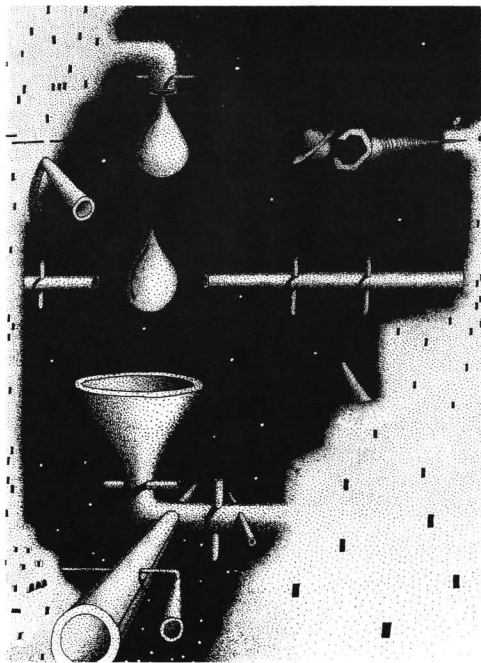


# ***Matrix***

*The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association*

101

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## Information and Contacts

### BSFA Membership

Now costs £15 (EC). Please enquire for overseas rates.

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## In and Out

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### Departed Members

Barnsley, Simon, Birch, Paul, Briody, Thomas A. Brown, Alexander S. Cochrane, David, Cutler, James, Sanders, Sandy, Elliott, Robert D. Eton, Andrew, Frihagen, Anders, Gamlin, John, Goudriann, Roelof, Hammersley, Colin, Harris, Jeff, Hill, Stephen, Hudson, Kim T, Inglis, Jamie, Jones, Tim, Kirk, Tim, Lake, Ken R, Leighton, Andrew M, Mair, Ann M, McAllister, Janet S, McCamnick, Lawrence A, McKay, Samuel, Metcalfe, J, Wendy, Mitchell, Anthony P, Moonraptured SF/F Society, Sheffield University, Moran, Jon P, Morgan, Robert B, Newbury, Darren, Nurse, Cecil E, Pearson, Michael, Peters, John M, Peyton, Rog, Pickles, Lorraine, Ramsey, Keith M, Ray, Phillip, Rowe, Nick, Rowe, Pamela, Russell, Simon, RHBC SF SOC (IFIS), Saran, Anita, Sharam, Rayesh, Singleton, John, Steel, James, Texas A&M University, Tomkins, Mrs C L, Tuttle, Lisa, Walkey, Garry, Warped: University of Manchester SF/F Society, Welch, John W, Whiteman, Andrew B, Wilkinson, Bridget, Williams, Gavin M.

## Determinants

One special treat for me, though more routine for Steve, is to go to the University and explore the Net. With the electronic bulletin boards, we can talk (in writing) to people all over the world and swap SF ideas and can, if the recipients happen to be switched on and willing, get an immediate response. From Israel, China, the States, even London. Given the immense range of people with access to word computers, sufficiently powerful home computers or who just know where the very few public access areas are, the breadth of conversation is infinite. So, logically, I concentrate on Science Fiction.

Sometimes a query starts off a whole thread of answers, like the query on post-holocaust SF, which is mentioned after the Information Service article: sometimes the conversation seems to burst into life because of some deeply felt outburst on hard SF, for example. There's news on the Net, details of interesting signings, new books, what the authors say and there's quite a lot on media, like the inconsistencies of Back to the Future. The typical Net person, if such an animal could or should exist, spends perhaps two hours a day on the Net minimum, looking for their special niche of interest, or following a topic of conversation, contributing, provoking and responding.

The fascination of the Net in many ways is that there are so many people interested in Science Fiction, really and all too willing to put their viewpoints forward. They are not fans, although they might go to conventions, signings or parties, the difference being that they would go to see the authors concerned, to ask about future plans and discuss the author's works. Access to the Net is limited for me. I often have to respond by the aptly named "Snail Mail" (not that the GPO call it that). The Net, though, is a keynote for this issue and I'd appreciate some feedback on whether you all think it should be a regular feature or just an occasional tit-bit.

Next issue will be out in plenty of time for Halloween so we will be swinging our focus towards Horror and Dark Fantasy. We'd be interested to hear about the H/D/F story that had most effect on you, and how you think the genre fits in with the BSFA's remit.

## Deadline 15 September

## News

From: Miguel Barcelo, David Garnett, Chuq von Rospach, Pam Wells, Simon Bishop, M. Michael Allen, Mark L. Stockpole, Rick Jacobs, Jamie Zawinski, Ken Lake, William Spanton, Julian Stoinov, Jessica Yates, Jerry Pournelle & Otto Tennant, Allen Harbinson, Katie Cary, Key McVeigh, Roelof Goudriaan, Paul Heroy, Sam Hill Cabal, Fiona Webster, Paul Maloney and your editors.

### Clarke Award to Synners

The 1992 Arthur C Clarke Award Ceremony took place at the Minehead Space Age Festival on Saturday 18th July. In a change to the usual procedure, the award was presented by Arthur C Clarke to a representative of the winner, Pat Cadigan, who then read (appropriately enough) a fax sent across the Atlantic via synchronous satellite (See also Simon Bisson's report below).

### "Electronic" Hugos

All seven stories nominated for this year's short story Hugo award were made available to the public via an electronic repository. In an unprecedented move, all stories are available in one place prior to the close of balloting, free for personal use only.

One reason for doing this is to measure the interest in the electronic publishing of SF - "cyberbooks". All the writers have co-operated in this venture, naturally with the hope that readers will vote for their stories. Voting for the Hugo is normally quite light and even one vote can make a difference. For example, at the 1990 Hugos, five votes made the difference between winning and second place on the short story Hugo.

In a parallel vote, non-members of the Orlando Worldcon have been voting (electronically) on the same shortlist. It will be interesting to compare the results.

### Dedication of Hoyle Statue

A statue of Sir Fred Hoyle, founder of the original Institute of Theoretical Astronomy (and no mean SF author), was placed in the grounds of the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge, and dedicated on July 18, 1992. Although the ceremony was informal, Martin Rees, Hermann Bondi, Margaret Burbidge and Jayant Narlikar were scheduled to speak, with John Faulkner as MC.

### Publishing information

In September, Millenium is due to launch its SF line, Orion, with *Fire Upon the Deep*, which should be getting heavy promotion, followed by a massive review of Michael Moorcock books (either in September or November). From November onwards, they're due to begin regular publication of new SF.

Flamingo is an imprint of Fontana paperbacks (part of the HarperCollins publishing group). Heavy promotion is planned including media advertising and thematic promotions. Geoff Ryman's *Was...* is scheduled for April 1993 and the complete stocklist includes new cover reprints of J G Ballard's *Hello America*, *Crash*, *Venus Hunters*, *High Rise*, *The Unlimited Drive Company*, *Low Flying Aircraft* and *Concrete Island*, plus Alan Garner's *Red Shift*, M John Harrison's *Climbers*, Salman Rushdie's *Grimus*, William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* and Frinjo Capra's *The Tao of Physics*.

Also on the paperback front, look out for Freda Warrington's enjoyable fantasies *A Blackbird in Amber* and *A Blackbird in Twilight* coming from New English Library in October (£4.99 each), followed by Joe Haldeman's *Worlds and Worlds Apart* also from NEL, but in November (£4.99 each). *Phaze Doubt* is the NEL Piers Anthony paperback of the month (November £4.99) and watch out for Karen Joy Fowler's *Sarah Canary* coming from Sceptre in November, a superb read at £5.99.

Headline's paperback stocklist is topped with Novacon Guest of Honour Storm Constantine's *Hermetech*, plus Dan Simmons' *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion* and *Phaser of Gravity*. Other SF includes Charles Sheffield's *Between the Strokes of Night* and *The Nimrod Hunt*, Mike McQuay's *The Nexus* and *Memories*, Brad Strickland's *Moon Dreams* and Frederick Fichtman's *Seti*.

Little, Brown and Warner lay great emphasis on imaginative horror with Ramsey Campbell in November - *Uncanny Banquet* (£3.99 hb Little, Brown), *Count of Eleven* (Warner, £4.99 pb) and new editions of both *Incarinate* and *Obsession* (both coming from Little, Brown at £13.99). Whitley Strieber's *The Wild* comes in paperback from Warner in August while Robert Holdstock's *The Fetch* follows in September. Later on, Jonathan Kellerman's *Devil's Waltz* appears in various formats (£14.99 hb, £7.99 C format, £4.99 pb) and Stephen King's *Dark Tower 3: The Waste Lands* comes in paperback for the Christmas run-up, together with Christopher Fowler's *Sharpen Knives* and Graham Masterton's *The Hymn*, after which everyone will be in a suitable mood for Christmas and/or Sir Isaac Newton's birthday.

Pan mourns the death of Isaac Asimov with the publication of two Asimov/Silverberg collaborations in November: *Nightfall* is an expansion of the original short story about darkness coming to a multi-sunned planet. Society will break down completely, faced with its first ever nightfall. The scientists find themselves forced into a reluctant alliance with The Apostles of Flame - hard, classic SF. *Child of Time* (an expansion of "The Ugly Little Boy") is about Timmie, a Neanderthal child brought forward in time and taught to

survive in a lab environment before being left to fend for himself in the modern day world with the help only of one scientist, Edith.

William Gibson and Dennis Ashbaugh have produced *Agrippa: a Book of the Dead*. It takes the term "limited edition" to extremes as the Dennis Ashbaugh illustrations portray DNA fingerprints and spookily abstract representations of computer viruses. These etchings will fade within an hour of leaving the box, to be replaced by a different picture that fades in days, to be replaced... William Gibson's text is on an enclosed disk which is wiped after being read once (and the attached software prevents it being copied also). The publisher, Kevin Begos, Jr, considers it to be a "puzzle and a challenge that promises to send odd resonances echoing through the neural pathways". Depending on the version, the range of prices is from \$450 to \$7500.

Another shock might be provided by the new Varley book *Steel Beech* which has a hook in the opening sentence: "In five years, the penis will be obsolete" the salesman said.

Circlet Press is a new independent publisher of erotic SF and hosted a reading at GayLaxicon in Philadelphia in July. Cecilia M Tan and Lauren Burka (author of *MATE: And More Stories From the Erotic Edge of SF/Fantasy*) autographed books. More details from the Circlet Press at PO Box 15143, Boston, MA 02215, USA.

### New Books

Adams, Douglas: *The Hitchhiker Omnibus* (Pan pb, October). All four cult books in one volume suitably thick for the most overloaded galactic traveller. Anthony, Piers: *Fractal Mode* (HarperCollins September £14.99). This confirms the cliffhanger from *Virtuality* - would-be lovers Colene and Darius break free from another dangerous reality, meet some intriguing characters, Angus, the amazing flying giant, for example and (presumably) prepare themselves for the next in the series.

Baxter, Stephen: *Timelike Infinity* (HarperCollins December £14.99). Humans attempt to overcome their Qax dominators by foiling the invasion before it started, thanks to the arrival of a spaceship launched some 1500 years previously.

Constantine, Storm: *Burying the Shadow* (Headline August £4.99). A fantastic re-invention of the vampire myth.

Delaney, Samuel R: *Dhalgren* (Grafton August £5.99). Stylish and very long novel, sometimes described as "Joycean", but powerful and intensely readable.

Dick, Philip K: *A Maze of Death* (Grafton August £3.99). Of course, this is a reprint, rather than a new, never before published work, but the themes Dick confronts are standard and relevant. Fay Weldon apparently describes him as her literary hero. Also *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (Grafton August £3.99). Another reprint, but, again, one which would well repay rereading.

Donaldson, Stephen: *The Gap into Power: A Dark and Hungry God Arises* (HarperCollins November £14.99 hb). The third volume in the "Gap" series. Nick Suckor reaches the infamous bootleg shipyard of Thanatos Minor to find the Amnion aliens waiting for payment. An explosive confrontation is possible.

Eddings, David: *Domes of Fire* (HarperCollins September £14.99). Book 1 of "The Tamuli", another series which follows on from "The Elenium", but is set a few years later. Sparhawk and Ehlana hoped to live happily after their marriage, but there is trouble in the east, or perhaps the west.

Farris, John: *Fiends* (Grafton August £4.50). Interesting horror, though rather obvious. The world thought Arne Horsfall was just one more crazy old man and most of the time he hoped they were right. Unfortunately, they weren't.

Feist, Raymond E: *The King's Buccaneer* (HarperCollins December £14.99). Set in the same world as the *Riftwar* series, Amos, the King's Buccaneer of the title needs to save all the beautiful women of Crydee (including the lovely Margaret) without sacrificing control of the Lifesstone.

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

Gardner, Craig Shaw: *The Inverse Cycle Omnibus* (Headline August £5.99). This comprises *Bride of the Stone Monster*, *Slaves of the Volcano God* and *Revenge of the Pluffy Bunnies*, the favourite being the last, the one which is recommended by a quote from *Paperback Inferno* to the effect that it "successfully recreates the B-movie conventions of the '40s and '50s and filters them through '90s eyes with affection".

Harbinson, W A: *Dream Maker* (Walker & Co., New York September). Already worried by the ozone layer depletion, a US Airborne Antarctic Expedition discovers that pollution is not, for once, to blame. A combination of romance, SF, politics, horror, occult and it is described as being "a mesmerizing read".

Holdstock, Robert: *The Cathedral* (Grafton April 1993). This is a new novel in the "Mythago Wood" cycle.

