there was no *Focus*. Personally, I think the magazine is redundant, but if the membership feels it meets a need then efforts should be made to ensure it appears regularly. Cecil Nurse did an excellent job when he took over the editorial reins, but you're only as good as your last issue and memory of that is fading. It's become obvious, for whatever reasons, that Cecil is no longer up to the job. The time has come to sort matters out, either by withdrawing the magazine or seeking an editor. Having *Focus* "on temporary hold" is no solution at all, only rubber stamping the current unsatisfactory state of affairs.

#### Terry Hunt, 269 Desborough Road, Eastleigh, Hants. SO5 5NG

I'm currently unable to use the Library, but I have long-term plans for research that it would greatly aid, so I'm happy it's there as a Foundation resource.

I didn't discover fandom through the BSFA, but I regard the BSFA as an important facet of fandom, and in periods like the present when I can't afford frequent trips to conventions or London, it's a valued contact.

The distinction between *Vector* and *Paperback Inferno* has been blurred by developments in publishing formats and perhaps needs re-defining. Both are valuable and since they invariably appear together a shared and more impressive cover as Dave Gillon suggests seems a sensible option, and indeed might reduce collation costs. I generally enjoy *Focus* and similar magazines (eg *Thrust/Quantum*) even though I'm not yet close to trying my hand at professional fiction, but I'm not sure if the currently sized BSFA has enough critical mass (unintentional pun!) to sustain it.

Re the BSFA Awards — no, I didn't make any nominations, being unable to afford much new fiction of late. Similarly, I didn't vote because I'd read virtually none of the nominees. Perhaps this is a general factor, and the recession is responsible for a temporary dip. If publishers are keen on a thriving BSFA, how about another blitz of ads. at the back of books, which would, I know, cost publishers virtually nothing.

So professional collation is a viable proposition, then? I'm mildly surprised. We presumably mean both collating/stapling/folding the magazines — by normal standards awkwardly tiny runs, so a *Vector/PI* merger would help — and generating labels and correctly stuffing and labelling envelopes with variable contents. I know none of this comes cheaply. You should also resign yourself to a markedly higher error rate. Personally, I greatly enjoy the collation sessions, provided reasonable numbers show up. It shouldn't really be beyond us to muster ten people for one day every two months — it's a much easier occasion at which to chat that the excessively noisy Tun! Incidentally, the labelling and stuffing

functions are technically known as "fulfilment"; I treasure the memory of a company I was once associated with commissioning expensive new stationery which proudly asserted "Hand Fulfilment Our Speciality".

Unlike Liz Counihan, I did, in a sense "get into fandom through variety", but only because that's where I happened to be at the crucial age, and I suspect that may be true of many. I knew about fandom and of the BSFA's existence before then (in my case via *Science Fiction Monthly*, and I'm sure that *Interzone* now does a better job in that respect). However, I'm not sure that most potential fans — as opposed to the vastly more numerous SF readers — don't find fandom one way or another, sooner or later, so I'm dubious about Ken Lake's scenario. In any case, it seems fatally circular: we recruit vastly greater membership to pay for a huge advertising campaign that will bring in the vastly greater membership that will finance etc. I begin to wonder if Ken appreciates how much a significant national ad. campaign would cost. I think it would be orders of magnitude more than we've tried to raise before, and at a time when the SF Foundation is looking for £100,000, too. I'm similarly dubious about having the BSFA professionally run. Could we really recruit administration for a greatly enlarged BSFA from within our ranks? Would it retain the features that in its current state make it enjoyable to belong to? SF is slowly and haltingly, but in the long run steadily, gaining greater acceptance; this very popularisation may make the idea of a special-interest genre group seem irrelevant. (Cue for accusations of wanting a cosy elitist clique).

Flippancy aside, Angela Carter's passing saddened me more than I'd have anticipated. I only met her once, and found her work difficult, but I loved her voice. I had a half-serious hope that one day she'd read my long-gestating children's fantasy novel on *Jackanory*, assuming they still have it.

#### Syd Foster, 539 Gower Road, Cila, Swansea SA2 7DS

Having cooled off since writing [to *Matrix* 99], I am a little concerned that I may have needlessly offended the by and large friendly and bright people who make up active fandom. As I did say in the letter "live and let live". I'm happy seeing them there as long as there's something in the BSFA for me as well. I largely agree with Liz Counihan (except that I love John Clute's use of language, and his essays in Criticism ... they are not reviews. Liz, they are remarkably applied and practical examples of the bastard art Criticism).

The main reason I have had pleasure and stimulation from the BSFA has been the articulate and informed dialogue in the letters pages of *Vector*, along with *Focus*. It's just that it's a lot of money for me to pay for around ten pages each year, if *Focus* really does get folded. Dave Gillon gave what seems a neat, logical solution to the "four periodical problem" (to evoke the colourful shade of Barrington Bayley's *New Worlds Quarterly* 2 story/fugue "Four Colour Problem" (1971)). I'd vote for that!

Which reminds me, I received my ballot form too late for me to even send it in, let alone actually read any of the nominations for the BSFA awards, which does rather make a mockery of its status as an informed choice by the membership of the BSFA! Surely something needs to be done about that.

The few cons I have attended have all been far from "pointless". In fact, they have been intellectually rewarding experiences, as well as enjoyable. (With the exception of the very first one in '86, a Mexican in Birmingham which I hitched from London for, only to be chucked out violently by Greg Pickersgill after midnight on the first night into a very cold January night with two feet of snow on the ground. I and about five other young paupers, who had expected to be able to sleep in the disco/fanzine room, having no money for hotel rooms, spent the night sitting on the floor of New Street Station. I hitched home to London in the morning, and that experience has coloured my thoughts about cons and fandom ever since despite subsequent encounters with many a fine fan! This has been on my chest for the past six years, as Pickersgill was so violent in his behaviour, and fully four or five of his fellow organisers simply stood around and watched him terrorise me. The fact that this guy goes around receiving accolades from fandom seems miserably unjust, and unseemly too. The fact is, the experience must have traumatised me, because I still feel the disturbance within me caused by the sight of a large powerful man looming over me, roaring in my face and taking intense swipes at my head with his fist, which he pulled up just short ok, but the full psychic force of the blows came through undiminished even though the first left a little air between his arm and my face. You may wonder what I did to evade this treatment. All I did was look sullen when told that I had to leave for the night, since I had actually phoned the Pickersgills before the con to see if it would be possible to sleep without a hotel room, and been told by his poor wife that this was usual as cons. If I'd known about the BSFA back then, I could have exposed the tyrant for a dolt before the people who should be aware of such things, the fans whose world this brute betrayed. And that would surely have been an appropriate "use of the BSFA" at the time!



## Magazines

Peter Tennant

The magazine's contents (*Matrix*) were excellent as usual, though once again the "Small Press" scene was conspicuous by its absence. It seems that for the BSFA the only British magazine publishing SF is *Interzone*. Everything else is either ignored or mentioned only in passing. One wonders if David Pringle is bribing everybody on the Association's committee. It's not good enough for the BSFA to beat about promoting SF and at the same time, ignore what's going on under it's very nose. Let's have some recognition for the efforts of magazines like *New Moon*, *Exuberance* and *Far Point*. They may not have *Interzone*'s mass circulation, but their intentions are good. They deserve the BSFA's support and encouragement.

Ken Lake bows out in this issue's letter column. Though I've seldom agreed with Ken's views, I'll miss his spirited contributions and enthusiasm. Good luck to him, wherever he goes. Ken leaves us with a marvellous vision of the BSFA as it could be, if we ever reach our full potential. He gives us little idea of how this can all be achieved though; talk of a vast advertising campaign and arranging finance. Barring the support of a wealthy philanthropist, it's hard to see how this vision could ever become reality. Future visionaries please note — tell us your dreams, but send in the balance sheets as well.

Kev McVeigh takes a more realistic view of the BSFA's future. I reckon the Association is still good value at £16, but a 33.33% rise does seem steep, especially when we're faced with the prospect of less magazines. Generally, Kev talks a lot of sense. I've made clear my own ideas about the magazines and the BSFA's role, so shall not repeat myself. But I will comment on a couple of points.

No merchandising should be undertaken unless it is proved that it will pay for itself. I don't want a BSFA t-shirt/badge/notepad/whatever, and I'm not happy that my membership fees should subsidise the production of such items.

Kev talks about the BSFA's involvement with the Clarke Award, which is fine and good, but steps should also be taken to give the Association's own awards a higher profile. As a first step, I'd suggest a change of name to something more catchy (eg *Nebula*, *Hugo*). How about the Vector Award? Or the *Matrix*? Something that's user friendly. It's a small thing, but will make a difference, I think.

[I have discussed Peter's points with Kev and we both agree that the "Small Press" should be reviewed in a constructive and critical manner, that is, in *Vector*. *Matrix* will continue to report the news about the "Small Press" and I have written to Chris Hart, who edited *The Pseudo Nymph*, about this. In the meantime, here are the addresses of a few of the more SF oriented alternatives to *Interzone*:

- ✓ *BBR* (Chris Reed, PO Box 625, Sheffield S1 3GY £11/4 issues. New subscribers will receive the back issue of their choice).
- ✓ *New Moon* (Trevor Jones, 1 Ravenshoe, Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 8DE £9/4 issues).
- ✓ *Exuberance* (Jason Smith, 34 Croft Close, Chipperfield, Herts. D4 9PA £6.50/4 issues).
- ✓ *Scheherazade* (Liz Coulahan, St Ives, Maypole Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 1HL £1.99/issue, £7.50/4 issues) Interviews, fiction, fables.
- ✓ *Far Point* (Victoria Publications, PO Box 47, Grantham, Lincs. NG31 8RJ £11/6 bi-monthly copies plus free SF novel from extensive list). SF/F fiction.
- ✓ *Aurigues* (Nik Morton, 48 Anglesey Road, Alberstone, Gosport, Hants. PO12 2EQ £4/4 issues) SF/F/Psychological Terror stories and poems.
- ✓ *Peeping Tom* (David Bell, 15 Nottingham Road, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire LE65 5DJ £1.80/issue, £6.50/4 issues) Quarterly macabre Horror and Fantasy magazine).

## Fanzines

Terry Hunt

Re: Nicholas. Gosh, yes! Dave Bell and I were terribly remiss in not reading the parts of Joseph Nicholas' letter that you didn't print, but I wish he'd addressed himself more pertinently to the parts of ours that you did.

Dave's reference to *FTT* as "his" (Joseph's) is in context merely economical writing, not a suggestion that Joseph is its sole editor, and the precise circumstances by which he was sent Dave's *Real Soon Now* scarcely matter. These quibbles serve merely to obscure the real point: that having received and presumably read a recent fanzine with significant filk content, Joseph still categorically asserted that filkers, among others, don't produce — or by implication contribute to — fanzines. That Dave "eventually" ceased responding to *FTT* is hardly evidence of general fanzine inactivity (fanzinac?) on his part: perhaps he just didn't find *FTT* to his taste.

I can't think what my "very peculiar ideas" are: my interpretation of the terms "community awareness" and "collective endeavour" seemed fairly straightforward at the time. What on Earth does Joseph (or, as he would evidently prefer, Nicholas) think that I think that he meant by them? (*Arooba! Arooba!* Recursion warning! Insert damping rods immediately!) As to being out-of-date about Joseph (so it is, I'm not going to get snooty), I plead guilty. Melud, and I ask for a count of overheated metaphor to be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, how long he hasn't written fanzine reviews for isn't quite relevant. I did say "...from my first encounter with Joseph...", and had in mind a particularly — and in my view unnecessarily — vitriolic and scatological fanzine review panel at Novacon 8, plus other and subsequent oral pronouncements heard at first, second or third hand. More recent fanish gub ((this is not a typo)) had failed to convey any marked realignment, but if Joseph's attitude to tyro fanzine editors has indeed become mellow and more constructive, why, then, I can only applaud.

All this strayed rather far from Michael Ashley and Nicholas's original points of discussion; whether and why fanzine fandom is in decline. I suspect that its activity may be cyclical, so it rather depends on what comparison periods you select, but a relative decline seems natural and predictable. Fanzines are in large measure a form of communication, and regardless of what former golden age you choose as a benchmark, communication (including travel) is now easier and more diverse, and fans in general more affluent. Where once we met rarely and perforce corresponded postally, we now have umpteen conventions at home and abroad (hence also umpteen committee meetings to plan them), and may converse via telephone, fax, computer net, CB radio and doubtless many other means (suggestions on a postcard, please...) (and this is not a typo either — ed).

And if fanzine fandom does contract, does it matter? The way certain people go on, you'd think its maintenance was a moral obligation, but fanzine fanaticism is only a means to ends, not least the pleasure it affords. If you get more enjoyment from doing something else, then why not do it instead? After all, even reading SF is not actually compulsory.

This leads me back to an aspect of Michael's original article I'd like to take issue with. At one point, he alludes to a fanzine having been "more or less unreadable due to terrible duplicating" — in other words, poor production. On the next page, he both quotes and makes some pretty offensive remarks about on-runners in general and "techies" in particular. But what are on-running and "tech" if not conventions' equivalents of editing and production?

Perhaps Michael (and quotee Nigel E Richardson) don't like attending conventions, but a hell of a lot of people do, so it's fortunate that a few of them are also willing to plan and run the events. I've been to several dozen; I've even started to help run the odd one myself in a modest way, and "joyless weekend bureaucrats, control freaks and jowls" are not images I recognise from either side of the (actually imaginary) fence.

Any medium is ideally invisible, so as not to interfere with the message it carries. (If someone wants to quote "The medium is the message", I hope they'll go on to explain what it's supposed to mean.) You only notice editing and production or on-running and tech when they're bad: I see nothing wrong with trying to make them as good as possible, and if a forum like *Conrunner* helps, then fine. That it's a "fanzine" and Michael and Nigel are "fans" doesn't mean it's aimed at entertaining them in particular; neither would anyone expect them to share the interest that, say Tim Illingworth and I might find in a railway journal, or that Ken Lake and I (and I — ed) would have in both a stamp magazine and recent proceedings in Southwark Crown Court. Having earlier lambasted Nicholas for allegedly thinking that specialised fanaticisms are mutually exclusive, Michael seems on thin ice with his characterisations of *Conrunner*'s contributors as "dim and literal-minded plodders" and a "lot of intellectual donkeys".

If Michael or Nigel ever do find themselves on stage at a con, I hope they'll reflect on just how ramshackle most con sites are in comparison to, say, the average rock venue where the "techies" are professionals, and that "Tech Ops" is responsible for more than merely making sure that they can be seen, heard and have something to sit on. PA systems have rather a lot of electricity going through them, lighting rigs are both high and heavy, and fire exits all too often turn out to be blocked or locked when a despised "techie" checks them. "That cretinous burbling about tech ops ... that infests *Conrunner*" might help to save their ungrateful lives.

No, I'm not a "techie". But I appreciate what they do.

David Clayton, 18 Elizabeth Street, Denton

Do you "sell" the chat-info section with reviews, etc on its own or is it tied into membership? Generally, [the BSFA is] an amazing organisation providing vast amounts of valuable information for fans or writers. It makes the *Sunday Times* look anorexic!

Alison Cook, 52 Woodhill Drive, Grove, Oxon OX12 0DF

This year an epoch of the BSFA closes — the bi-monthly mailing sessions. It is very difficult to find out from Keith Freeman how long he has been their organiser, but I think it is about twenty years. Not only does he receive and organise the mailings, deal with membership lists and drag in money with "subdued" notices, he also posts it one (and in recent times two) weekends every other month. Whereas other collators (myself included, I'm ashamed to say) have allowed themselves to be ill or otherwise engaged or even downright disinclined to go to a mailing, Keith doggedly carries on.

Without him, the BSFA would have folded years ago. Editors come and go, but Keith keeps going. The problem is, he does all this in such a quiet unassuming manner, that I am afraid his enormous contribution will go unrecognised and overlooked.

Wouldn't it be nice if the BSFA (for example) could scrape together enough funds to host him and his wife Wendy (without whose support he would have given it up) at next year's Eastercon and give him something to mark the occasion? I think it is due.

Steve Grover, 10 Seyton Lane, East Kilbride G74 4LJ

Unlike Syd Foster, I will not be leaving the BSFA over the *Million* issue (it never even occurred to me), but, after a great deal of unnecessary shit from David Pringle, I have already cashed in my long-standing subscription to *IZ*. (*Million* was not the only reason, but the full story is too long to detail here).