Jones, Jenny: *Lies and Flames* (Headline July £15.99 hb, £8.99pb). Volume 3 of the "Flight over Fire" series. Now that Eleanor is reunited with her lover, there are difficulties - like him being married to another. Although she now wants to return to England, the Sun and Moon (the lies and flames) are not prepared to free her.

Joyce, Graham: *Dark Sister* (Headline November £15.99 hb). A novel of the occult which starts with Maggie Stanton attempting to cure her children's minor ailments with "herbal" remedies - but these are Maggie's first unwitting lessons in witchcraft...

Kay, Guy Gavriel: *A Song for Arbonne* (HarperCollins October £14.99). New fantasy concerning Arbonne, a lush land of love and music about to be invaded by barbaric northern hordes.

Kennedy, Patricia: *The Throne of Scorn* (Grafton July £4.99). Kennedy, Paul: *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (HarperCollins Spring 1993 £20). To the question "Is history's ageless story of change and development going to bring us further massive examples of winners and

losers?", Kennedy's emphatic answer is in the affirmative with detailed analysis and examples. *The Picador Book of the New Gothic* (Picador October). This anthology aims to "dissect the human condition and the hell we have contributed for ourselves" with contributions from Angela Carter, Martin Amis, Peter Straub, Jeanette Winterson and many more.

McLeish: *Number* (Flamingo November). Mathematical history from ancient civilisations to the computer, from Mayan calendars to the pocket computer. The promotion includes large advertising in the national press and both general and university magazines.

Maly, Julian: *Blood Trillium* (HarperCollins August £14.99). Sequel to *Black Trillium*. With fantasy it appears that no one can live happily after marriage, least of all Anigel and her husband. The petals of the Trillium must be reconciled or the world will yet again be at risk.

Resnick, Mike Ed: *Alternate Kennedys* (Tor \$4.99). Twenty-five speculations including seven new ones. Kristine Kathryn Rusch on an alternate Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy, Judith Tarr "Them Old Hyannis Blues" with the four Kennedy brothers as the world's biggest rock sensation and Martha Soukup's "Rosemary's Brain" which shows how crucial a few millimetres are where a brain and an alternate world are concerned. After Mike Resnick's introduction, there is a poem by Jane Yolen, "Carnet Redux or Jack Kennedy Seen as an Alternating Current". Resnick says in his introduction that he missed out that if Jane Yolen didn't have time to write a story, he'd settle for a poem (which has all sorts of sinister implications for his opinion of poets).

Robinson, Kim Stanley: *Red Mars* (HarperCollins September £14.99). Mass landing on Mars in 2027 by engineers and scientists hoping to transform Mars into a new Eden. First of a trilogy spanning the first two hundred years of Martian history.

Silverberg, Robert: *Kingdoms of the Wall* (HarperCollins September £14.99). A mixed group of young hopefuls aim to scale the immensely high mountains called Kosa Saag. A novel of discovery in all senses.

Sutton, David & Jones, Stephen: *Dark Voices 4* (Pan original, October). Next in the Horror anthology series including authors like Christopher Fowler, John Brunner, Stephen Gallagher, Graham Newman and Peter James.

Warrington, Freda: *A Taste of Blood Wine* (Pan original, October). Vampires seem to be flavour of the month. Karl, however, wishes to be free from his vampire Lord and Jan vividly counterpoint to the wasteland of World War I, this seems final and terrifying conflict.

Williams, Walter Jon: *Days of Atonement* (Grafton, July £4.99). Wood, Bridget: *The Last Prince* (Headline August £5.99). Another first fantasy novel evoking the usual Celtic myths and an attempt to save Ireland at the hour of her greatest need. One could be cynical about this.

## SF Scene

On Saturday August 15 (hopefully after you have received the BSFA mailing), Forbidden Planet will be holding a signing to launch the Gollancz anthologies *New Worlds 2* (edited by David Garnett) and *In Dreams* (edited by Paul McAuley and Kevin Newman). At least twenty of the contributors are expected to be there, at the refurbished Cafe Munchen near Tottenham Court Road tube station. As well as the editors, these include:

Brian Aldiss, Barrington Bayley, Stephen Baxter, Jim Burns, Jack Deighton, Christopher Fowler, Colin Greenland, Peter F. Hamilton, Simon Ings, Graham Joyce, Dave Langford, Ian MacDonald, Ian R. Macleod, Charles Shaar Murray, Michael Moorcock, Alastair Reynolds, Nicholas Royle, Lisa Tuttle, Ian Watson.

Apparently *New Worlds 3* is already in the pipeline and will feature John Clute's assessment of the SF novels of 1991.

Arthur C Clarke is quoted as recommending a terraforming program for the Commodore Amiga 500 from Virtual Reality in California to show the possibilities of a transformed Mars. Olympus Mons could have pine trees planted on the summit in a thousand years' time; it could be surrounded by an ocean - he says that "everything you need is on Mars". More easily accessible.

The Fantastic Muse, a fanzine essay he wrote in the 1930s on SF poetry, plus a poem as example - available for £1 from Steve Sneyd at Hilltop Press, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, West Yorkshire HD5 8PB.

Katharine Kerr was an avid baseball fan until given a fantasy role-playing game in 1979. That was the start of something big: gaming articles, gaming modules and now the Deverry sequence of which six novels relating a journey through the mysterious western lands have been published. Success hasn't spoiled her, however: she has written a co-academic de(con)struction of her own myths in the parody issue of "OtherRealms".

Brian Aldiss said apropos of *Bury my Heart at WH Smiths* that he could never write an autobiography: "it would be too incredibly sad. Why should I burden others - my family for instance, in which I set such happy store - with the misery I underwent for countless years? Life's a triumph of hope and biological happiness over adversity, form which most people suffer in their most vulnerable years. We're so courageous in our sorrows, so outrageous in our pleasures".

Brian Thomson is leaving Questar for TSR, where he will be executive editor in charge of their book line starting August 10. In 1993, he will control all TSR books, including a planned 50% increase in titles. Chiqui von Rospach comments that although he knows Brian only by reputation, he "can't see him moving to TSR just to turn out 50% more *Greyhaven* and *Forgotten Realms* stuff".

John Brunner reports that he has a novel nearly finished and another in mind that he anticipates "will do well", though he would welcome the chance to write some non-fiction for a change. However *The Sheep Look Up* made it into a good recent reference to horror, *Horror: 100 Best Books* edited by Stephen Jones and Kim Newman. John Brunner is in good company such as Christopher Marlowe, Joseph Conrad, John Skipp (of Skipp & Spector) did the write-up on Brunner.

Fredrik Pohl writes that "SF is the very literature of change. In fact, it's the only such literature we have; and as such it really deserves to have its own, unshared institutions" - and he'd have preferred the SFWA to stay SF in content, rather than admitting Fantasy authors and converting to being the SFFWA.

Orson Scott Card's next book *Lost Boys* will be published by HarperCollins in October. This is Card's first mainstream release. *Call of Earth* is also slated for publication in 1992 - that is the sequel to *The Memory of Earth*. Orson Scott Card seems to be planning 6 books in the *Alvin Maker* series. Anyway, his editor at Tor says that the book currently being written is about Christopher Columbus (pub. probably 93-94) and after that will come a sequel to *Xenocide* (pub. probably 94-95), both hardbacks with paperbacks a year or so later.

Jerry Pournelle states that he and Larry Niven have just finished writing "The Mouth around God's Eye". It will be called *The Gripping Hand* and published by Simon & Schuster.

Graham Joyce has moved from Pan to Headline and his second novel, *Dark Sister* will appear in November (see new books). It appears that he was in great demand and Headline's offer included a two book deal with hardback publication and a more "supportive financial arrangement" than Pan proposed.

Gordon Dickson wrote to "SF Chronicle" to explain a necessary correction in the wolf's name in *The Dragon Knight*, new sequel to *The Dragon and The George*. Basically it is a necessary correction, rather than a misprint or typo, since Gordon Dickson is meticulous about his research and had checked how a wolf would pronounce the name of this particular character with Dr Harry Frank, Michigan's leading lupine research expert. The wolf in question is, of course, "Aargh" (wolf language for "This territory is mine") and it will also feature in the new book *The Dragon on the Border* and the forthcoming *Sir Dragon at War*.

Ursula K. LeGuin found her new word processor challenging to write poetry on (it is) "like handling soft clay, changing it with your fingers, playing with it. It allows a different kind of play. That's good. But when you come right down to it, I don't give a hang what I write on, so long as I can write. If it had to be a piece of stone and a chisel, I would be hard at it, chip, whack, chip".

Mike Jagger, who starred in *Freerick* was once a SF addict and spend more time staring at the cinema screen than reading SF novels. Despite (or because of) this, he is a great believer in the power of film and says "the borders of literacy have been widened by the cinema because you can turn a book into a film and show it in countries where very few people read".

WA Harbinson's latest book *Dream Maker* (September 1992, Walker & Company) fits in appropriately with the current US obsession with the ozone layer hole. Colin Wilson described him as "a combination of HG Wells and Frederick Forsyth" because he mixes SF, occult, politics and adult human drama. In a total change of genre, he is currently working on a biography of Klaus and Natassia Kinski.

Dave Langford, master of recycled prose, is now producing a monthly re-mark of his vile gossip-sheet *Ansible* (omitting the more salacious bits about the BSFA) as an *Interzone* column mysteriously called "Ansible Link". He is thinking of publishing (since nobody else will) a complete edition of his 100-odd fabled review pages from *White Dwarf*, *GM* and *GMI* magazines.

Sally Ann Mella's piece on Angela Carter is to be translated into French for "The Yellow Submarine". BSFA writers are in demand on the Continent: we have been asked if Matrix contributors Ian Mundell and Ben Wharton might allow some of their work to be translated into German also.

Dave Barrett's anthology *Digital Dreams* has just been translated into Hebrew and one of his stories is to appear in an anthology in Russia. He also has three books coming out in the next couple of months, none strictly SF, but all interesting for readers of the occult.

Terry Pratchett doesn't (fortunately) approve of being over-mechanised - he says he would rather informally support cottage industries than let some big concern screw around with his works. There are Discworld models and characters available from Clarendon Designs, Woolpit, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9SH and the Octarine t-shirts showing Death, complete with hood and scythe saying that he could murder a curry are great (Octarine, the society for the promotion of SF humour, can be contacted at 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby DE3 6ES). People who read his books in detail can spot several inconsistencies, for example the number of eyes that Grebo has in *Witches Abroad* or that Rincewind drinks when a smell is in *The Light Fantastic* and is told by Twoflower who was earlier described as having "no sense of smell". Technical details: Terry Pratchett owns the fastest PC he could then buy, he writes with WordPerfect 4.2 and uses a laptop when travelling; and he doesn't like windows or mice. [The above information from the usenet newsgroup "alt.fan.pratchett", one of whose members is a certain tp@tcu.tu "k.k.c.\*x. Some of the smarter contributors have begun to realise that if they



cut into Terry Pratchett's writing time too seriously, there'll be less DiscWorld stuff to read...]

Steve Sneyd was the Wordsmith in Residence at Dean Clough from May to August this year and has been in great demand at other literary events in the Yorkshire region.

Kim Stanley Robinson will have an exhausting national tour to promote the first book of his Martian trilogy, *Red Mars* in September. Dates so far confirmed are:

Wed. 23 Sept.:	Dillons, Manchester
Thurs. 24 Sept.:	Waterstones, Princes St, Edinburgh
	Forbidden Planet, Edinburgh
	John Smiths, Glasgow
Friday 25 Sept.:	4.30pm Andromeda Birmingham
Sat. 26 Sept.:	1.00pm Forbidden Planet, London

Plus he is also booked to talk to the Brum group and at the BSFA meeting (for details on this latter, please see Kev McVeigh's "Empire Dreams" piece).

In the *Red Mars* publicity pack, Robinson comments that "There are a number of Mars novels out recently or about the same time as *Red Mars* (by Frederik Pohl, Robert Forward, Jack Williamson, Ben Bova, Allen Steele, Paul McAuley, Frederick Turner and later Arthur C Clarke) - but these should not be seen as competition *per se*, but rather as a sign of a great collective interest in Mars". *Red Mars*, published by HarperCollins on September 24 at £14.99 will give the first instalment of man's first 200 years of history on Mars, to be followed by *Green Mars* in 1993 and *Blue Mars* in 1994.

One suggestion on this sudden collective interest in Mars came from Kim Stanley Robinson himself who wrote that "the hundreds of Martian stories written before Mariner and Viking had been forced to portray invented surfaces for the planet, so that they were in essence stories about imaginary places, using a real name. But after 1976, it became possible to write about Mars as it really is. This seemed to me a truly wonderful opportunity". In an attempt to visualise the landscape, he travelled widely and contemplates "once I visited Meteor Crater in Arizona and stood on the rim of that beautiful and very Martian place and reflected that there were hundreds of such craters on Mars; and for a moment I seemed to see what the crater would look like when domed, and holding a small town ..."

That suggestion held the seeds of ambivalence, in that "if someone were to propose humidifying the climate of the American West, for instance, and foresting all its bare deserts, I personally would be offended; I would consider that a desecration, an insult to the land's intrinsic beauty and worth. Surely there were people who would feel the same about Mars, especially after they had lived there". This ambivalence could be brought out in his characters who may have opposing beliefs, but can all be drawn sympathetically and quite genuinely.

Finally, in a list of 10 things you didn't know about Mars, the most optimistic was no. 10 where President Bush made a definite commitment to a Mars mission in his 1989 speech saying "It is quite possible that the first man on Mars has already been born". If only it would not be optimistic to suggest this...