Presumably, Syd Foster is the "other subscriber" referred to by David Pringle during our recent acrimonious chat. Apparently, Syd and I are the only people, of all the thousands who read *Interzone*, who could be bothered to complain in anything like forceful terms. Is it any wonder then that Mr Pringle has changed his attitude not one iota and remains convinced that what he did was perfectly right and proper?

Like Syd, I find it amazing and dispiriting that such a tiny proportion of the 1000+ BSFA members could be bothered to tell Mr Pringle what he should do with his palmed-off *Millions* and his arrogant, condescending and contrived explanations. Is it just apathy, or a facet of that which allows the British to queue endlessly without a murmur and forbids any expression of disapproval beyond an embarrassed cough? Or are Syd and I really the only people who found *Million* objectionable? I would honestly like to know the answer to that one.

(WARNING: Mr Pringle's first line of defence is to accuse any critic of being a Sour Grapes Artist ie someone who holds a grudge because their fiction submissions have been rejected. Just so you know).

Chris Bailey, 52 Druids Walk, Didcot, Oxon OX11 7PF

Fellow member Syd Foster appears to be sucking a right face full of unsweetened lemons, regarding his letter concerning the "Million" affair. I can sympathise with his state of depression, as I myself suffer greatly at times from this very complaint, but I don't like the way Syd appears to slag off the entire BSFA, lock stock and barrel over the unfortunate loss of *Focus* from the most recent BSFA mailings, or the lack of certain information concerning his own pet interests. I've been a regular paid-up member since February 1986, and apart from one or two minor complaints, I have nothing but praise for the hard-working, whole-hearted, purely voluntary and determined efforts of past and present editors and contributors of *Matrix*, *Vector*, *Paperback Inferno* and *Focus*. It wasn't that long ago when *Matrix* itself was simply a collection of stapled together, photocopied A4 pages, but it was still full of interesting sci-fi/fantasy related topics, letters and various articles. The BSFA is at best only the sum of its parts ie its *Members* and it is through the Members' contributions that it has reached its present successful state (with much room for further improvement), although *more* members could themselves help to enormously improve matters by contributing a letter or three once in a blue moon. If Syd is that worried about reading about the lack of his own interests, they why doesn't he make a few regular informed and informative contributions of his own? BSFA members can only read about specialised/general information on any sci-fi/fantasy or fandom subjects if someone submits it in the first place. So let's have *less* whingeing, and *more* action from everyone...

Andy Sawyer, 1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT

I was a bit surprised to read about Syd Foster's anger over my apparent lack of coverage of the "Million" affair — though he obviously wasn't quite incensed enough to write to me about it. My "lack of coverage" boils down to this:-

In *Paperback Inferno* 92, I featured Andy Mills's usual *Interzone* review in which he commented critically on the publication of *Million* inside an *Interzone* cover, ending his review "I cannot recommend that you purchase *IZ* 51". I sent a copy

of his review to David Pringle, who responded with a lengthy justification of his action which I printed alongside. I waited for the response from the readership, which would enable me to pontificate editorially and perhaps end up head-hunted by one of the weightier Sunday papers to write steaming leaders. There was no response. Only Andy Mills himself replied in time for *Paperback Inferno* 93, stating that David Pringle's various statements on the matter failed to convince him and suggesting that other *Paperback Inferno* readers comment. The result of this was a short letter from Steve Grover in *Paperback Inferno* 94 criticising "the editorial arrogance and smug complacency that have been displayed by *IZ*'s editorial staff over the last few years".

It might be noted that both Andy and Steve are associated with *Paperback Inferno* in various ways.

Given this apparent lack of interest, and that by then six months had passed since the offending issue, it seemed that the best thing to do was leave any ensuing discussion to lie between David Pringle and his subscribers (of which I am one, as I said several times). In hindsight, I could have highlighted the issue more in terms of re-structuring what was printed where and banging in a few shock-horror headlines, but I felt (and feel) that what was at stake was nothing more sinister than an error of judgement. Once noted, and discussed, I personally did not feel that it was a cause worthy of a major crusade, particularly given that no aggrieved parties — including Syd Foster himself — (other than the above-mentioned) — took their feelings to *Paperback Inferno*. "Far too little space"? I published a critical comment in a review, the editor's reply, and a unanimously critical response to that reply. It is a shame, perhaps, that "unanimous", in this context, means two.

Jim England, Rose Lea, The Compa, Kinver, Stourbridge DY7 6HT

What are the facts about *Focus*? We have been told that its editor, Cecil Nurse, has had "problems". Tense, nervous headaches? Clinical depression? Gafiation? Lack of help from others or lack of material to publish? If we aren't told, we can't help. Presumably Cecil volunteered for the job and doesn't have a "dog in the manger" attitude. It would be nice to know if *Focus* will ever appear again. If so, when? If not, why not?

As for *Paperback Inferno*, I've never liked that title, with its nasty associations. It seems lately to review great numbers of books already reviewed in *Vector*. This can be interesting when the books are good, but is wasteful of time and space when they are bad. Perhaps the two magazines could merge and the space saved could be utilised for longer reviews of the best books or reviews of them by two reviewers. But I feel that *Focus* should not be allowed to perish. As Peter Tennant suggests, it need only be published annually, but should publish Orbiter stories.

Helen Bland, Edinburgh

Syd Foster is right to attack *Interzone* over the *Million* issue, it was a disgrace, but as a reader of several British magazines, I take his reference to "Our National SF Magazine" as a sign of his narrowmindedness, and as the effective shooting of his own foot. Similarly, his petty sniping at the BSFA leads me to suggest that his won't be a huge loss, and maybe he could set up home with Mic Rogers? The BSFA has faults, there are too many types, and the Wingrove affair was overblown; and on the other hand abusive letters don't solve anything; I certainly don't get drunk at cons, a few people may do so, the *Matrix* reports don't usually say so; and *Focus* came out twice last year, so Syd obviously doesn't need it that much if he can't recall those. So the sooner he takes his petty prejudices away with him the better, I say. The rest of us have real SF to discuss.

I couldn't quite see the point of the "Music and SF" section. In recent years, popular music has become an integral part of the cultural extrapolation of SF, either as central device or as background noise. Many SF fans are enthusiastic fans of all kinds of music, and I was surprised to see that none of the BSFA's most vociferous music fans seemed to have been consulted on this piece. Where was Michael Ashley, Joseph Nicholson, Kev McVeigh, Gwyneth Jones, David Wingrove, Nic Farey, David V Barrett, Jenny Jones, John D Owen, MJ Simpson or Linda Krawczyk? Why no mention of *In Dreams*, the anthology edited by Paul J McAuley with Kim Newman or the thousands of rock bands with SF names? No Duran Duran, Heaven 17, Galaxie 500, Marillion, Wasp Factory or Mona Lisa Overdrive. Surely the Hawkwind/Moorcock links are amongst the most obvious, along with the other rock artists to have written SF novels: Nick Cave, Simon Leonard, Mick Farren. Did you know that Jonathan Carroll is related to Steve Reich? That Ken Cheslin's son plays bass in Ned's Atomic Dustbin or that Dave Langford's brother Jon is a member of The Mekons?

To have produced such a thin piece on such a wide subject fails to do justice to the essence of National Music Day [June 28] which was to celebrate this. Personally, I think much SF has done music as a whole a disservice by clumsy name-dropping, stereotyping and dated fixation, although "From the Mars Hotel"

was a pleasant whimsy with a solid twist, Norman Spinrad's sexist trash *Little Heres*, and even the normally cool John Shirley in *Transmaniac*. On the other hand, Lewis Shiner's *Desired Cities of the Heart* has one of the best depictions of a rock show in SF, whilst his *Slam* suggests that he is as up to date as it is possible to get. Lucius Shepard has written several successful music stories, as has Paul De Filippo, and who could neglect Howard Waldrop in this context? Unfortunately, too many people do neglect Carter Scholz, who has written excellent stories invoking new music (like Reich, and maybe Philip Glass). Just my opinion, but it is important to a lot of people. Thank you.

Kevin McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF  
Writing purely as an ordinary BSFA member, I have to say that Dave Gillon is wrong. The BSFA is not a "SCIENCE fiction association", it is a SCIENCE FICTION Association. The difference is significant.