## SF as a teaching aid

In an interview with Michael Cullen, Tony Keating explained why Stephen King and Bram Stoker were more relevant for studying literature than Jane Austen or Charles Dickens. He uses *New Worlds* a lot "just to describe very interesting and unusual things to do with English - because it is quite innovative what is done in SF and horror". He doesn't dispute that Stephen King's characters can be seen as shallow, compared to Charles Dickens', but argues that it doesn't really matter, because it is more important to choose something the kids find some relevance in - Tony Keating looks forward to when the comic medium is used as an interface between Art and English, to exploit the kids' visual literacy.

Alternate History novels have been used in teaching senior US high school students. They get the kids to think about how a change in a sequence of events can lead to any number of repercussions, reports William Stanton. Favourite titles include: Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder" which illustrates cause and effect really clearly and Norman Spinrad's *The Iron Dream* which shows Hitler as SF writer and works on different levels.

## Other Awards

The 1992 Canadian National SF&F Awards (Aurora's) were awarded on June 28 in Waterloo, Ontario and were given in ten categories. The winners were:

**Best Long Work in English:** *Golden Fleece*, Robert J Sawyer

**Best Short Work in English:** tie between "Breaking Ball" Michael Skeet and "A Niche" Peter Watts

**Best Work in English (Other):** *Prisoners of Gravity* (a TV Ontario production)

**Meilleur livre en français:** *Ailleurs et au Japon* Elisabeth Vonarburg

**Meilleur nouvelle en français:** "L'Enfant des mondes assoupis" Yves Meynard

**Meilleur ouvrage en français (autre):** *Solaris* Luc Pomerleau, editor

**Artistic Achievement:** Martin Springett

**Organisational Fan Achievement:** John Mansfield, Winnipeg in '94.

**Worldcon Bid Chairman**

**Best Fanzine:** "Sol Rising" Larry Hancock, editor

**Fan Achievement (Other):** David W New, editor of *Horizons SF*

The **Gravitation Award** for "good imagination" was presented to Velitchka Nasradinova and the **Best SF illustrator award** was presented to Boyan Penev at the Union of the Bulgarian Writers banquet and meeting.

The **SFCD-Literaturpreis** for the best novel of 1991 went to Christian Maehr, the Austrian novelist, for *Fatous Staub*, referring to the famous mathematician and to Egon Eis for his short story "Das letzte Signal". Both awards were presented at Freucon, just after Easter.

Johanna Sinisalo won the Finnish **Astorox award** for the best short story published in the previous year for "Punatahti" ("Red Star"). This is the third time she has won this and justly so. Her writing is powerful and very dramatic.

## Magazines

Shadwell Oman, editor of **ProtoStellar**, has made a special offer available to BSFA members. To help promote his magazine, he will offer the first issue free to any member who sends in with a A4 SAE and the requisite 42p return postage, with no obligation to subscribe or "anything else commercially lucky". He describes his magazine as "a 52-page magazine professionally printed and produced to W H Smith standards - quality paper, quality writing and quality articles". Write him at PO Box 491, Coudsford, Surrey CR5 2UJ.

It was suggested on the Net that the reason the *Aboriginal SF/Interzone* swapper issue resulted in a disproportionately high ratio of new subscriptions to *Aboriginal* was that in North America the thriving newstand market means that an *Aboriginal* subscriber has deliberately chosen to subscribe to it, while an *Interzone* subscriber has picked the only British monthly SF magazine. This hypothesis will be tested as *Far Point* and *ProtoStellar* hit their stride...

New magazines: *Praxis* will relate to the arts and environment, while *Switch* will require all forms of poetry. Neither magazine is specifically SF, but they require you to "release your anger over issues that drive you wild". No fee is given for publication in either magazine. More details from 43 Beevers Court, Leeds LS16 6NX.

## Contests

### The UPC SF Literary Contest

When the Technical University of Catalonia organised a SF Novella Literary Contest to commemorate their 20th anniversary, it was such a success that it is being repeated and is now open to the international SF community. Manuscripts of about 100 pages will be accepted in Catalan, Spanish, English or French and must be submitted before 10 September 1992. The first prize is one million pesetas (about \$10,000). More information from the Consell Social (Board of Trustees, Diagonal 649 (Edifici ETAB), 08028 Barcelona, Spain, tel: (3) 401 63 43) or contact Miguel Barcelo on electronic mail at: blol@lsi.upc.es.

### Plays for children

"The dearth of original new work for children has been a problem for theatres seeking to develop young audiences" wrote Jude Kelly. So WH Smith are sponsoring this contest and require scripts in English of at least 50 minutes in duration. £20,000 is offered in prizes, and the play must be for a child audience. BSFA member (and actor) Ken Campbell is one of the judges. Entries to be sent by recorded delivery before October 1 to: WH Smith Plays for Children Awards 1992, The West Yorkshire Playhouse, Quarry Hill Mount, Leeds LS9 8AW.

## SF Television

The Sci-Fi Channel should launch on September 24 presenting SF/Horror 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is scheduled to include *Buck Rogers*, *Dr Who*, *Space 1999*, *Flash Gordon*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *The Prisoner*, *Bionic Woman*, *My Secret Identity*, *Invisible Man*, *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Probe*, *Night Stalker*, *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, *Man Without a Body*, *Alien*, *War of the Worlds*, &cetera. More details from The Sci-Fi Channel, Marketing Department, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, USA. Jamie Zawinski suggests: "I'm sure the Sci-Fi Channel is going to do for Science Fiction exactly what MTV's "Liquid Television" did for animate short film. Yeah".

## Fandom Matters

It's that time of year again, when the TAFF race opens. This is a way of sending a representative of British fandom to the US Worldcon alternately with a US fan coming to the UK's Eastercon. Nominations open on August 1 to send a British representative to the San Francisco Worldcon next year. It's an all-expenses paid trip (though it should be noted that the winner is expected to fund raise for the year afterwards to replenish the funds spent). There are several rumours of possible candidates - all will be revealed next time. In the meantime, Vince Clarke was offered the chance of going to Magicon - although a very early TAFF winner, he never actually took his trip. Though honoured, he declined. "I'm deeply grateful and appreciative of the offer" he wrote, adding that he is uncomfortable in crowds and not terribly well at present.

## Empire Dreams

Kev McVeigh

Firstly, an apology. Several of you have written to me in the past few months commenting on the current and future condition of the BSFA, often accompanied by good ideas and offers of help. I'm afraid I've been rather lax in replying to all of you. I'm sorry.

All I can say by way of excuse is that I have been attempting to resolve some of the BSFA's problems - we now have a new Treasurer, Elizabeth Billinger, who is in the process of taking over from Brett and has already averted one minor crisis; and a new editor for the *Paperback Inferno* section of *Vector*: Stephen Payne, who is currently liaising with Andy Sawyer and Catie Cary to negotiate a smooth handover. I ask you all to be patient if things do stutter briefly at this time.

Perhaps it is time to tell you a few things about the people who run the BSFA. I've had several people express an interest in helping whilst thinking they have no experience to do the "big" jobs. The good news, or maybe the bad news, is that none of us had any experience before the BSFA. Very few of us work in any relevant field: I'm a part-time harman (unless anybody can offer me something permanent anywhere?) and previously edited *Vector* from the drole queue, as did Boyd Parkinson; Jenny Glover produces a monthly catalogue for a stamp auctioneers whilst juggling two young children, Steve Glover is about to become a student again and Stephen Payne works for British Rail, but he assures me *PI* won't be late!

Of course, there are perks: some of us get free books from publishers, but they aren't always the ones you'd want; there is the thrill of seeing your words in print, followed two months later by a letter saying what rubbish it was; we get expenses, but inevitably lose money on behalf of the BSFA.

The BSFA is very important to all of us, and we work hard at it, but you will appreciate that occasionally other things are more important: family, final demands for Community Charge, etc. Thank you. Perhaps this explains why I sometimes take criticism of the BSFA a touch too personally. Excuse me.

Having now resolved the question of who is on the BSFA Council for the right reasons, for example because they want to do something, we have several spaces to fill. We must also decide if we want to change the size of the Council, and what the Council should do. The general consensus is that the Council ought to be available as consultants in their field and should raise the BSFA profile where possible. I'd like your thoughts on this matter, please, and if you would like to nominate anyone please write to me (I don't want to publish names until I gain the individual's consent to sit on the Council). I have already approached a few people, and would like to hold an election for the Council before the end of the year (this is likely to be at the BSFA meeting at Novacon 22).

As I expected, there is a lot of comment on the loss of *Focus*. Please read carefully: *Focus* is suspended until the BSFA's finances are healthy enough to justify the expense, and until someone comes up with a strong policy and the ability to carry it through. Meanwhile, *Vector* will run an irregular series of *Focus*-type articles.

Several people have suggested a fiction magazine for members to submit stories to. Why? If this is to be a haven for poor writers who cannot get into the many other magazines around, then I want none of it. On the other hand, if the contents are good short fiction, and we can be likely to break even on the project (which means YOU buying a copy), then I'm all for it. As soon as we've resolved the current difficulties, I will investigate the option.

Tim Robinson's comments on the BSFA award are confusing. Much of what he proposes has been done for years (the publishing of Nicholas Mahoney's address as Awards Administrator, the publishing of the figures, nominations by the general membership, etc), the remainder is unsubstantial allegations of ballot-rigging to keep David Wingrove off the shortlist. I don't know why any of the 1000 or so members didn't nominate David Wingrove. I only know why I nominated the books I nominated; because I thought they were the best of the year. Simple. There is no plot against David Wingrove at the BSFA, some of us like his books, others don't, some don't like him in person, some don't know him, others like him.

I know we made mistakes this year, I'm sorry. Next year's award is already in hand, I hope you are already making suggestions to Nicholas for the rolling nominations list.

Finally, for those of you in the South East, and the intrepid few who travel further, the BSFA London meetings have been re-launched under the organisation of Andrew Seaman. Most meetings will take place on the third Wednesday of each month, and the venue is the Victoria and Albert pub, on the forecourt of Marylebone Station from 6.30pm with the main event at around 7.30pm.

Andrew and I are in the process of negotiating to bring you several top authors, including one big name American, over the next few months. Hopefully you will make the venture worthwhile by turning up to support us.

In September, the meeting moves temporarily to Monday 21st September in the same venue. This is to enable Kim Stanley Robinson to speak that night.

Robinson's new novel, *Red Mars*, published that week, is a gripping tale of the terraforming of Mars, with Robinson's usual complete characters, and their loves and hates, packed with hard science and hard politics. I've been lucky enough to see a proof copy, and I assure you it is a magnificent, passionate and human work. I'm sure it will be on every awards shortlist. Robinson is also a fine speaker on Philip K. Dick (on whom he wrote a Ph.D. thesis) and very knowledgeable about British SF. This is sure to be a fascinating evening with one of the very best writers around. Don't miss it.

The same evening will involve a very brief piece of BSFA business, an Extraordinary Meeting to approve the BSFA Accounts (the Financial Statement for the year ended 30 September 1991). Please attend this five minute item, it may be boring, but it is important. Thank you. (If you cannot attend this meeting, and would like to make your presence felt, proxies (a simple signed letter nominating someone to cast your vote or otherwise act for you) should be sent to Kev McVeigh for the Monday before the EGM)).

## Into Orbit with the BSFA

Carol Ann Green

As Kev McVeigh pointed out in his *Empire Dreams* in *Matrix* 99, the BSFA's constitution carried a commitment to helping up and coming writers among its members. *Orbit* and *Focus* are the parts of the BSFA given over to writers, with the recent suspension of *Focus*, *Orbit* is the only visible commitment to writers left. But many people are unaware of its existence - or if aware that it exists are unsure of its relevance to them. It is my intention in this article to try and bring the *Orbit* network to the attention of new and old members alike.

I took over the Coordination of *Orbit* from Sue Thomason this summer, after being a member of an *Orbit* group for three years. Having had practical experience of how *Orbit* works, I am well aware of some of the difficulties involved in trying to circulate a parcel of manuscripts around five different people with totally different commitments.

So what does *Orbit* offer its members? For a start, it doesn't offer an easy way to become a writer, nor should it be used for an ego trip. Used properly, *Orbit* is damned hard work. But don't let that put you off, you only get out of something what you put into it - and if you're prepared to work at it, then *Orbit* can be very rewarding. Each member is expected to write honest critical comments on the other four members' manuscripts - and they in turn will receive honest critical comments on their manuscript. Sounds hard, doesn't it? Yes, it is. But whilst you're struggling to come to terms with, and learning from what other people have written about your last manuscript, you're also learning how to criticise someone else's work; and in the process improving your own writing.

Who does *Orbit* cater to? The answer to this is easy. You. Ordinary BSFA members who are committed to writing, whether they are selling or not, whether they have been writing one year or fifty. If you're interested in writing and prepared to commit your time to it, then *Orbit* is relevant to you.

How does it work? Each *Orbit* group is made up of five members with one selected to co-ordinate the group. There is no extra cost to join *Orbit*. Each member puts a manuscript into the parcel, this can either be a short story or part of a longer work, writes constructive critical comments on each of the other four manuscripts and sends it on to the next person on the list. The parcel should go round the group in two to four months with each member expected to hold onto it no longer than 3/4 orbits. There is no requirement to put a manuscript of your own in every orbit, you may not always have something ready; the only requirement is that you write honest critical comments on the other manuscripts.

Of course, this doesn't mean that all *Orbit* groups work perfectly. As I mentioned at the beginning, there are five members each with different commitments making up each group. Some groups circulate their manuscripts quicker, others can take up to a year to go round the whole group - which can cause problems, but it's up to the members in each group to make their group work.

So, where do I, as overall co-ordinator, come in? Well, I set the groups up and keep a record of who is in each group, deal with queries, find replacements if a member leaves and try to help any group with problems.

*Orbit* has been running successfully now for a number of years, there are many success stories, there are also a few failures. It works, and I'm not proposing to alter that, but I do think that it's time for a few changes - members willing. By the time you read this article, I should have been in contact with every co-ordinator and hopefully with every member some time soon - asking them what they think of *Orbit* now, where they feel they fit into the network and how it helps them.

I'd like to offer a service where a member of one group can swap with a member of another group if they think things are getting stale where they are or for the chance of new ideas on manuscripts already gone round the present group. I've already had one query about setting up a novelist's group and am prepared to organise one if there are more takers. I'd like to propose setting up new groups; for women only, for disc users, for people interested in writing criticism, and if anyone else has any ideas, I'd like to hear from them.

I'd like to start up an Orbiter newsletter, with items of interest to other Orbiter groups. I'd like to see some of the people involved in Orbiter getting together for writer's workshops - with members of their own group or others. And at some time in the future, if *Focus* gets going again, I'd like to see a closer relationship between *Focus* and Orbiter.

I can't do any of this on my own. I need input from you, the members. Whether you're already a member of Orbiter or not, I'd like to hear from you - would you like to be part of a group, and write me I know. Orbiter is an important part of the BSFA and I'd like to raise its profile, but only if there's the interest. If I hear from no-one, then things will go on as usual, with nothing lost. But I hope there's sufficient interest to put a few of my ideas into operation.

## Not forgetting Cassandra

Martyn Taylor

Following the correspondence about the absence of *Focus*, I wonder whether those legions of budding authors in the membership (which is all of us according to the last membership census) might be interested in a writers' group devoted to SF & Fantasy which already exists.

Cassandra is a self-help group of SF and Fantasy writers in this country - and abroad (I joined while resident in the Isle of Man and Kenneth Bailey lives, of course, on Alderney). It began in Northampton and most members were, initially, unpublished. Recent editions of *Interzone* have had up to half the fiction coming from present and past Cassandra members - Eric Brown, Simon Ings, Charles Stross, Sylvia Siddall, Sharon Hall, Karla Dearsley, Susan Beeston and Julian Flood spring to mind. Ian Watson, John Brunner and Terry Pratchett are also *ex officio* members and have moderated workshops in the past.

Cassandra activities have included publication of one of the first of the new wave of British small press SF magazines, weekend workshops, postal workshops, various other interesting bits and pieces, and a bi-monthly newsletter which covers a multitude of sins including new markets. The "Welcome Pack" details just about every publisher of SF & Fantasy in the English speaking world (well, UK & USA...) and a couple of tip sheets, suggested reading and the like. More than anything else, I suppose, it is a forum for the like minded to get together and chew over the problems and opportunities presented to us.

Space precludes more than a brief resume, but most of us find it not only fun, but useful too (and it is cheaper than a sub. to *SF Chronicle* or *Focus*) unless a previous editor of *Focus* who condemned us sight unseen. Still, even Liz is welcome to join if she likes...

If anyone out there is interested, they can get in touch with me, Martyn Taylor (104 Natal Road, Cambridge CB1 3NS) and it is all for £7.50 a year, cheques made payable to Cassandra.

Sharon Hall adds: Cassandra's "women-only" group in particular is currently looking for new members, but we would welcome all enquiries. Personally, I have found both the BSFA's Orbiter and Cassandra's Mercury workshops a tremendous help and would recommend them to any "new" and even not-so-new writer.

I was sad to see that *Focus* has been suspended. Like many others, I came to the BSFA and fandom through writing and joined the BSFA mainly because of *Focus* and the Orbiter workshops. Whilst more frequent market information in *Matrix* would be useful, and whilst how-to-write (but not how-to-write?) articles might find a place in *Vector*, I do think that every effort should be made to retain *Focus* as a forum for writers. Without it, the BSFA's "commitment" to new writers seems little more than fine words.

## Sex in Zero Gee?

(In the last issue of *Vector*, Philip Muldowney wrote in the letter column that "SF had an uneasy relationship when dealing with sex; it has never combined the elements very well" and suggested that thinking up pornographic SF novels might be a suitable contest for *Matrix*. The response was - exciting - starting with a wry comment that Robert A Heinlein's sex scenes always seem to be conducted over the telephone, with a pause for orgasm before the woman says thank you very much and a few suggestions of (of course) Stephen Donaldson's "Gap" series and Geoff Ryman's *The Child Garden* and some that Lee short stories which would be even shorter if a general caveat was printed to say that demons are fantastic in bed, now let's get on with the story. We also received two longer pieces...)

## Message from the Cryonaut:

### #1 SF and the Naughty Bits Julian Flood

[Biographical Note: In 1969, the author, who had been celebrating the Apollo 11 moon landing, took a wrong turning near Lincoln and drove his MG Midget into a cryogenic store owned by the Regional Air Freezer Facility Inc. He had drunk three quarters of a bottle of Johnny Walker Red Label, two vodka and limes and a bottle of Bass, an excessive consumption which may explain what happened next. The store, an automated meat plant, had been left running when

the company operating it went bankrupt. The doors to slaughterhouse department No. 5 blew shut the next day and the accident went un-noticed. The stunning and low temperature sections functioned normally, freezing the startled visitor in microseconds. Fortunately the evisceration and flaying departments failed and the car's paintwork was unscathed.

When the store was de-commissioned in 1991, driver and machine were both found, on thawing, to be at least partly functional. The author missed the SF New Wave entirely and has never heard of Martin Amis. He had a hangover for three days. This survivor from the distant past of SF enables us to print the old-fashioned views of someone who is truly a traveller in time. He has been reading voraciously.

Considering its ordeal, the MG is surprisingly healthy. - Ed.]

You want me to talk now? Into that? It's a tape recorder, yeah? Wow! Man, we had these things with big spoons, yunno? Big as a shoebox. Oh, sex and SF, I've gotta talk about that? OK. You're the doctor.

There wasn't much about then, understated stuff, hints, that sort of thing. You know "be gentle with me, big boy, you really give a girl a good time". Not explicit. Read a book last week, well, not all of it, got so bored I used it as bog paper. They were having it off all over the place. If the action slowed down, off they went into a corner and did it. Sort of teenagers really, teenagers as they'd like to be anyway. Adolescent, is that still the word? Bit bigger than childish, a lot less than adult? Yeah, adolescent wet dreams. He actually had his thongie, you know, pressed up against her back and it stuck there! Wow, you wouldn't have got that into anything in my day. "Analog" wasn't into that sort of thing. You could buy it everywhere, all station bookshops. OK, back to sex and SF. *Playboy*, maybe, *Penthouse*. If you wanted descriptions of... "Bonking", is that the word? Crazy, babe! Weird slang you have, blows my mind man, outasight. Blows. No, that was something different then.

If you wanted to read about bonking there were dirty mags., but not in our stuff, us SF readers. Didn't have fans then, just people who read SF, all sorts, people who were active between the ears. SF mags. were full of space ships and science and that sort of thing. Worrying about the future and technological development. The relationship between Man and aliens. Trying to make people think about what science and technology was about, not reading for a cheap thrill where the story takes second place to the...bonking. Non-puritan literature. Say, Doc, what happened to SF? When I left it was thriving, come back and it's dead. New Wave? Ah, yeah, I've heard of that. Haven't read any though, makes me nod off.

Technology and sex? That's worth reading about, worth writing about. Will technology alter sex? I've even tried to write a short, yeah, me too, embarrassing, ain't it? Everyone who reads SF nowadays fancies himself as a writer. Always did, we all wanted to write it, get into *Analog*, *Or Astronaut*. Remember, I go waaaaaay back. Where was I? Oh, yeah, this girl in my story. She's being bonked by a waldo ... Waldo, it's what they call remote tele-operated nowadays. Yeah, the word "waldo" came from a SF story. Much better word. Used in the early '60s, so it wasn't into remote sex, it was just science and intellectual stimulation. I mean early sixties was fab, don't get me wrong. We used to read *Health and Efficiency*... You too, huh? Still? Wow! Bet that sells more than *Interzone*.

This "effect of technology on things", that's real SF country. Sword, sex and sorcery isn't, I mean, why not read one of the top shelf mags, if it's shagging you want? Yeah, bonking, OK, OK. So why force it into SF which is about new things, not about the oldest entertainment in the world? Reminds me of a fashion note I read, "women are wearing the same things in bras this year as they were last". Figures, I reckon. It doesn't change, does it, so where's the plot? I mean, you just stick this into that and ... Really? Gee! What'll they think of next? I'll have to try it some time, when my little trouble clears up. Trouble? No, not an infection. I'd rather not talk about it.

Sex and aliens? I remember reading a story or two back then. There was one where this woman wanted to mate with aliens, had a biological drive to breed with an outsider, to increase bio-diversity. Then there was this chap who was a gigolo, used to commit un-nameable perversions with tentacle insects by stroking the third polyp from the left. Got eaten in the end, it was the culmination of the sex-ritual. Good short, not much use as soft porn, though, which is what you really mean when you ask about SF and sex. I've not seen it done successfully since I was thawed out, not in any adult way. Except maybe "The Steel", *Interzone*, that's sort of new SF sex, symbolic, funny too. Sort of psychological. Clever, Alien. Not spelt out in detail. Adult instead of adolescent.

Is that what you wanted? Anything else? Swearing and SF. Boy, can I go on about that! Have you ever heard someone say "will you shut the fuck up"? Me neither. Real adolescent stuff, you know, look at me mummy I'm a big girl/boy and I can write dirty words like ... er, yeah, like that. Wow, you say it right out. What a woman! Nice eyes, too. Hey, Doc, say it again, I love it when you talk dirty. Wow, yeah baby, give it to me some more ... Ooooh, honey ...

Look at that! We have left-off for the first time since 1969! Come right on over here and show me what you've got, babes. Treat me gentle, big girl, and shake them ...

[The rest of the tape has been censored by the author's wife]

## Is SF playing safe with sex?

Kevin McVeigh

If you read the papers or if you watch the news, you have probably seen two recent scare stories about AIDS. In Birmingham, a young man who is HIV+ has been having unprotected sex with a variety of women. As a result of this, there are calls for an amendment to the law so that he can be prosecuted for wilfully passing on the virus. All the blame has been apportioned to him. I've seen no mention that his lovers might have suggested safe sex. In London, a gay eye surgeon has effectively been ousted by a series of articles labelling him as the AIDS doctor and implying that his patients are at risk. According to an interview in *The Independent* on Sunday with this doctor, he has never taken a test for HIV, and therefore these articles are pure fiction, and the product of rampant homophobia.

Science Fiction, if we like, is about knowledge - about science, about the human condition, about the interfaces and the interstices of these things. So what can SF say about AIDS? What has it said about AIDS?

I first heard about AIDS in about 1982, when the papers picked up on it. That's ten years ago, and ten years is a long time in SF. *Intervene* was struggling off the ground, William Gibson, Lucius Shepard, Kim Stanley Robinson, Pat Murphy, Dan Simmons were all unknown names. I was starting my A levels. So there has been plenty of time for SF to take this new development on board, the way it absorbed and developed Virtual Reality, Cyberspace, Chaos Theory etc.

The first SF story to deal explicitly with AIDS was probably Delany's "Tale of Plagues and Carnivals" in *Flight from Nervon* (1985). Maybe that isn't surprising. Delany is a gay man, and AIDS was initially most severe amongst gay men. Now, however, AIDS is recognised as a danger to almost anybody. Including SF readers.

It isn't something to be taken lightly, to be fair, it may be that some SF writers are afraid to tackle the subject in error, preferring the safety of the past, the distant future, or middle earth-substitutes. Though I've read a lot of stories from the late '80s which pay lip service, AIDS gets a tokenistic mention, but it doesn't affect people's lives. I've read very few which acknowledge that people are dying in pain and misery, that people are afraid of dying and of losing their loved ones, that people are angry: this is presumably too dirty for the readers' sensitivities. I've read even fewer which might be considered as post-AIDS in their commonplace approach, their everyday attitude to safe sex.

Some, such as Judith Moffett's bittersweet "Tiny Tango" do this. It is narrated by a woman who contracted HIV from her first partner and includes a series of scenes from a self-help group for HIV+ people. The story foresees a vaccine for the virus, but not a cure for those already affected. This dwindling constituency lives on a knife edge of fear and hope, watching each other die. Most of us cannot imagine, as we could not truly imagine Dachau. Judith Moffett helps, a little.

We can, however, get angry. When you're afraid, when your friends are afraid, anger is easy. Hence screams of rage, such as Charles Sheffield's short story "Saved from the Shredder". This is anger against governments who fail to fund the research, who fail to fund the advertising, who fail to educate the potential carriers and recipients.

Three short stories then. Is that it? Not quite. I'm told that Nancy Kress has written a powerful AIDS metaphor, "Beggars in Spain", there may be a few others. I hope so. But many people only read novels. Geoff Ryman writes about AIDS (another gay man, you notice), obliquely in *The Child Garden* and in horrible detail in *Was...* Gwyneth Jones' *White Queen*, Richard Kadrey's *Metaphrase* and Michael Blumlein's *The Movement of Mountains* might be viewed as extended metaphors for the plague. Certainly, Kadrey postulates San Francisco devastated by plague, and ends on a note of disillusion. There may be no escape.

And there are the vampire stories: Ian Watson and Dan Simmons are the best examples. Their value, I'm not sure of, but they have seen a problem and are addressing it. Compare them, and the handful of examples above, with all those scenes of casual sex, violent sex, pornographic sex, even warm lovemaking in nearly every modern SF novel. Consider all the drug use too, no dirty needles? SF can lead the way, or at least join Armistead Maupin, Adam Mars Jones, and others like them. Tell me this, when did you last read of a hero putting on a condom before sex? In SF? You must be joking. Unless it was Lewis Shiner's mainstream (well, nearly) novel *Slam*, you probably didn't.