It has long been accepted that SF is more than simply fiction about science. It is even fair to say that SF is not even about technology. What it more frequently is, is fiction invoking science and technology as icons, as structural forms, and as devices and conceits. Dan Simmons's magnificent *Hyperion Cantos*, for instance, uses fatline communication, ftl space travel, matter transport, AIs and implants amongst other talismans of classic SF, but it is about religion, art, political manoeuvring and love. As Arthur C Clarke says "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" and Simmons makes no attempt to justify his conceits. Indeed, for him to have done so would not only have multiplied the length of an already wordy novel several times, but would have severely disrupted the novel's rhythm and tempo.

At another point on the SF compass, we find that "hard" SF which does take time out to explain its scientific premises. Stephen Baxter's *Rafi*, for instance, a novel which relies on the novelist-as-god changing one physical property of nature and hanging a plot on it. In this case (and it is an old, old trick), gravity is a million times stronger and the author has great fun with the advantages of this. What he neglects is the already known effects of high "g" on human cells. In other words, he ignores inconvenient science even in major details and basic principles.

On the whole, SF does science poorly — it either gets it completely wrong, or ignores things which won't fit, or lectures the reader via an ignorant character, often clumsily. Does this matter? Yes and no. Authors as disparate as Greg Bear and Geoff Ryman have argued that SF criticism allows SF to do science badly, and I agree, though there are more important aspects than scientific detail. The attention to scientific rigour should be as strong as that given to historical veracity, political background, arts, sport and any other element of the novel. If a scientific gimmick is the raison d'être of the story, it is likely to be a poor story. If the response to that gimmick is the focus, then who knows.

That deals with the fiction, what about the real world? Is space relevant any more? Communication satellites give us ... soap operas and game shows. Weather forecasting? Remember Mr Fish's hurricane? What about the starving, sick, homeless or unemployed. How would a UK space program benefit them?

Science is morally neutral. Smallpox vaccine or DDT, electricity or semtex. Scientists and their paymasters change that. A cure for cancer or AIDS or M.E. would be great, a further splitting of the atom is merely interesting.

I take issue also with the assertion that this is the century of social change driven by technological progress. Surely the 19th century was the era of change? Canal and railway networks, steam ships and factories brought cities into being (such as Birmingham). And with these upheavals came major changes — political Emancipation, social conscience, the end of slavery. Far less has changed since World War I than between Waterloo and World War I. The quality of life has improved with electricity, plumbing and motor cars (all begun last century), but the social structures remain, and are now being re-emphasised as the poverty gap grows. An example? For years, blacks have been beaten regularly by the Los Angeles police (or some of them, at least). Technology made no difference in Rodney King's case.

I'm not anti-science, I'm simply demanding that it sees the real world, and acts accordingly. Dave Gillon obviously lives in a fantasy world, I'm afraid.



## BSFA: Quo Vadis?

First we have Eric Bentcliffe's piece reprinted from his "File 13" Column in Vector 2.

### Plus ça Change...

...In other words, fandom is just too esoteric, the man says. And he has a point.

I can well imagine this correspondent's dilemma at being confronted with material about fans rather than SF, because for several years Terry Jeeves and myself have put out just such a magazine as the one which has incurred our friend's wrath. And, from time to time, a plaintive cry of "...but what it got to do with SF" has been heard from a new subscriber.

The facts of the matter are that SF Fandom, like any other hobby, is a very diverse thing. Many of the fans have been around for quite a number of years, and whilst most of them still read SF, they have, understandably, got a little tired of talking about it — and writing about it. Fandom, for them, is more of a "social" organisation than a media for discussion SF. And, if you care to think about it, you will realise that this is true of any hobby ... one starts out by discovering one mutual interest and seeking other people who also have this interest, and then goes on to find out if they have other mutual interests.

You start out by wanting to talk about SF with someone who also is fond of the genre — you go on from there by wanting to find out what this (these) other people are like, what their other interests are, whether or not they have similar tastes to yours, and so on.

That SF fandom can provide you with an interesting and worthwhile hobby, I can testify personally, and one that it is well worth the time and trouble incurred to find out more about. It is one of the truly international hobby-fields, one in which you can correspond and meet with people of most nationalities and in which race, politics, and religion are no barrier.

But to phrase a brief answer to the query posed in the letter above ... Science Fiction Fandom has many facets, and one can be slightly "dazzled" at first contact, however it is well worth the trouble of examining more closely. The BSFA exists, of course, to help those of you who are new to fandom with your "examination".

Ken Lake comments on the future of the BSFA, note please that he (rather sensibly) uses "his" in place of the cumbersome his/hers.

### Dreams of Empire

While we should welcome Kevin McVeigh's attempt to sketch out the aims and successes — and shortcomings — of the BSFA, the simple answer to the question "What purpose does the BSFA serve?" is: to satisfy its members. If it fails to do this, its failure is complete, and the fact that membership stays pretty well static is — despite the occasional vendettas of the Mic Rogers of this world — an indication that by and large most of the people are happy most of the time. But do they really know what they want, and does the leadership know how to give it to them? There's many a slip 'twixt launch and touchdown: are we riding a Sputnik or an Apollo 13?

Let's take each aspect as Kevin did in *Matrix* 99, starting with the magazines. These depend on three factors: cost to produce (as I said in that same issue, the greater the membership, the lower the unit cost and the greater the chance to increase size and improve quality), the editors (take a look back over the past 99 issues and you'll see how this immediately affects the whole feel and appeal of each of our publications), and the membership feedback (unless people provide stuff to print, the editor is forced to rely on his own work, and that can never be a good thing). Yet we may even differ on such critical points as: should we cram stuff in or leave lots of white space "for artistic effect" and should we have irrelevant snafu artwork slammed into any old spot to fill a column, should we combine two or more magazines (for example, putting the *Vector* and *PI* reviews in one magazine, and the *Vector* articles into *Matrix* along with the other "media" ones). All these points are open to debate — if we fail to address them, we can't blame the editor for following his own style.

How many of us even know that a BSFA library existed until this Foundation fuss blew up? How many know how to access it, and how many feel it should never have been put into the hands of the Foundation? How can we improve it — or do we need it at all? What use does the BSFA itself make of it, and why not? Kevin is quite right to stress that SF just isn't generally available — although this may improve if/when EC regulations stop the direct import and general sale of overseas editions — but to what extent does the BSFA library contribute

anything at all to this problem so far as the average member is concerned, and what does that member want it to do for him?

I was afraid we'd get bogged down in "what is fandom?" The answer is so simple yet everyone ignores it: fandom is any gathering, in person or spirit, of any group of people who take their inspiration from their basic interest in some aspect of SF/Fantasy. What this or that fan does with this — conning, conning, conning, D&D, Trekker and Towellie meets, pubbing their ish, bibbing at the Tun, locking or simply kvetching about the BSFA's activities and aims — is irrelevant: fans join the BSFA to have their dreams fulfilled; the BSFA must uncover those dreams, seek to fulfil them, or tell this or that group of fans that frankly, my dear, we don't give a damn so piss off and do your thing on your own. You gain some, you lose some — people are always quitting because there isn't enough attention paid to this or that aspect of fandom, but others come along because either they feel at home in the organisations's current matrix or they expect and hope to change it.

The BSFA has never been static: despite its published aims, it has developed along lines the members have demanded, and it will continue to do so, as does any other "live" organisation. If the non-London fans feel isolated, the BSFA must find ways of both drawing them in and encouraging them to organise locally; if members demanded reviews of all the overseas SF available through specialist importers, the BSFA would have to persuade those importers to supply review copies — and believe me, that would be a real eye-opener to those who, like Mic, think they can find it all at the local library or WH Smith's.

Key mentions fannish apathy; he doesn't dwell on directly anti-fannish activities like Jo Nicholas' constant sniping at any kind of fanzine of which he disapproves, but I believe that is important too, for above all else the BSFA must be a means of reconciliation, a bringing together of diverse opinions and desires with a view to giving everyone what they want and need, not to enforce some doctrinaire dogma of politically-correct fannish behaviour and production upon our diversity. We all know that activities involving constant censorship and discouragement have driven hordes of former members away: if the PC types insist on exercising their KTF (Kill the Fuckers) proclivities, let them go away and fight it out in their own zines, not seek to involve fandom and so split it asunder.

Key now reaches the quarter-century-old objectives of the founders and I believe they deserve a careful examination. We certainly don't promote or encourage the writing and publishing of SF now, even if we did in the past: with the diminution of regular commercial serial publications, why haven't we got a fiction zine that actually pays commercial rates to contributors? I am not a fiction editor, but I know good writing when I see it; if I were not disappearing on my eternal Bummel, I'd offer to edit a fictionzine for the BSFA!