## Information Service

Phil Nichols

The Information Service is free, absolutely free, if you'd like to make use of it - if you want to know anything that's even remotely connected with SF - then please get in touch. All you have to do is write to me, and I will try to find an answer to your question. I usually reply within fourteen days, although a full answer to your question may take longer. The only thing I ask is that you enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you want a reply. The address to write to is: Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB.

Now to this issue's mini-guide to SF. I'm still short of contributions for this series, which you should please take as a hint to write in with short articles on authors or themes. Meanwhile, I shall continue slaving away with my own researches. This time, feeling depressed, I thought about the end of the world.

## To be or not to be

How many ways could the world end? In SF, the world can end with the conventional bang or whimper, but the causes of the termination are almost unlimited, as is the scale. Sometimes "the world" is civilisation as we know it, sometimes it's all life, sometimes it's the planet, and just occasionally it's the entire universe that ceases to be.

Mary Shelley's other SF novel *The Last Man* (1826) shows us the end of humankind through the rise of a great plague. One man survives, as in many of the end-of-the-world stories which would follow. Part of the appeal of this type of story is the idea of the sole survivor making the best of whatever is left to him (and it usually is a him, not a her). Personal favourites include *Earth Abides* (1949) by George R Stewart and *An Legend* by Richard Matheson, in which there is more than one survivor, but there is only one who remains truly human.

While the sole survivor is not without precedent in mainstream fiction (remember *Robinson Crusoe*!), SF is by its nature uniquely able to ponder other aspects of the end of the world. HG Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) is informed not only by Darwinian evolution in its speculation on the development of man, but by the physics of the day. His apocalyptic vision is the heat death of the universe, the second law of thermodynamics triumphant in the entropic run down of the world. *When Worlds Collide* (1933) by Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer, although written much later, reflects another notion which prevailed in Victorian times: catastrophism. This time the world ends through a largely unforeseeable event. Larry Niven kills off with the Sun going nova in "Inconstant Moon" (1971), while James Blish pulls off the ultimate destruction by destroying the entire universe in *The Triumph of Time* (1958), part of his "Cities in Flight" series.

SF can let us see things through new eyes, become detached from the biases we hold as individuals, societies and as a species. The change of viewpoint may only be fleeting, lasting just as long as it takes to turn the page to the next story, but the new perspective is to be valued. Those monks with their peculiar idea that by writing down every name of god they will fulfil man's destiny - they must be mad. Except, in Arthur C Clarke's "Nine Billion Names of God" (1953), it turns out they're right; when all nine billion names have been written down, the world quietly ceases to exist. In "Adam and No Eve" (1941) by Alfred Bester, the last man on Earth proves not to be an individual, but a collection of millions of cells, capable of re-populating the world long after the last flicker of human consciousness has gone.

Of course, if you can see into the future, you can prevent the end of the world. Can't you? That's the premises of another Bester tale "Push Of A Finger" (1942): the government, dedicated to the idea of stability, develops a Prognosticator, which sees far enough into the future to see doomsday. Conversely, if you find a destroyed world, you can deduce what must have happened. Can't you? In *In After Doomsday* (1962) by Poul Anderson, the destroyed world is Earth.

The end-of-the-world story is a staple of SF, one of the great games, along with "what if..." and "if only...". Since 1945, the most common way for the world to end has been with a nuclear war. Indeed, this became a common obsession with the coming of the cold war, and re-emerged in the late '70s and early '80s, only now it was not a fear of the far-flung future, but a real concern of the here and now, even becoming a popular subject for the movies with *On the Beach*, *Dr Strangelove*, *The Day After*, *Threads*. I suppose the de-freezing of East-West relations is the main cause of its now diminished popularity as a way of ending it, all, but it makes me wonder: what will take its place?

((Oddly enough, this subject has recently been discussed on the Net, following a query from Doug Ingram, at the University of Washington, Seattle. He wrote: "My fiancée and I are looking for some good recommendations in the 'post-nuclear holocaust' genre. I've read *The Postman* by David Brin, but besides that, we're at a loss". The top responses, of the five hundred give or take ten or so I noted were:

Harlan Ellison: "A Boy and his Dog" [John Whitmore, Seattle described it as "a tad shocking"]

Nevil Shute: *On the Beach* [Rheal Nadeau in Ottawa said it was "not your standard dog-cat-dog Mad Max type post-nuclear war book"]

Walter Miller Jr: *A Canticle for Leibowitz* [recommended by about thirty SF readers with comments like "have a Latin dictionary handy" and "one of the all time great SF novels"]

Other suggestions were David Mace's *Demon-4* from Markus Stumptner, Vienna; David Graham's *Down to a Sunless Sea* from Keith Morgan at MIT who describes it as "really depressing" and Wilson Tucker's *The Long Load Silence* which Crawford Kilian at British Columbia said was "dated... but fine style and pace". Last word, for now, from Mark Meyer at Texas Instruments Inc. "As a teenager, I collected end-of-the-world books (I didn't do drugs, didn't sleep around, and hated heavy metal music, so I had to do SOMETHING)).

## Arthur C Clarke in Minehead

Simon Bisson

The small seaside town of Minehead is famous for two things, a large holiday camp called Somerwest World, and for being the birthplace of Arthur C Clarke, who celebrates his 75th this year, and Minehead invited its famous son back as part of its 'Space Age Festival'.

Minehead is your typical British seaside town, gently decaying from its Edwardian prime into a morass of tacky shops and bed and breakfast guest houses, perhaps not the most likely place for a 'Space Age Festival'. Certainly, the place was swarming with people, but most of them were tourists heading for the beach. The two exhibitions were virtually empty, and perhaps not that interesting for the SF reader. The first, in an empty garage, contained some exhibits that caught the eye, the most engaging of which was a large glass case containing some of Arthur C Clarke's many awards. The second was an art exhibition, which was mainly children's pictures from a school competition, the sole pro there seemed somewhat out of place, though he did seem pleased to talk to people who actually appreciate SF art (I did consider buying some of his stuff, but the prices were a bit beyond me).

Both exhibitions were somewhat enlivened by the spectacle of Arthur's brother, Fred Clarke, running around in circles trying to keep things organised. Perhaps they should have got Tim Illingworth to do the job.

The exhibitions pursued, it was time to head for the main event, the talk by Clarke, Gentry Lee and Patrick Moore (a prominent TV astronomer). There was quite a queue, containing a few recognisable faces (among them Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter), however, due to poor publicity, the audience was mainly local people with a small contingent of fans who had actually managed to find Minehead.

Perhaps this is the place for a slight digression on the subject of the A39, the Bridgewater to Minehead road. Or perhaps not. In any case, it makes for an interesting journey!

Patrick Moore was unable to attend (it appears he had a prior collision with a cricket ball - ed.), so yet another TV astronomer has been dug out, Heather Couper. An incompetent introduction from a local dignitary described her as an astrologer...

The presentation of the Arthur C Clarke award was a very brief affair. Arthur's brother Fred announced the nominees and explained the judging procedure. Arthur then opened the envelope, to announce that *Synners* by Pat Cadigan was the 1992 winner. Pat was still in the US, so a representative of her UK publishers HarperCollins read a fax she had sent earlier that day.

The evening continued as a discussion between Clarke and Lee, chaired by Ms. Couper. She handled the whole thing very well, considering that she had had less than 12 hours notice of the event, and of those 12 hours at least 6 would have been spent travelling to Minehead. I must admit that I started the evening with quite a bias against Gentry Lee (as I think most people would, if they had read *Cradle*), but he spoke a lot better than he writes! The conversation covered several topics, ranging from a look at the future of the exploration of space to future book projects (Clarke has recently completed what will be the first piece of fiction to appear in *Time* and has signed contracts for several non-fiction books). There were several references to terraforming Mars. Both Clarke and Lee see this as one of the most important goals for humanity, in fact, Clarke's next book *The Snows of Olympus* will deal with this topic. Clarke noted that it was becoming a major theme in SF, and recommended Kim Stanley Robinson's forthcoming *Mars trilogy*.

Then the discussion was thrown open to the floor. Arthur and Gentry were asked a wide range of questions, which led to discussions of SETI, crop circles, the relevance of SF, communication satellites, the ethics of terraforming, *Star Wars* and the rise of scientific illiteracy (a point perhaps resulting from the large number of pseudo-science questions that were asked). In response to one question, Arthur revealed that he considered the novel *The Song of Distant Earth* to be his best work. Through all the questions, Arthur and Gentry kept up a lively exchange, with a healthy dose of scepticism thrown in for added entertainment!

Despite Arthur's ill-health (he is still recovering from post-polio syndrome), the question and answer session continued after a brief interval for a further hour. Arthur's voice was good and strong, though he did seem frail, and had difficulty in walking unaided, and apparently gets tired easily (the planned programme was only an hour of conversation and discussion).

At just before 9pm, Heather Couper brought the evening to a close. It had been a most interesting evening, and well worth the trip from Bath to Minehead. Such events are very rare, and this one was made more poignant by the fact that this was potentially Arthur C Clarke's last trip to the UK.

((The 1993 judges for the Arthur C Clarke award will be Maureen Speller and Mark Plummer representing 'Foundation', Kev McVeigh and another (not yet confirmed) representing the BSFA, Maxim Jakubowski and Dr Morris Goldsmith representing the Science Policy Foundation and Dave Barrett administering, probably with the help of Jeff Kipling.))

## WriteBack

If something in this issue has caught your attention, if you have something to say - on Science Fiction, the BSFA, or anything else - please write to Jenny and Steve Glover, 16 Avary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP by the deadline:

**September 15 1992.**

### More than Bloody Teflon

In *Matrix* 100, co-ordinator Kev McVeigh wrote (as an ordinary member) that "communications are just ... 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?" He will now find out.

Julian Flood, Lodge Farm Cottage, Coney Weston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 1HG

How can anyone who drives a car, uses communications of any sort, uses a dishwasher or a washing machine, writes with a word-processor, even, how can such a person doubt the value of a space programme? Let me spell out the results of the race to the moon. It was, after all, a long time ago.

Without Apollo, the miniaturisation of electronics would have been delayed by years. All the above items are cheaper, smaller and less wasteful of resources because they are better designed. Better design depends on cheap computing. Weather forecasting has improved - one Fish does not make a shoal of error. Land use has improved. Pictures from space alert us to the damage in tropical rain forests, soil erosion and water pollution. Crop diseases are diagnosed from orbit.

Sill not convinced? Try this. A single picture showing Earth rising over the bleak surface of the moon brought home to millions how small, fragile and beautiful our home planet is. Anyone who sees that image, general, Green, politician or fan and who remains unmoved has s/bits\* emotions stupefied by reading too much high fantasy.

It is more difficult to think of reasons for the British to go back into space. (Yes, back. We had a space programme, launched satellites, even held the records for the heaviest first launch). It was the Black Knight/Black Arrow programme. A report said that it was a successful demonstration but more money was needed if it was to be developed into a viable commercial rocket. The money was not forthcoming - instead Harold Wilson gave it to BMC or British Steel or Upper Clyde Shipbuilders or some other pet financial black hole - so the scheme came to an end and that was it. That's why we scrounge rides from Russia, the USA and France.

What would we gain? Well, suppose we started by developing Alan Bond's engine and the Hotel space plane. New materials, new design techniques, new engineering skills. Who knows where they might lead? A research and development effort along these lines might be more profitable and even morally more acceptable than developing another conventional fighter aircraft. Cheap lift into orbit opens all sorts of possibilities - power resources, manufacturing, disposal of dangerous wastes. Think of the commercial advantages, the tax money available to spend on the poor, the homeless, the humble.

It won't happen.

The technological challenge that a nation chooses to face is an expression of its will. The Americans are in space because they have the outward urge, the competitiveness to show the world who's best. We are not in space except as beggars. We don't have the guts.

Even Science Fiction in Britain ran away from space, hid from technology. Perhaps that was symptomatic of the deeper malaise. It is still dominated by epic fantasy, thinks the phrase "a sense of wonder" is pejorative, seems to believe that we can turn our back on the techniques that we have to, have to, use to feed and clothe ourselves in a finite world. SF should be a way of trying out ideas, preparing people to deal with new and exciting concepts. Superheroes fly, they don't cost money from the DHSS and stick strange chemicals into their blood streams. Go to Bradford, sit right in the middle of the IMAX cinema and watch *The Blue Planet*. See what we're missing. I don't suppose there'll be many takers.

Tell me I'm wrong, please. Tell me that the generation that screwed up the car industry, the shipyards, aviation, space, SF, please tell me it was an aberration and that the new generation of writers, businessmen, politicians, designers, engineers and accountants has broader visions, clearer insights, wider vistas. Otherwise, it will go on getting worse.

What use is a space programme? It's a diagnostic tool, it tell you if your society can hack it.

\* This construction ensures that no offence is given to persons of either, any or no gender, unlike the customary s/he or his alternatives. Or it takes the piss out of the PC thought police. I forget which.

\*\*

**Blue Planet** is one of several films available on the IMAX system, the UK's largest cinema screen, some 52 feet high and 64 feet wide. In the UK, IMAX can only be seen at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford, though there is also an IMAX screen in Den Haag and at several sites in the USA. More details from the NMPT, Peter's View, Bradford BDS OTR, tel: 0274 727488.