The aim of heightening public knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of SF has again been a total flop. We do it for our members, especially through critical reviews and occasionally interviews, but none of our hard work gets through to the general public. Our zines bear notional cover prices — how many are actually sold to non-members, and through which outlets, and why isn't this number multiplied a hundredfold when we consider the demand out there for information and guidance?

There are many dealers' lists around, some — like Mike Don's excellent *Dreamberry Wine* — containing not only offers of new and secondhand books but providing reviews and a live lettercolumn; why isn't the BSFA collaborating with all these hardworking people? We could subsidise their zines, even incorporate them into our own costfree, making the BSFA for the first time ever a real marketplace for the buying and selling of actual SF!

The BSFA's mission to help fans meet each other and authors is to some extent served by the Eastercon and by local group meetings — are we all agreed that this is far too little? Why doesn't the BSFA offer a conrunning facility for every con, enlisting the organisers into a better-for-all umbrella organisation that would use its enlarged muscle to improve every con, attract more and better guests and facilities, perhaps rationalise a little by suppressing the occasional dilution of fannish activity and response into some of the less successful small cons?

How about the promotion of lectures, courses and discussions anyway? Does it happen? Can it be improved? Do we want it, and what do we want from it? Let's hear the voice of fandom raised here, as in all these other aspects, telling the Top People what they really want.

To maintain libraries, and to publish and print books, pamphlets and articles, to establish and maintain scholarships, and provide grants, prizes and financial assistance... Well, yes, it sounds lovely, doesn't it? Did it ever happen? Of course not: we are far too few and too penurious because we are too few, to keep anything like this going or even to initiate it. My last piece dealt with this

problem: big may not be beautiful but when it comes to financing things, it's essential and it's efficient in the right hands. As for investment and loans, please, don't make me laugh — it hurts. We have failed fandom and the general public, and we've failed because we think small and we seem to like it that way.

Look, either we announce publicly that all these grandiose aims are pie in the sky, and we scrap them and turn to something we can actually do with under 1000 members (which isn't much) or we espouse all those aims with fervour and set out to gather the membership that enables us to fulfil them. My vote goes for active, aggressive, skillfully directed propaganda, for direct enlistment campaigns, for infiltration of things like local government councils' fundraising and funding committees: we are no less a minority interest than any other, and we're a damn sight brighter and more motivated than most — why are we so timid? Why should we, as Key begs us, "for present purposes ... ignore those" aims that we have failed to even embark upon, with or without split infinitives? Key calls for dropping all the "pompous" and "naive" aims: I call for their revival and the pursuit of excellence.

Key then takes a look at our publications. I agree with all he says about *Matrix*: it's the basic multipurpose vehicle for fandom, and for that reason it ought to be five times the size and ten times as bright. *Vector* has been attacked by one Gillian Rooke for its tone: I find this amazing for it speaks with many voices, at many levels, in many registers, for many contributors, to all of us, and by and large does it very well; ok, so I feel there's been an awful lot of wasted space in it in the past, and some very unfortunately experiments in typesetting and paste-up, but it's noticeable how Katie Cary has jam-packed it with anguished responses from readers to just one tiny question — our hobby is full of such questions, and *Vector* needs far more pages adequately to air them for us and with us and through us.

*Paperback Inferno* is a monument to the activity and good sense of Andy Sawyer, whose activities we can hardly stand to lose: I've suggested higher up how the functions of these zines might be changed, and if we can't find an equally good replacement for Andy, then I would argue very strongly for the disappearance of the artificial split between hardcover and paperback books, and for the separation of all reviewing from the hard-hitting and fascinating non-review contents of *Vector*, freeing that zine for expansion. Please understand that this is not Empire-building: rather than the usually ineffectual editorship-sharing we have seen from time to time, we need separate editors for separate functions, as we have had for reviews and other material in *Vector*.

Why has *Focus* faced such apathy? I suggest that once you have read all the issues to date, you know all there is to be taught to relative beginners about writing SF, and that there are many more publications, like the excellent *Writers News*, for those who have graduated from kindergarten and want to carry on learning about writing and publishing. *Focus* could return to publishing fiction — but paying for it! Yet Key proposes we scrub *Focus* because we can't afford to make it better: sure, we could scrub the whole BSFA for that reason, but surely that's outside our remit? We're here, let's do it right, not whinge our way out of this and that responsibility to our members!

*Orbiter* is damned hard work, and those who contribute are owed a real debt of gratitude — but even there we find far too much kvetching, backbiting, blind-leading-the-blind criticisms of this or that piece of fiction on PC or deconstructionist or other philosophical grounds, not to mention sheer envy and stupidity. Could we not perhaps supply an expert panel of published writers to pass comment on all *Orbiter* contributions? That way at least those who send in their pretence efforts would have some confidence in the opinions passed upon them.

Key would have us abandon scholarships, grants, publishing books ... and wants us to set up subcommittees to decide whether to publish pamphlets and, if so, on what subjects. This is not only defeatist, it's putting cart before horse. Pamphletwise, we should be crying out for manuscripts, submitting absolutely everything we get to an expert — and small — committee, and getting on with publication. Out among the membership there are many with worthwhile ideas for the good of our trade and hobby who could and would write useful pamphlets and booklets if only they felt there was a body waiting to consider them, ask for improvements, make constructive suggestions, and then, come what may, publish them, sell them, and publicise them countrywide through all possible media and outlets. I have been doing this for thirty years in my specialist field; I have never heard of a body setting itself up to ask what sort of things needs to be written and then approaching me and my colleagues to write for them — even the most hidebound Establishment body in my field has announced its intention of publishing whatever meets its standards, and has done so based on what it has received. I have been writing over 150 articles a year, getting no more than 5% rejected, if that, and finding my own markets for them all, in the sense of examining each magazine and writing to suit the readership: no editor has ever

held his horses till he could provide potential authors with a plan of what he wants! (I have also edited magazines, so know this field from both ends).

Kev next picks out a few writers as examples of high quality writing. We may agree with his choice or not, but the point has been missed: people want to read things that interest, amuse or frighten them — they seek escapism between the covers of their chosen fiction. They take first to the lowest common denominator of fantasy and SF, possibly not even aware that this is what they are reading, and publishers know damn well that without this basic — and very large — market they will go bust. The appearance of "fine literature" in our genres depends upon publishers being able to subsidise small printings from the profit they reap from the popular writers, and we ignore this simple fact of life and peril of destroying the genres themselves. The stupidest thing we can do is to sneer at those whose appreciation of our literature is still at the level we regard as crap; we too all read crap first, and only gradually came to appreciate something better. Never condemn cheap literature — without it, good literature remains unpublished, or lurks in the "little magazines" earning its skilful creators little or nothing and driving them into more lucrative writing in other genres.

I do not want this contribution to sound like an attack on Kev; from this point onwards he has many good ideas, useful hints and important and worthwhile requests for help and advice. His survey, setting aside its defeatism, is well worth our attention — I felt it important enough to spend no little time writing this expansion of his ideas, and I am sure I am not alone in wanting to help the BSFA expand and improve itself.

But we must somehow cut down on those locs and contrivs which are aimed solely at undermining others' valid arguments and proposals for purely PC or personal reasons. We must enlarge the well of skills we can call upon, and the circle of members whose wants we exist to serve. There is never a better time to launch a revivification procedure on any organisation than the time when good and true people come together to do it, regardless of whether that be in a recession, under a dictatorship (long live samizdat!), in boomtimes when everyone's too busy enjoying their good fortune to want to help, or on the day of atonement or for that matter of Armageddon.

When Kev presented his *Empire Dreams*, I know that he was not dreaming of Empire-building: he was calling for all hands to the pumps, not for a centralised BSFA Committee ceding all rights to Kev McVeigh! This Empire belongs to us all: let's build one we can be proud to live in, and to serve.

*Maureen Speller, ex-BSFA coordinator and Matrix editor still has plenty to say about what we all should be doing:*

## Red Shift Revisited

In an ideal world, Mic Rogers would never have been allowed to get away with questioning the point of an organisation without being required to address that organisation directly on the matter as well. It's not so much Mic's opinions that I object to, though she has made far too much mileage out of what history has turned into a relatively trivial incident, as the fact that she chose to express them in an arena where, as I'm sure she knows very well, most BSFA members are unlikely to see them, and to an audience which she might guess would be sympathetic to her complaints. Be all that as it may, Mic has raised some pertinent questions about the existence of the BSFA, questions which need to be urgently addressed by the Committee and the membership together. And this time, unlike so many others, the questions have got to be answered properly if the BSFA is to continue any meaningful existence.

Kev McVeigh's article in *Matrix* 99 strikes a twin note of hope and despair. Hope, in that it's tempting to believe that this time we can get it all sorted out, and despair, as in "oh, god, here we go again". It's curious, considering that we are supposed to be redundant, how the BSFA still inspires violent responses for and against, and how even the most disaffected cannot forbear from discussing it. In the past, terrible arguments erupted over the best way to run the BSFA, as successive teams of Young Turks toppled the Boring Old Farts, convinced that they could do it better, whatever "it" might be. Surveying the unfilled accounts and the poor reputation of the organisation, I have wondered whether this was a good thing, but witnessing the latest feeble demonstrations of support and displeasure, I long for the days when people felt sufficiently concerned to mount a takeover bid. Where has all that passion and energy gone? It's been replaced by a complacency which leaves people with only the strength to lob the odd letter in the Committee's direction, explaining where everything has gone wrong, but showing no inclination to participate in rectifying it.

There was a moment, during the darkest period of my time as Co-ordinator, when I wondered whether it wouldn't be better just to kill off the BSFA altogether. No matter what we did, no-one seemed satisfied. Indeed, it was a mystery to me why people bothered even to renew their subscriptions when it seemed that nothing

we did in any way pleased them. I often suspected that they stayed simply in order to continue sticking in the knives. SF fans like easy targets and what better to continue funding your very own scapegoat? If anything goes wrong — blame it on the BSFA.

To be scrupulously fair, some members were giving earnest thought to what we should be doing. I received the most extraordinary suggestions as how we could diversify our activities, with not a thought given as to how we would implement these ideas, nor finance them. Turning the BSFA into a film company was popular. Instantly, overnight, we were to be up there with Lucasfilms, slogging it out on approximately £2000, minus equipment and know-how, but making proper SF films. Or what about publishing, which usually boiled down to us publishing the suggestor's hot SF novel which ten publishers had already turned down. My own survey also made gloomy reading "Would you like regional meetings?", "Yes", "Would you be willing to help organise them?" "No, it's the Committee's job to do that." "Are you prepared to help the BSFA at all?" "No".

I was forced to conclude that the collective BSFA psyche is characterised by stupidity and selfishness. The average BSFA member wants everything handed to him/her on a plate. S/he never stops to think about how anything is achieved but like a cuckoo gaping in the nest, calls relentlessly for more and better. S/he complains if things aren't done, but rarely does s/he offer to help.

But by far the biggest problem that this organisation has is that it hasn't got the faintest idea what it's doing, and worse still that a good percentage of its members don't really care so long as it does what they want it to do. I'm not so naive as to believe that altruism is alive and well in modern Britain, but it disturbs me, that in joining an organisation, many of the members are engaged in a one-way "gimme, gimme" transaction.

Apart from being a film company, a publishing company, a professional organisation for authors (who presumably haven't got the nous to set one up themselves), a group dedicated to establishing colonies on the moon and all those other frightfully elegant but entirely unrealistic things that people have suggested, what should the BSFA be doing? Looking at recent discussions it was clear that the BSFA means a lot of different things to different people.

Before the 1979 Worldcon in Brighton, fandom was a much smaller place. Fans met perhaps once a year at the Eastercon and mostly kept in touch by letter and fanzine. In those days, the BSFA served as what Vinc Clarke most graphically called a beacon for potential fans, something which might bring them into contact with like-minded others. Whilst this is still true, the context has obviously changed considerably.

Vinc is talking about a time when SF and its readers were both at a premium and one fell upon a fellow reader/fan like a thirsty man coming to an oasis. John D Owen describes the BSFA as the "organisational shell around fandom, attracting in people from the SF consuming public". Marry those two descriptions and we could be looking at a draft guideline for the BSFA's aims, something which would nicely fulfil clauses i and ii, as quoted by Kev McVeigh.

But now we see a dichotomy developing between "fan" and "reader". I take a "fan" to be anyone who shows more commitment than simply staggering into W H Smith's once in a while, whether it be in actively seeking information about their favourite reading material or attending every event in sight. However, it's clear from years of correspondence that "fan" has acquired a pejorative flavour. "Fans", it is darkly hinted, do so many weird things, they can't possibly be interested in the literature. Which is a curious attitude as some of those people most passionately interested in SF as a literary genre are those very people who produce fanzines, write for apas, carry out a myriad of other non-reading activities. I'm proud to count myself among them.

I firmly believe that in more people the disapproval stems as much as anything from a fear that they will be sucked into fandom against their will, rather like discovering that you best friend has become a born-again religious fundamental — is it contagious, will I be converted?

But before recoiling in horror at the thought that these two-headed beasts are moving among you, yes, even that nice Maureen Speller, think on this. "Fans", particularly the pejorative sort, have one great virtue — they are "doers". They're the sort of people who, given an idea, have carried it out while your average guy is lying in his armchair, wondering if it might work. They are the backbone of clubs, groups, societies, inside and outside the sub-culture. Through being willing to help, and through being capable of doing the job, they have a natural tendency to rise to the top of any heap. "Fans", those people so many of you don't quite approve of, are the people who keep your organisation going. What happens on the day when we finally take you at your word, move on and leave you to it. Who's going to do the work then?

You see, you are the people who suck up the considerable energy of people like myself, without replenishing it. You are the people for whom the cashed cheque is sufficient; it entitles you to take, but you do not need to give, except to explain why we aren't doing the job right. You are the people who, through your own apathy, have given us the jobs. We do them because we care about SF and believe the organisation has something to offer. You are the people who haven't time, don't know anyone (and don't want to know anyone, thank you very much), can't be bothered, think it's our job, or whatever the hundred and one excuses are. You will say why the hell should I do anything? I pay my money and I've a right to expect stuff to be sent, things to be got right. You will accuse me of being abusive, of not understanding how tough it is trying to hold down a job, raise a family, study and all the other myriad excuses on offer. But if a few of you gave a little of your time, then maybe we wouldn't be so over-stretched in the face of exactly the same problems as the rest of you.

We do have one thing in common: we are both members of the BSFA, equal in the sight of our subscriptions but both looking for different things, us and the other one thousand one hundred and ninety-eight punters who individually regard it as their society. The BSFA is a broad church, and in that will lie both its strength and its weakness, it is because of this amazing disparity that we really don't have the faintest idea where we are going, nor are we likely to settle on a clear aim while each individual is screaming "me, me, me". Better by far to settle on something which we can effectively accomplish, something which will benefit all of us to a reasonable degree.

During my time in the upper echelons of the BSFA I saw it as a service providing information on all aspects of the SF sub-culture, from books being published, through cons being organised to trying to identify all those specialist spin-off groups, from filkers to game-players. I knew we couldn't and indeed shouldn't seek to satisfy them all by doing what they do, but I saw the BSFA as a jumping-off point. It's clear that many people see it in much the same way but, because they are all jumping to different places, they assume that their interest is the BSFA's prime interest. Whilst Mic airily dismisses any need for the BSFA to supply information about fan activities as they are easy to find out about, I've had letters of gratitude from people who had attended their first con or loved their first zine and found somewhere they felt at home, thanks to the BSFA.

So, my first proposal is that the BSFA sticks to doing what it knows best — providing information. Let it see its members, as Andy Sawyer suggests in *Thingumbob* as SF readers, but let it also bear in mind that while its members may want to become active on the social side, this is not necessarily of consuming interest. *Matrix* is becoming, once again, a fanzine, rather than a SF publication, long on reports of conventions, but short of basic news and articles. The letters pages seem to be shrinking alarmingly which isn't healthy. Information about the BSFA itself is, if not disappearing, then merging into the seamless mass of text, appearing at the back of the magazine rather than prominently at the front. Of course, it is irresistible for an ex-editor to say that those who come later aren't as good, but I do feel that we should be getting more from a newsletter than endless impressions of cons. I go to cons myself and I'm sick of reading about them.

My second proposal is that the BSFA continues to provide a forum for people, not necessarily fanzine active, but as active readers to discuss the genre so dear to them. Whatever the reorganisation of the magazines brings forth, it seems more likely that we will end up with *Matrix* and a literary journal called *Vector*. I believe this restructuring of the magazines can only be a good thing. I don't deny that in my own time as Co-ordinator, I fought strenuously against it because I was unclear why people wanted this. Basically, it boiled down to us having one magazine which we could then flog on the newstands, and bye-bye any reason for having the organisation in the first place, a move which was clearly nonsensical.