**Blue Planet** takes the viewer 50 miles into space to view the world, surrounded by the narrow, fragile band of atmosphere that supports life on earth and also looks at the forces that influence our environment like volcanoes, earthquakes, typhoons and, perhaps the most powerful, Mankind. It mainly comprises scenes shot by orbiting Shuttle crew members, one of whom, Colonel John Blaha said "When you are out in space and you look down, you get the feeling that this is a precious place out here in the universe".

Other films available include *We are Born of Stars* which goes on a five-billion year journey through the evolution of life in twelve minutes with state-of-the-art computer graphics and *Antarctica* which takes the viewer underneath the massive icebergs where the seals glide and life is a never ending struggle.

David Gillon, 41 Armada Way, Admirals Reach, Chatham, Kent ME4 6PH

Kevin McVeigh hits back at me in *Matrix* 100, commenting on my "Case for Space" soapbox in the previous mailing. He says I'm living in a dreamworld... Dammit, I knew there was something surreal about this place. Seriously though, Kevin's reply to my "Case for Space" raises valid points and merits a reply.

Perhaps the major point that needs to be made clear is that I was never arguing for a UK space programme - the idea is ludicrous and was meant purely as an eye-catching metaphor. We might have had one once, with *Blue Streak*, but the government of the day lacked the guts to press ahead with it and the moment passed. Trying to start an independent UK space programme wouldn't even be pie in the sky, it is money down the drain. Personally speaking, I don't even support ESA's involvement in the Hermes mini-shuttle. Its benefits are outweighed by the costs. Co-operation is the only way that manned space flight will advance beyond the shuttle and Space Station Freedom. America may just make it back to the Moon by itself, but any Mars mission is going to need Russia, ESA and probably the Japanese as well. Britain has no individual importance in space, but Space is important to the UK economy and to all those people in high-tech companies which benefit from the satellite industry - British Aerospace and Matra Marconi Space being the most noteworthy. These aren't just one man and a dog enterprises and if they go down the tube, then large numbers of people will be hurt.

Kevin criticises my emphasis on "Science" rather than "Science Fiction" in the title of my last issue. I have no intention of implying there was anything other than a literary society, what I was emphasising is that science is of profound significance to one of SF's major schools and important enough to the other, softer, school that authors almost inevitably feel the need to create some pseudo-scientific justification for even their most outlandish of literary conceits. If science is of importance to the people writing in the genre, then surely we must treat it with equal importance if our criticism, commentaries or whatever are to be of any value - would Kevin write an article debating influences on Tolkien or CS Lewis without considering their Christianity, for example? Given that science is relevant, we must assume that the real-world's treatment of science is of at least passing interest, certainly the election issue must have stirred the notice of more than a handful of members. If science is of no interest to the BSFA, then why the hell is *Vector* publishing articles on the Burgess Shale and anomalies in flint strata? There was also Cecil Nurse's infamous "Why Scientists are Idiots" soapbox, which appeared in *Matrix* a couple of years ago (copies available from the editorial address on receipt of a large sae - ed.).

It is obvious that Kevin and I disagree on the importance of abstract scientific knowledge - I believe that curiosity of this type is a survival trait - but my argument was focused on the view that certain of the problems facing our society can only be achieved by the funding and management of scientific research in an educated manner - and that means we need scientifically literate members of our government. If Kevin wants his cures for Cancer, or M.E., or AIDS, then he had better hope that some government somewhere is allocating money to that research.

I'll admit to finding it a little hard to follow Kevin's logic in moving from technology to the case of Rodney King. As he says - though perhaps not as he meant - technology made no difference, it was irrelevant. The King case is one of ethics: the ethics of the police officers involved, the ethics of the jury which cleared them in spite of the evidence, the ethics of the people who seized the excuse of the verdict to turn LA into a city of terror, and the ethics of the population at large, which was wise enough to condemn all three groups. Technology plays no part, any assumption that it should is flawed. Technology is never more than an enabler, a tool, changes in society as a result of it depend not just on the possibilities it raises, but on the society existing prior to those changes becoming possible. Example: fertility treatments and embryo experimentation were the subject of the Warnock Committee and Report, not to co-ordinate the research - which would be the "pure science" reason for such interest - but because the ethics prevailing within our society meant that it was unacceptable for such research to be carried on without some form of oversight and limitations being applied.

I haven't read either *Hyperion* or *Cantos* or *Raft*, which Kevin draws on when he talks about science in fiction, but if he is tacitly assuming I'm a diehard hard SF fan, he's actually mistaken. Oh, I used to be. *Niven and Forward* were at the top of my personal canon at one stage, but nowadays I far prefer the psychological character oriented fiction of, for instance, CJ Cherryh. I was particularly impressed by Orson Scott Card's *Speaker for the Dead* recently, and he can hardly be branded as a writer who bends his work to fit the science. While I would agree that SF usually doesn't do a great job of depicting science, some representations are quite passable - Cherryh's *Cyteen* for example. Doing it well, and not compromising the story are simply a measure of the skill of the author.

To sum up, Kevin accused me, and by implication science in general, of failing to see the real world. If wanting our government to take a leading role in directing science research is dreaming, if ground-level American scientists organize petitions against their government's failure to sign the Bio-diversity Treaty at Rio is failing to confront reality, then I'm glad I'm a dreamer.

What's ironic, of course, is that since the election, we have seen the creation of the Office of Science and Technology with a Cabinet level minister in William Waldegrave (admittedly part-time) and a remit covering almost exactly what I suggested in my soapbox article. This isn't just surprising, it's damn near stunning, but it is a hopeful sign. What remains to be seen is whether or not it makes a difference.

Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading RG1 5AU

I can quarrel with several aspects of Steve Baxter's science in *Raft* (mostly the biology), but Kevin McVeigh's accusation that he ignores basic physics seems misconceived. To cite "the effects of high g on human cells" is to miss the point: g, the local acceleration due to gravity, is a variable in *Raft*'s universe just as it is here, only more so, and the book's characters experience equivalent g-values within a supportable range from free-fall to several times Earth's gravity on the briefly-visited surface of the iron star. It's capital G, the gravitational constant, which is a billion times larger - so that unusually little mass is needed to produce a "normal" g. And when Kevin calls this "an old, old trick", I bet he's thinking of high-g stories like Clement's *Mission of Gravity*, rather than the high-G situation Steve actually describes.

Yuri Scherbatykh, kw 136, ul. Koltsovskaia 17, Voronezh, Russia 394036

((this open letter was also sent to the Protoplasm SF convention, held in Manchester this June, as a contribution to their scientific strand))

Human beings have always tried to catch a glimpse of the future from the time of the ancient pharaohs to the present. There have always been fortune tellers and prophets, astrologists and palm readers. But the questions about the future change to suit each period in history. People can try to forecast changes in the Earth's climate, changes in political systems, or can predict technological progress. Let's try to imagine what human beings will be like in the distant future, let's guess how their bodies and souls will develop.

People are children of nature; they are the product of the laws of evolution of living creatures on our planet. But after having always been an organic part of the biosphere, they are now becoming more and more alien to it. This has to do with the fact that humankind has persistently been creating its own technological living environment; a "technosphere" that greatly differs from the environment out of which it was created. In order to better understand possible directions of human development, I would like to present a hypothesis of the three stages of humans' adaptation to their environment.

In the first stage of development, when people were only thinking primates, they reacted passively to changes in their environment and adapted to them, for example, in the cold, all mammals' blood vessels contract, regulating the organisms heating reflexes. When people acquired reason, they found another way to react to natural factors. Rather than passively adapting to natural factors, they started changing their environment, altering it to conform to their needs and desires.

Thus began the second stage of the evolution of living creatures on Earth. What do people do when it gets cold? They put on clothes, build shelters, turn on electric appliances. In other words, they create around them a micro environment with comfortable living conditions. Most of the problems that face human beings today have to do with the fact that our living environment has changed drastically in the past century, while biologically speaking, human beings themselves have remained just as they were a thousand years ago.

The core of my hypothesis is that humankind will be forced to turn to yet a third step of adaptation. In this stage, humans will learn to change their organisms to meet a desired goal to be flexible and adjust to their environments, consciously changing their bodies as become necessary. Indian yogis were the first to start doing this: they can change their own body temperature, metabolism, hear beat, etc. Today, biofeedback machines help people control their own vegetable systems. This is only the beginning of the process of human beings' release from the rigid genetic programs that are established in them by nature.

What can humans expect in the future? Let's turn to science for an exact answer. But unfortunately, today's science doesn't look more than twenty or thirty years ahead. Here are the reasons why: absence of funding of long term project. Also the impossibility to properly test on existing models, since only

time can show what the future will really be like. And the narrow specialisation of contemporary science discourages the collaboration of experts from many branches of science: biologists, psychologists, physiologists, philosophers .... that is critical to distant predictions.

So if science won't tell the future for us, we'll turn to Science Fiction. Fantasy bravely creates images of a new world. Constant invention of new images is vital to Science Fiction, since it is what arouses readers' interest. However, Science Fiction is more than fruitless dreaming, it often turns out to be valid predictions. Remember that lasers, holograms, the atom bombs, robots, television and space flight appeared first in Science Fiction literature, and only later in real life. Science Fiction presents us with a wide variety of alternatives for the future, and at least a small number of them will be realised. Today Science Fiction is the only way to get a clear, concrete look at the future.

How does Science Fiction present human beings of the distant future? There are generally three different kinds of predictions, each of which has its own branches and variations. The first is that human beings will not change. This is the most popular view and is presented by, for example, Isaac Asimov in *The End of Eternity* and Stanislaw Lem in *Solaris*. Humans can come up with amazing machines, change the planet's climate and conquer the galaxy, but their own souls remain just as perplexing and their bodies just as powerless as ours are for us today.

The second sort of literature looks at the constant process of evolution: a race of "new people" will take the place of human beings we know. Examples of this sort of prophecy include HG Wells' *The Time Machine* and Edmund Hamilton's *The Evolution of Doctor Pollard*. This kind of fantasy, in which humans change passively, is probably unlikely. In his book *The Past, Present and Future of Humanity*, the Russian Professor Bystron wrote: "In order for man's biological evolution to continue, it is necessary to place people in life threatening conditions in which they need certain biological traits in order to survive". But this probably isn't possible in our humane and civilised world, where weak and strong, and ignorant and intelligent have practically even chances to reproduce.

The third group of Science Fiction prediction is that humans change actively, by their own will and according to their own plan. The probability of this kind of development is greater. Some authors expect drastic changes in human beings, who in future will gain entirely new capabilities: telepathy, levitation and telekinesis. Other authors concentrate on technological perfection of people: artificial gills, mechanical brains and other organs, and so forth. The general symbol of this approach to evolution is the concept of a "cybernetic organism", a human machine that combines the advantages of both people and robots. However, the human body and human emotions are too alien to machines' logic to successfully combine the two.

But a person doesn't need to insert a computer into his or her brain in order to learn to control his or her body and consciousness. We don't know which direction human development will really take, and can only make suggestions. Right now, Science Fiction writers are faced with the problem of people's psychological preparation for surprises and unprecedented changes that will arise through the development of human civilisation on Earth. Science Fiction literature serves as a gradual adaptation to the future.

## Peculiar to last issue

Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough YO12 5RQ

Of the Asimov obituaries (too much coverage in *Vector*), I'm not a great lover of Asimov's fiction, but I thought the Tommy Ferguson comments to be balanced and accurate, partly because he was given more room to develop his theme. Asimov's seminal influence in SF, he did write some good stuff and a lot of bad, and he was most certainly an influential figure in many fans' introduction to the genre. Let's face it, Gernsback wrote some abysmal fiction, but no one would deny he was a prime mover in the creation of the whole SF field. Let's not condemn the whole of Asimov outright - or for that matter, let's not make him a saint - he was, like the rest of us, a human being with strengths and weaknesses. Steve Grover appreciated these two sides and I loved the comment on the jaw object to the robot in *Saturn 3* because it didn't obey Asimov's laws.

I enjoyed both New Books and the SF Scene, but I would put in a plea for greater coverage of the magazine field, perhaps a column on what is appearing in the American magazines would go down well - certainly it could be no worse than the current coverage of magazines. Sadly, *Interzone* prints stuff which I found unreadable the last time I tried it. Confession, I never even heard of the other titles mentioned - that of course is a good point, the column makes me aware of new stuff.

As for voting on Awards, well, I have several very good reasons (to me, at least) for never voting, even though I get a large number of titles by way of review. My reasons are as follows:-

1. I'm never sure of which titles come within given voting dates.
2. I seldom come across any titles I think worth a nomination.
3. My views are usually different from the selection panel, so I'm not interested enough in the Nominations to bother voting even if I were entitled to do so.

With regard to the on-going argument about what the BSFA should do, be and so on, herewith my own humble opinions for what they are worth. Whatever current members may say, when we created the BSFA back in the fifties, its

avowed aim (which may possibly have been officially changed since then) was "to bring new blood into fandom" as it was thought numbers were falling. Does the BSFA still pursue this aim? I'll assume it does, but, sadly, not as well as it might.

I'd prefer the magazines to revert to *Vector*, as this is easier to handle, less floppy and more book/magazine like. As form, which should be the "flagship" of the magazines, has dull covers - and often dull lead articles - and who decided it should be "The critical journal" - ? Page 2 is wasted by the overlarge spread of titles. The page 3 editorials could benefit (and take less space) if they used the print size, format and three columns of the rest of the mag. The sideways headings also waste space and are a pain to the eye. Taken together, they use up almost three pages of the total 24. A ridiculous balance for mere title headings. Even the competition notes on page 9 take 2/3rds of a page. As for material, too much space on Asimov, and I doubt much general interest would be met by "fossils". Book reviews, these are excellent and just the right length without verbose overkill - drop 'em from *Vector*, put all reviews into one magazine.

Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA

Re *Focus*: I'm having a rethink on whether a magazine format is the best way to organise a fiction workshop, and wonder if an apa system might be more suitable so that everybody gets a look in. I've noted the EGM at Novacon (no - the EGM will now be held just prior to the Kim Stanley Robinson talk at the BSFA London meeting on September 21, see Kevin McVeigh's column for more details - ed.). It really depends on what the writers want themselves - real critical feedback on submissions or a subsidised vanity press. I would strongly argue against the BSFA funding the latter just to inflate a few bags.

Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AY

Kevin McVeigh says "The BSFA doesn't have much money". So he ups the sub. to £15 and simultaneously axes *Focus* and *Paperback Inferno*. Nobody answered my earlier questions: how many copies of BSFA magazines do we sell at the cover prices, through what outlets, why don't we sell a helluva lot more? And to summarise: I expect value for money, and were I not leaving the UK this September, I'd cancel my 12-year-or-so-long membership right now. What do we want? Value for money. And this ain't it.

Kevin says we need a Business Manager, mentions "exchange ads" in BSFA zines and Gollancz paperbacks. It was one such which brought me to the SFA, so I know they can work, they don't cost a penny (camera ready copy from Gollancz, it's SFA advertising, we need it so must sacrifice some editorial for it). I have been both an advertisement manager (selling space) and an advertising manager (drafting copy, placing ads, to best advantage) and I can't be alone in having this skill. Why must Tennant knock good ideas when he is obviously totally ignorant of the field? Let's do it!

Both Tennant and the lovely Ms Speller can't grasp why the BSFA must grow. It's a matter of scale: with 10,000 members, we could have a superb selection of zines, far more influence in the publishing world to provide members with more and better SF, the chance to launch a fictionzine that paid commercial rates (and which would also sell across newsstand counters) the petty problems of collating and stuffing ("fulfilment") would become picaresque, everything - everything! - would be easier all round. We'd have happier editors, happier readers and the beginnings of an organisation that could change the face of SF worldwide. All for the sake of paying for expert help to place and sell ad. space to increase membership. Come on, now!

I'd like to extend a massive greeting and all good wishes to Elizabeth Billinger and Carol Ann Green for their willing acceptance of complex and harrowing tasks. We need more like them, and we should be grateful to them! Congratulations also to Chuck Connor for a brave and honest outburst! And congrats. to Jim England for his suggestion that *Focus* should print Orbiter contributions - what a damn good idea! That way the writers would be assured of getting unbiased criticism at least ... But should Tennant be able to say "I won't have my sub. used for this/that" when the Committee has been democratically elected to make these decisions? I've brought a t-shirt if you made 'em big enough (and if the inscription was confrontational and controversial enough)! How about "BSFA People Do It With Rocket Fuel" or "Grow Your Own Alien - Plant A BEM Today" or some such trash?

Finally to Maureen's letter: I applaud her spirited call to arms but regret her feeling that she has to scold us so much and refute her complaint about criticism and praise for Committee members - let's get this straight: praise is immaterial and irrelevant, all that matters is that the complaints come rolling in, for without them your membership is decaying and sliding away quietly: criticism means people care! And no, Mo, I did not (even implicitly) criticise you: you admit yourself you have changed your mind about things you fought strongly for; I want to see the BSFA survive, and to do so it must be dragged kicking and screaming into the market place. I hope you've not been too long in the groves of academe to remember the Real World out here, where money matters and membership means money.

Susan Francis, 16 Crowhurst Road, Colchester CO3 3SW

Steve Grover reckons he and Syd Foster are the only people who complained about Millzone "in anything like forceful terms". Please defend "forceful". I only whinged when renewing my sub. that I wouldn't renew it again if there were any more such cock-ups. I reckon from what has been published and the verbal opinions I've heard that Mr Pringle must have had a number of

variously abusive letters, most of which he chooses to ignore. This is now nearly a year old, and I expect the ed will be printing "this correspondence is now closed" any time now. (see below :- ) -Eds)

Re Ken Lake's empire building eg "We could subsidise their zines, even incorporate them into our own costfree" and several other suggestions. This has been said before, by Maureen and others; it is not costfree! Even supposing the people you want to collaborate with agree and assuming an infinite supply of competent volunteer labour paying their own transport costs, material (paper, etc.), and postage are both significant costs that increase with bulk, not fixed overheads. First you'd have to have the greatly expanded financial base (membership), then you can consider doing this stuff. Otherwise you mortgage yourself to the buy now pay later system, which is the most expensive way of doing anything, as every people have found to their cost, and which the BSFA has so far avoided, as far as I know.

I agree with most of what Maureen says, quibbles, etc. follow. Criticism of apathy ("the average BSFA member wants everything handed to him/her on a plate": this is nothing to do with the BSFA as such. Random (ie familiar to me) example: my FoE group has about 100 members, a half to two thirds of which renew more or less on time, sort of, a much smaller number give any other indication of being awake and about 20 turn up sometimes either at meetings or elsewhere. It is not known how many engage in other relevant activities, eg writing the letters to M.P.'s that are frequently called for. I also don't know how many have serious reasons for not being active like being housebound or having two full-time jobs (one paid, one not). For all I know, most of them are active in something else (like CHD, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, local "community activities", PTA's, voluntary work, evening classes, sports, cultural associations, conrunning, written fan activities outside the BSFA, local clubs, "fringe" fandom, etc.).

One of the things people can do that doesn't take much time away from their particular extra-curricular activity is nominating and voting for the award, except of course when the forms arrive 3 days before the deadline. I rarely read new books unless the library happens to get them: people who don't live near a good library (and aren't rich), or whose literary tastes are not confined to SF and allied genres, have a problem here. The problem I had was that, having been assured Eastercon members are eligible to vote, therefore it is possible to vote at Eastercon, there was no box to vote in. If your rep. is only going to be there for the AGM, please ask the overworked Committee to put a cardboard box with a suitable label on it somewhere (preferably somewhere visible) (There was a box for BSFA ballots beside the other ballot boxes in the foyer -- an overworked committee member).

The magazines have lately acquired a confused and tatty air? Listen, I've been a member for 12 years. The magazines have lately been neat, legible (if only with a hand lens) and intelligibly laid out. You should have seen them in the mid '80s!

## Nature Notes

John Hurley, 18 St David's Place, Park Site, Maestag, Mid Glamorgan

I sit here in my deep, amiable armchair, slipped feet at peace upon an ottoman, the old meerschbaum smouldering and I am in a fey mood, a lazy and ponderous hour is upon me, due, no doubt, to the heavy weather. Languid heat is pressing against the high window and not a breeze stirs, not a single zephyr has ventured forth from the near fir-spiked hills in a curious attraction to view who is doing what, and so, having perused *Matrix*, *Vector* and *Paperback Inferno*, I begin this missive in an imish frame of mind.

Doing much walking about the near countryside, because of the prolonged good weather, the abundance of wild life, flora and fauna, has been strongly noted this year by myself and others, plants especially are in profusion. Foxgloves stand tall along the roadsides, more than I have seen for a long time. The little white crocuses are in flower, as are the numerous other plants whose given names I do not know. Molechills were in abundance a month or so back and in the last five years a pair of buzzards were daily seen gliding across the sky, the first that I have ever seen in this area, alas, they are missing now as some trash in human guise cut down a hundred year old oak tree to collect their eggs. Snake and lizards have always been seen hereabout and deer come over the hill to graze. Rabbits and numerous birds go about their lives -- just a minute, what is all this leading to? Get to the point, even if it has no sharpness. It's no thrill at all displaying a jewelled bill if the drawn sword has a plywood blade -- Well, I was thinking, what if there is a world of humans, but no other living creatures. No birds, insects, fish or mammals, just vegetation adapted to survive in its own unique way, and so on this premise, how would the human evolve? No airborne creatures to give wings to the imagination, no water dwellers to give the fancy of breathing in the deeps, no lifeforms at all for the apeman to ape. The living world consisting of trees, shrubs, reeds, flowers, vegetables, etc., what society, what civilisations would develop?

*Yimm sat and observed the pods burst and fling their seeds into the air and he revered the magic of the action, and so after many dreaming nights he examined the pods and finally he constructed his own giant one and caused himself to be flung into the air, to the awe of his tribe. Yimm was thrilled and proud at his new above the people. Later, as the people enjoyed the picture of Yimm broken and dead upon the ground, Gimm said that Yimm had acted like a seed, let us now plant him; and so they did, but he did not grow.*

*Much later, Bimm thought about Yimm as he pondered the great sycamore-type tree and the clever falling of its seeds as they twirled downwards, and he realised that this was the perfect way to fly, and so he made sticks in the odd shape of the seedcase, which was a large "Y", and standing upon the apex of the lofty tree, Bimm leapt down, his hands holding his invention, and the tribe stared in awe at his behaviour. Later, they enjoyed the image of Bimm, broken and dead upon the ground, Gimm said that Bimm believed himself a seed, so they planted him, and the strange stick, which had stabbed itself into the ground, they left there as a reference to the spot.*

*In the quiet days, many thought about Yimm and Bimm and their impressive deaths, and they began a fashion reflecting the flora of Nature. Those who covered themselves in leaves became the Bushmen, while those who wore the fruits of the hazel were named the Nutters. Then the flowermen arose, who had various outfits according to what plant they favoured, for example: the Bluebells, the Pansies. With the passing millennium came the climax: the Nettie Kilt, first worn by Sting. It can be safely predicted that the Vegetable Empire will soon arise, so we can expect the arrival of the starship: New Potato, crewed by the Swedes?*

P.S. I have refrained from delving into their defence systems involving the parsnip pistol, melon mortar and the deadly cruise carrot, borne by the Millet-Tree.

## Overview of the BSFA

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

There's much talk of members' apathy and lack of contributions, but issue 100 was almost bursting at the seams with content, so you must be doing something right.

There's no much to discuss and comment upon that it's difficult to know where to begin. Chuck Connor's letter seems a good point of departure, as he credits me with sparking him off. I'm sorry that Chuck found my letter in *Matrix* 99 so mind-numbing. He should have waited for the effect to wear off before putting his own pen to paper.

Chuck uses the poor response to Mic Rogers' criticism of the BSFA as an excuse to berate the membership for apathy, dismissing 99% as "mindless, passive consumers" in the contemptuous tone of the self-righteous activist. Bully for Chuck. Not content with that, he turns on the two people who did respond to Mic and proceeds to put them in their place too, apparently unaware that there's an element of inconsistency creeping into his arguments. I guess targeting everyone with the same brush is easier than exercising a little judgement.

Chuck goes on to quote me out of context, giving the impression that I want *Focus* cancelled simply because it appears irregularly. Then he indignantly demands what I've done to keep the magazine going. *Focus*' regularity is not the issue as far as I'm concerned (though if the magazine is to continue, steps should be taken to ensure that it appears on a regular basis). Anyone able to follow the recent dialogue in *Matrix* will be aware that I consider *Focus* to serve no real purpose. Given that, why does Chuck think I should be doing something "to remedy the irregularity"? For the record, though, let it be noted that when Cecil Nurse took over, I offered to submit/criticise articles; since then, I have written letters to Cecil and contributed to an article there. Not much compared to some people's work for the BSFA. I'll admit, but Chuck Connor's only contribution seems to be slugging me off for suggesting the cancellation of a magazine put out by an organisation to which he chooses not to belong. He criticises me for sitting on my backside: I think that he talks out of his.

In answer to Mic Rogers, I suggested that the BSFA wasn't necessary to people already involved in fandom (her own view, surely?), but had potential for growth among the far greater number interested simply in Science Fiction for its own sake. An innocuous remark, or so I thought, but it seems to have attracted the full weight of Chuck's scorn. "I sincerely hope that [he] doesn't mean the BSFA's failure to reach fandom, does he [me]?" Quite, Chuck. Glad you managed to grasp that one. Can't slip anything past a perceptive reader like you, can I? But exactly what is the point you're trying to make?

Liz Counihan is next in line to receive the Connor boot in the face. "[She] claims to read SF, which is fine by me". That's big of you, Chuck, but in case you hadn't heard, no-one needs your permission. Liz's offence seems to be that she has a few words to say in praise of BSFA activities, and that she doesn't go to many conventions. The latter implies that she goes to some (plural) (true, I had an enjoyable chat with her at Mexican IV last year -ed.), but that doesn't stop Chuck saying that she doesn't do much to try and understand". Does even a superfan like Chuck Connor to do and to enjoy every single convention that's held? I think not.

Chuck closes his attack with a pithy remark about the apathy of Liz and myself. It's amazing what he can infer about our respective characters from a few lines in a letter. OK, I don't regard myself as a mover and shaker, but over the past five years I've had stories, letters and reviews published in twenty odd magazines, helped organised and take part in two art exhibitions. Liz is also a persistent letter hater for the BSFA and editor of "Scheherazade" magazine. Small potatoes, I guess, compared to publishing an occasional fanzine and sending it out to a circle of friends for the usual, whatever that happens to be (and if you want to find out, look for the fanzine column -ed.).



If Chuck feels so strongly about the BSFA, then why doesn't he put his money where his mouth is and rejoin? Surely the presence of such a live wire will galvanise us all. Sadly his only use for the BSFA now seems to be to read the magazines and write letters to them attacking the members. In the circumstances, his comments about people who take everything out of the organisation and put nothing back in seem entirely inappropriate.

I suspect for Chuck the BSFA's role is not an issue. Fandom is the be all and end all for him. He seems to have taken my words and Liz's as an attack on fandom and responded in kind. I can't speak for Liz, but I never had any such intention. Fandom is something I have neither the time, money nor inclination to get involved with, but good luck to those who do. I simply don't see the BSFA's primary role as a gateway into or adjunct to fandom, though I've no objection to people who do use the organisation that way. I see it as a clearing house for information about Science Fiction. The fazines, conventions, meetings, etc., are just icing on the cake for those with a sweet tooth.

Frankly, I'm amazed by Chuck's letter. I've read stuff by him before and he seemed like an intelligent man, capable of debating the issues. The impression given is of an arrogant buffoon, interested only in stamping on anyone with the temerity not to share his point of view. I do hope that impression is wrong, that he only adopted this loutish tone to provoke a response from people whom, rightly or wrongly, he considers apathetic.

I'm glad I wasn't the only one irritated by this year's management of the BSFA awards. It's ridiculous that *The Fall of Hyperion* should get the best novel award with only 44 votes from a membership of approximately 1000. What proportion of these were postal votes, I wonder? If the awards are to have any meaning at all, then they must be as broadly based as possible. Let's hope that the organisers, and full credit to them for taking on a (probably) thankless task, can make a better job of it next year. Of the various suggestions put forward, I like Dr J D Stephen's idea of divorcing the awards from the Eastercon. That would allow us more leeway in voting, etc.

Can I second Alison Cook's suggestion that some sort of collection/presentation is made to Keith Freeman as a token of our appreciation for his efforts over the years? We all owe him an immense debt of gratitude.

Like certain other correspondents I would have cancelled my *Interzone* subscription over the "Millzone" affair (I say would have, because I stopped subscribing to that magazine a year ago). For David Pringle to palm off another magazine to his *Interzone* subscribers seems entirely unprincipled, and his attempts to justify the decision only compound his original error. How would he feel in similar circumstances; given a meal he didn't want in a restaurant because the food he had ordered was unavailable. It's the lack of serious competition in the market place that allows Pringle to get away with being so high handed. And to a degree the BSFA has helped perpetuate this state of affairs by denying serious consideration of *Interzone*'s fledgling rivals.

Ken Lake lays down his vision for the BSFA in greater detail than before, and most of what he says I find appealing. We all want the organisation to be bigger and better, and to see the people who put so much hard work into making it a success getting paid for their efforts would be marvellous. I still don't see how it is feasible, though. Ken's scenario depends on an enormous increase in members, generated by a vast national advertising campaign. But how is such a campaign to be financed? One ad, in *New Worlds* cost £400 plus VAT, leaving the Association strapped for cash and with few new members to show for it. Does Ken propose that we book the ads, and keep our fingers crossed that they'll generate the new members to pay for them? Of course, he's right in principle. Science Fiction in all its forms pervades the modern media landscape and millions of people are, however slightly, interested in what the genre has to offer. In such a climate, it's ridiculous that the BSFA should have only a thousand members. I can't see how to rectify the situation though. For the near future, all we can hope for is slow, cautious expansion.

Much depends on the magazines. They are the BSFA's calling cards and for many the only link with other members. Their well being is synonymous with that of the organisation itself. In the past I, along with others, have made various suggestions regarding their format. I wait with interest to see what Kev McVeigh and the respective editors will come up with, when the proposed re-vamping is completed.

I receive lists of all BSFA members who leave the society or just let their membership lapse and they get listed, though I give priority to changes of address and new members if possible. Often members re-join. BSFA committee members pay membership fees just like all other members, and occasionally let their memberships lapse temporarily, either from pressure of work or from financial considerations. - cd

Gillian J K Rooke, Southview, Pilgrim's Lane, Chilham, near Canterbury, Kent CT4 8AB

I feel the urge to put my oar in here and agree with those who think the BSFA is getting too fanatical. It isn't so much that there is more of fandom, as that there is less of anything else. The job *Matrix* does is good. It is necessary to report on conventions and group activities round the country. I wouldn't like to see much changed in *Matrix*, although note, I do not read it, apart from skimming through for publishing information, and looking at the letters.

I joined the BSFA after looking in the library to find a magazine for writers of SF. I expected a serious magazine about the problems and experiences of writers with information about how to get started, and of course, hopefully,

contracts. The magazines did start me with the orbits, which I find great fun, so I'm grateful. But I do find that there is less and less in them of the sort of thing I want to read.

This is, of course, mainly because *Focus* has gone. It was my favourite, and although *Vector* has taken over to some extent, there is now talk of making *Vector* into a review magazine. Does anyone seriously think, that if this happens, it is going to continue to run as many articles as it does now? The BSFA is simply going to consist of the news and gossip of fans, in one zine and endless reviews of hundreds of books that only unemployed dropouts would have time (or would want) to read, in the other. The BSFA would have to drop its claim of being an association for writers.

So please, please, don't let this happen.

Positive suggestions:

1. If we must have endless book reviews, then yes, certainly put them all in one magazine. And how about calling it something original, like "Book Reviews"?

2. I have already agreed that we also need to run info, about fan groups and activities.

So what I would like to see, and I hope I'm not the only one:

1. Info, about current publishing outlets; who is accepting what and why, plus a few interesting anecdotes from writers and publishers.

2. Some sort of critical overall look (a regular column) at the way Science Fiction is moving. I suggest a science column, dealing with the scientific aspects of recently published books, and/or a column dealing with the current philosophy behind the story lines. References are made to cyberpunk, etc., but no one attempts to analyse these movements. If some of the reviewers got together, instead of all working separately, they might come up with some useful overall analyses and discussions.

3. More contributions from big names. I suppose this is difficult, though a lot of writers do like the feedback. Jenny Jones, for example, was delighted to contribute, and her piece was very well received. But a proviso here. When I say "contribution", I mean something they wrote themselves. I consider the practice of grabbing an author at a "con" and getting an impromptu interview a bit of a waste of paper.

4. How about some more social surveys? No, seriously. If we suggested doing a careful survey on reading habits and preferences, it may be that one of the big publishing firms might just be aware of the possibilities and sponsor it.

The BSFA, by its structure, gives a unique opportunity to researchers, in being of just the right size for obtaining meaningful data without impossible expenditure. And I think it would be popular. Look at the brouhaha (quite justified) when members couldn't get their votes in on time! People love stating their preferences, especially when, to do it, they only have to tick a box. Magazines, from *Readers Digest* (vocabulary testing) to the gutter press (how good is your sex life?) cash in on the popularity of questionnaire. It might even boost our readership!!! Of course, we don't have to run a serious send in one. Obviously, the ones in large circulation mags, are self-marking. But it would be nice for everybody to know what we all think of... whatever, wouldn't it?

It has been suggested that *Focus* be a channel for co-ordinating and showing off the orbits. I heartily second this! After all, as far as I know, the orbits are the only BSFA members who actually write. I could be wrong (and if there's anyone out there, who writes full length SF books rather than short stories or novelettes and wants 'mutual reading', could they please get in touch).

This suggestion, of course, is not a new one. But it may be that on previous occasions when Orbit writers were invited to submit their stories for publication with criticism, they were put off by the fact that it was unclear whether they would be allowed to see this criticism before publication, or given the chance to withdraw, should it be disastrous.

I suggest that the criticisms used, be those from the orbits, themselves, and then any author who has got good constructive crit, will feel happy about submitting that piece of work, plus the three crits, he prefers. (Orbits must also be allowed to say they don't want their crits, used).

It would, obviously, be nice to have criticisms by a professional critic, publisher, or famous writer, but those orbiters of a nervous disposition must be able to opt out of this. Orbit criticisms tend to be short, so there is no reason why they shouldn't be followed by a professional criticism occasionally, where the author agrees.

I don't buy magazines, so I don't know. Is there already a published magazine of short stories which includes criticisms? If not, this could be an important first, and could even turn into a best seller! If any of the magazines are going to "go glossy" it would be this one. If people are as keen on reviews as they seem to be by the reams we get, then surely they are going to be delighted to have the story itself in the same package?

\* namely Ms G J K Rooke  
\*\* (The mags., not the orbits).

Cecil Nurse, 49 Station Road, Haxby, York YO3 8LU

Jim England has a good point re: *Focus*. The facts are these. My problem was that my life and psyche got into a mess and I was unable to decide whether I wanted/was going to quit the BSFA/leave *Focus* or not. My apologies for making such an untidy exit, but I have now left. I had no trouble getting material for *Focus*, as long as I made the effort to get addresses and was prepared to discuss what sort of piece I wanted. I thought it was clear from my editorial that the failure of my PCW was only an excuse; after all, that was very issue not word-processed to its usual degree? I was depressed, but I am not any more.

All this has nothing to do with the continuing existence of *Focus*. Whether or not the BSFA publishes a separate writers' magazine is a matter of policy as determined by the committee, and members who do not approve of their decision should, I suppose, become ex-members. Given a reasonably clear prospectus, which is not something that has hitherto come with the territory, anyone with the time and energy could edit *Focus*.

So, I did my bit as well as I was able, enjoyed it while it lasted, and that's it. Unlike Maureen, I do not feel any responsibility for or commitment to the further evolution of the BSFA. Why not? There was a time a couple of years ago when I spent a fair bit of time thinking about the BSFA and attempting to formulate "what was wrong", "where it should go" and "what should be done". I presented by thoughts to the committee in a "bid" to be elected Co-ordinator. (Ha! I bet you didn't know that!) I was not elected, but that's not the point. The point is that the membership had no chance to choose between "my" ideas and Kev's. The numerous other members who also gave it thought at the time could just as well have been blinking in the wind, since there was no way of determining whether they were vocal minorities and no way of determining whether they were vocal minorities and individuals or represented majority feelings, and thus whether they ought to be taken into account or ignored (by the committee).

My parting shot, then, is this: the BSFA needs a new constitution, one which states its diffuse and diverse nature into account and makes the committee in some way directly accountable to the existing membership. Annual or bi-annual elections of committee members; the explicit formulation of policy and referenda on any changes to it; the presence of a broad Steering Committee of older, knowledgeable fans committed to facilitating the interests of the membership and ameliorating the excesses (positive and negative) of the excesses - such things would make "being a member" of the BSFA mean something and encourage a sense of responsibility for the whole. This would entail dissolving the present BSFA and forming a new one with a different legal structure. Until such a time, I can only see that all activists will be frustrated, all "thinking about the BSFA" - except that done by the Co-ordinator - will be fruitless, and a certain degree of apathy or indifference will be necessary in order to remain a member.

Bon voyage, BSFA, whatever the hell you are!

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

It would appear I'm not welcome in the BSFA! At only is *Focus* "suspended" (even though the technology to resuscitate is still full of kinks), but both Chris Bailey and Helen Bland seem to wish I'd leave them to get on with their club's shining destiny (at least as long as I insist on "whining" according to Chris, about the misdirected energies of the club, according to me). I'm not too upset, though, since none of them seems to have read my letter correctly.

Strangely, Chris Bailey and Steve Grover have each got my two complaints mixed together, and assigned the wrong action to the wrong complaint: I was slapping off the entire BSFA for failing to care about "Millizone", while I "threatened" to leave the BSFA because of the loss of *Focus*. In calling for the salvation of *Focus*, I was stating that my main interest in the generating (imagining, researching, writing, publishing) of SF, and not so much in the BSFA per se. I'm amazed that Chris describes that as my "own pet interests". My feeling is still that the BSFA could benefit from turning its attention to the issues involved in the creation and publishing of SF, instead of trying to be only a professional quality Fan Organisation.

Chris, I agree with you that "whining" is not very useful (whilst standing by the meaning of my complaints, if sheepishly confessing I was having a good old rant which veered towards imaginative colouration: Helen, I've seen/hard so much suggestive talk in con publicity material about the bar being a major attraction that I painted with false colour the boring con reports which come out of *Matrix*'s ears: you see, I don't drink, so apologies to you for the misdirected insult. I do agree with you that abusive letters are counter-productive, as evidenced by your reaction; and more contributors are obviously always welcome in an enterprise like *Focus*, and the other magazines.

On the other hand, whilst sympathising with Maureen Speller's sense that she and a handful of others have been doing all the work (I've been there, in FoE and related activities), she should remember her own build up to her complaints about the silent mass who just pays and takes the mailings: they are not Fans, they don't have the urge or expertise (yes, or time!) to join the active running of the BSFA: that is the province of those who actually do, at this moment, do it, because they want to, right? No point doing it otherwise. Even letter-writing is a problem for most of us, since the level of discussion in the letters is pretty high and I think the silent mass of members probably feel, as I do really, that they can't compete with the articulate and knowledgeable people who do write

letters and articles; and yet they feel a rewarding sense of stimulation to their thoughts when listening in on the debates. Do you (Maureen apart, as she comments that more should have been said about it) really think those who are active in the BSFA should be ignoring the dis-service done to readers of SF by the publication of a non-SF issue of *Interzone*, and at the same time be slapping off the members who aren't talented letter writers for "not getting involved" in the club's running? What if the 999 silent members sink off into the shaded shadows in guilty acknowledgement of their greed and selfishness in wishing to pay for the privilege of eavesdropping on some nifty dialogues?

As far as Andy Sawyer goes, which is not very far, he doesn't seem to have been shown the extensive folio I sent to Andy Mills covering my correspondence with Pringle to that date, just in time to miss the deadline for *PI* 94. Perhaps Andy Mills thought that I'd also sent it direct to A Sawyer, which I hadn't because I thought that A Mills was supposed to be dealing with it. But Sawyer announced in *PI* 94 that the issue was closed, and since he stated in *PI* 93 at the foot of Mills' page that he was on Pringle's side, I felt that the issue was not just being ignored by the BSFA, but that it was being too hastily put aside. It is very frustrating to have no one actually acknowledge the true issue, and to receive instead a false "answer" to a different one, which is what