Times have changed though; the vagaries of publishing have reduced the reviews sections to a complete shambles regarding hardback and paperback editions, further complicated by Chris Amies' sudden inclusion of yet more capsule paperback reviews in *Vector* involving endless duplication. It is no longer clear what goes where. I also hear that the feeling of the AGM was that the editors of *Vector* should not be aspiring for higher critical standards in the reviews and analysis, because this would alienate the membership through being too intellectual. It is surely the role of *Vector* to demonstrate that good criticism can be written in a perfectly accessible and intelligible way, without descending to a level little short of plot summaries and I am appalled that BSFA members are willing to connive in a reduction of quality.

Articles and reviews have also tacitly developed a clear line on what is "good" and what is not — i.e. hard SF is almost always a good thing, while fantasy is not, but without any coherent analysis or justification. The critical darlings are endlessly recycled when we should be giving as much time to the endless fantasy

series, which have as much popularity. If they are bad, I want to know why, not merely be told that they are. I want to be challenged, but it is a fact of the consuming society we find ourselves in that many of us are able to play to the gallery for an easy laugh, while the rest of us have become complacent and unquestioning in their attitudes. Hell's teeth, I was even able to accuse *Vector* of being boring, with all the response of a damp squib in a thunderstorm. Well, except for Colin Greenland professing satisfaction with the issue containing his interview, but, with respect to Colin, he would, wouldn't he?

Doubtless, even as I am writing this, Syd Foster's intemperate letter is raising a few giggles, but little more. While I don't follow his choleric line, and certainly wouldn't wish to be involved in an orchestrated campaign of vilification against *Interzone* and David Pringle, Syd's letter shows that we should be a lot more searching in our consideration of the genre and its activities, actively questioning rather than toeing a pre-established party line. It's true that very little has been said about the Millizone business. More could have been said, should have been said. And will anyone rise to comment on the designation of "Our National SF Magazine"? I doubt it and that's a pity.

More than anything, the BSFA needs to get its own house in order so that when people like Mic criticise us, we can proudly defend ourselves rather than shuffling our feet uneasily in the dust. Our current image is very much that of a scruffy little two-bit outfit, inefficient, tardy and generally laissez-faire. We need to change it.

We need to avoid such absurd situations as most of the membership being disenfranchised in the BSFA Award voting. We need to ensure that we no longer have magazines arriving late because there were insufficient collators. We need to be able to maintain a decent presence at a convention without having the same two people being tied to a desk all weekend. We need to advertise ourselves consistently and aggressively and convince people that we have something to offer. We need to present ourselves as being worth joining and then staying with.

We need to ensure that we have something to offer. The magazines have lately acquired a confused and tatty air that the revamp must dispel. We also need to be clear on what else we can offer BSFA members and then proceed to offer it in a methodical way. We already offer a postal writer's workshop and I trust the revamp proposed for that will bring it more firmly into the public eye. I hope the same will be true of the shy and retiring magazine chain, always assuming we still have it. We have a flourishing Information Service. The London meetings will shortly recommence (though not at the Old Coffee House, as was suggested in *Matrix* 99). But is that enough? What else can we offer?

There have been many ideas which are probably familiar to us all, including merchandising a fiction magazine, quite apart from the film-making and publishing. Whatever is carried out, can I urge that the Committee take on one thing at a time. I know from my own bitter experience that the impatience of the membership can cause the Committee to rush into things in order to show that something is happening, only to leave one or two people struggling with a huge workload that they can't possibly hope to carry out. I would urge caution and the undertaking of one project at a time, carried out with precision and completed to general satisfaction.

And I have, inevitably, to urge the members to contribute to this activity, if only an odd hour here and there. Out of the corner of my eye, I can see Ken Lake feverishly scribbling yet another letter on what the BSFA needs to do i.e. go professional and have full-time, paid editors. As I understand it, Ken's argument runs along the lines that by paying people, we will encourage them to stay longer. Quite apart from the fact that a myriad other organisations get by on an amateur basis and produce excellent publications, I must draw people's attention to the fact that, among service industries, the only one I can think of with a greater turnover among its employees than publishing is advertising. I find it unlikely that a salary, and a small salary at that, will attract people with the skills we need and willing to stay for more than a year or so — and isn't that what already happens? We need people committed to the genre, not the salary.

As Ken's most recent letter implicitly criticises me in that I am among those who have rejected his grandiose notions, let me explain why I feel we don't need to go "professional". Ken has been seduced by the idea that biggest is best, without any clear idea why we should become bigger and what we should do. In essence he is proposing that we should grow for the sake of growing, with no activity beyond that, and I can't for the life of me see why we should do this. A society can be run in a "professional" manner without paid staff. One correspondent in *Thingumbob* has suggested that the BSFA has a lifespan of about a year so far as the interest of most people is concerned. If so, is there really any point in becoming a professional organisation when we are going to have a continually shifting membership which we can't expect to maintain at a high level?

And why do we need a professional organisation for what is a hobby? Okay, so I work professionally within SF, but the bodies I turn to for professional advice are for editors and publishers generally, not for people specifically involved with SF. When most of our membership is composed of people who simply read the stuff, what on earth do they require professional representation for? Whilst I can see that "professional" gives us a warm rosy glow about our importance, I can't say that it's going to do us any good.

This is all words, of course, and words are cheap. Words fuel the BSFA, but words are just not enough. We need action as well as words and it is imperative that the Committee ensures that we get more than just words in the coming years. It is imperative that the changes they propose are seen to be carried out, to the benefit of the BSFA. At the same time, it is imperative that we, the membership, respond to good faith and help rather than hinder, or at best ignore, the effort. Are we equal to the challenge?

## Soap Box

### SF Cinema is for Kids

Chris Baker

I'm not sure exactly how I came to be interested in SF, but undoubtedly Steven Spielberg's films, the *Star Wars* trilogy and *Star Trek* played a major role. And they are good ... for children! I loved them when I was eight. I watched all the *Star Trek* episodes on tv, saw the films, saw many of Spielberg's films, saw the *Star Wars* trilogy, and I went mad over them.

As I have grown up and read widely in SF literature, unfortunately the SF at the cinema and on tv has not grown up with me. I have had to go backwards in time to discover films that keep up with SF literature and then, they only barely do the literature justice — like *2001*, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, *Solaris* and a few others. And there are only a few others.

SF cinema is regressing, not progressing.

I believe *Star Trek* and the *Star Wars* trilogy are two of the main contributors to this effect.

*Star Wars* is really a children's film with lots of action, stupid robots and basically a traditional "fairy tale" story line.

*Star Wars* took SF to the nursery where it is still trapped, despite the odd escapes (like *Total Recall*). George Lucas might enjoy reliving his childhood but did he have to take SF with him? Ever since *Star Wars* there has been a glut of SF films aimed at the youth market, many emulating *Star Wars*. And the trouble with *Star Wars* is that it is basically not very good. Yes, the special effects are good, but the plot leaves a lot to be desired and the main problem is that it was aimed at children.

*The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi* are just as bad with things reaching an all time low with the dire "Ewoks".

This type of film has now become the sort of thing that people outside the genre associate with SF. People have the impression that SF is only for children, which is not helped by the numerous pseudo SF cartoons on tv.

SF took a long time to grow up and George Lucas has done his best to prevent it.

*Star Trek* has helped with this regression, but is responsible for other things as well. For a start, it is not very good, and I'm sure lots of other people will agree. The tv series was not well made and had poor scripts. The films are slightly better, but are youth-orientated and still lack much in the scripts and plot.

Apart from this, the other problem is that it has become trapped in one of its own time warps. The whole thing has a 1960s feel about it. It should have been left after the series finished. Then people would have been able to look back and say "Oh yes, there was that quite good series *Star Trek*".

Unfortunately, *Star Trek* has become a cult and is very popular. When people think of SF, one thing they definitely know about is *Star Trek*. They have probably also heard of Trekkers and most people have the impression, rightly or wrongly, that they are a group of juvenile weirdos.

And now there's *Star Trek: The Next Generation*! Unfortunately, this has carried on in exactly the same vein as the rest of *Star Trek* and if anything, appears to be slightly worse.

This isn't the image SF should have. If we want the world outside the BSFA to become interested in SF, then this image needs to be shrugged off and the real SF

publicised. I am in complete concordance with Kev McVeigh when he states that most people do not know what SF is. And the general public cannot be blamed when most bookshops do not know if, for example, J G Ballard writes SF when half his books are categorised with SF and the other half with ordinary fiction, even though some are the same titles.

However, part of this problem is that the SF community can't really define SF itself! Fantasy now tends to be regarded under the same breath as SF, but this is really ridiculous. Fantasy is more often than not completely removed from what used to be called "Scientifiction".

Fairly recent acclaimed films have been called good SF, but really the SF in them is only a side issue to the main plot. In this category, I fit *Blade Runner*, *Alien*, *Terminator*, *Robocop*, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, *Robocop 2* and *Aliens*.

*Blade Runner*, based on the excellent Philip K Dick story "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" is basically Philip Marlowe in 2020 and offers little more than visual brilliance. I still cannot believe that the book was adapted so poorly; most of the main ideas of the book are simply not present. I realise that a book and a film will always be different simply because they utilise different media each with their own advantages and disadvantages. What annoys me is how good the film could have been if more attention had been paid to the book.

*Alien* and *Aliens* are both quite good films, but in my opinion they are not SF. They are more akin to the horror genre, playing all the time for cheap shocks and they can't even get the science right. The ever present roar of the spaceships as they move through the vacuum of space is something that annoys me immensely. What is even more amusing in the light of this is that one catchphrase for *Alien* was "In space no-one can hear you scream"! If they are to be called SF, then they are very poor SF.

Of course, the roar of spaceships is also to be found in *Star Trek*, the *Star Wars* trilogy and many other so-called SF films. SF was once called so because it contained accurate science. What has happened to these ideals?

*Terminator*, *Terminator 2*, *Robocop* and *Robocop 2* are all basically an excuse to spend lots of money using lots of lavish special effects, with a little pseudo SF plot line chucked in for good measure. All these films you go and see at the cinema, marvel at the special effects, get carried along with the story, but ultimately that's all the films are good for.

SF is in a very sorry state at the moment and the BSFA should try and do something about it. The SF literature being produced at the moment is very good, but I feel that we have reached a peak and during the '90s will descend the slippery slope on the other side unless the image of SF is improved. The reason for this bad image, I believe, is that the main image of SF comes through from films and there hasn't yet been a film to really match up to the great SF literature.

Unfortunately, I don't see this changing in the near future. If a proper SF film were made, it is unlikely that it would be successful and pull in the money ensuring that more films of its nature are made. And that would be the end for the decent SF film.

I am not going to go into my thoughts that SF and Fantasy should be classified separately. I have assumed here that SF should include Fantasy as well, but only for the ease of writing. I will simply say that things like the *Star Wars* trilogy and *Star Trek* I regard as Fantasy and like to maintain this distinction. The distinction between Fantasy and Science Fiction is as great as the distinction between Horror and Science Fiction. Of course, there are exceptions.



## Competition Corner

Roger Robinson

### Results of Matrix Competition #99

An extremely disappointing number of entrants, only 4, but their 10 attempts were all of a high standard — if a little repetitive. Four out of the ten involved *War of the Worlds* scenarios and the efficacy of 'flu jabs in the late 19th century. In runner-up place comes Anthony "Doppelganger" Shepherd with a comment he heard in the make-up room on the set of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* — "Mr Stewart, we want you to wear this toupee". But the clear winner of the £5 book token this time is Ben Jeapes with his heart-felt real life missed opportunity "JRR Tolkien burns his old notebooks instead of bequeathing them to Christopher".

### Matrix 100 Competitions

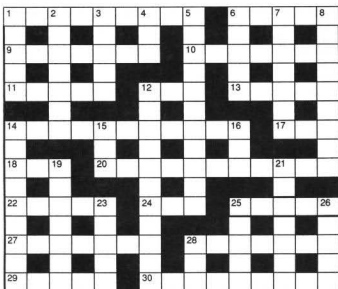
Not 100 competitions, but three, including what I hope will be a regular new feature, a cryptic SF crossword. For this I take no credit (or blame!) as it comes from John English from Brighton (thanks, John). The extra competition, and the generous prize comes from the "Glasgow in '95" committee (thanks, guys).

#### Glasgow in '95

The votes for the Worldcon site selection for 1995 will be counted in early September at Orlando and Glasgow and Atlanta are the two possible sites. The "Glasgow in '95" committee have not announced (or even finalised) their choice for the convention name. As usual, this will be announced when they win the bid. All you have to do is guess the name they will choose. Send your suggestions to me at the usual address and I will pass them to the committee. All of the correct entries will go into the hat for a draw with the first prize of a free full attending membership. Closing date is the same as for the other competitions on this page.

#### Crossword

Completed diagrams (photocopies will do) to the usual address by the date shown below. John and I would both welcome comments from successful and unsuccessful solvers.



#### Across

- 1 Bury belt and magazine (9)
- 6 Rent property; Norse god needs to get into shelter (5)
- 9 Alchemist's distillery produces beer with doctor in charge (7)
- 10 Wizard takes last of egg and a loaf (but just the crust) (7)
- 11 It follows globe in a circular path (5)
- 12 Madman goes back to find fannish London rendezvous (3)
- 13 Norse script can be directly executed by microprocessor, perhaps? (5)
- 14 Newspaper or radio transmission can prove repulsive (7,4)
- 17 Greek character becomes model to the French (3)
- 18 SF publisher of the highest quality? (3)

- 20 Grew vitally confused finding that which is as deep as escape velocity (7,4)
- 22 Albino brought back ring but lost a hundred (5)
- 24 Pratchett's nanny is soggy in the middle (3)
- 25 Gold returned in the form of a bounced cheque is a source of intense pleasure, according to Niven (5)
- 27 Choose one with mother — get the best available (7)
- 28 Time machine invented by lad in U.S. (7)
- 29 Old coin taken from one in channel (5)
- 30 Engineers in soggy boat feature in futuristic place of entertainment, according to Niven (5,4)

#### Down

- 1 I'm past the third part of Butler's Xenogenesis (5)
- 2 Shake — third British folk song took in a thousand! (7)
- 3 Worker died when buried in rubbish (5)
- 4 Sauron's cat paw, or maybe cat's head? (3)
- 5 What Scotty does when fuddled in east with green gin? (11)
- 6 Concerning satellite, let us never abandon rocket launchers (5)
- 7 Not in favour of an increase, by the way (7)
- 8 Face it, fuel must be mixed without iodine to be successful (9)
- 12 Free trade reform made planet earthlike (11)
- 14 Smooth fool cropped up — it's a small world! (9)
- 15 Droop as the result of endless fantasy trilogy, perhaps? (3)
- 16 Month in which Julian wrote *The Sdg of the Exiles*? (3)
- 19 Maybe Slippery Jim (when held by Pratchett's Faust) is unpredictable (7)
- 21 Rent raised, I returned account for items of a titillating nature (7)
- 23 Heavenly sign tucks me into bed (5)
- 25 Dug blue material up (5)
- 26 Evil cyborg finds deuterium at edge of boiling lake (5)
- 28 Take legal action against Thomason, perhaps? (3)

The prize has been offered by Colin Greenland, who will post it to the winner: A set of the new U.S. edition of Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan*: 3 vols., trade paperback, with Peake's original illustrations, introduction by Anthony Burgess and Quentin Crisp, and supplementary memoirs and critical essays by G Peter Winnington, Louise Collis, one C G et al — quite smart, brand new, though covers a bit curled from being in his damp flat.

### Competition #100 "Initial Thoughts"

To complete this puzzle, you need to find the initials of the authors of the following list of 9 books. You will need three (yes, 3) initials in each case. When you have done this, you should re-arrange these 27 letters to form 5 names.

- 1 Sixth Column
- 2 Stybiom the Strong
- 3 The Hand-Reared Boy
- 4 The Mechanical Monarch
- 5 The Screwape Letters
- 6 Get Off the Unicorn
- 7 The Shunned House
- 8 Rockabilly
- 9 The Poison Belt

To help you solve the final anagram, the 5 names required might go with Frank, Edgar, Samuel, Laurence and Oliver respectively. Your entries should give all the 9 names, plus an indication as to why the 5 hints above are appropriate.

All entries and comments to Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Ave, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 0RG by July 15, 1992.

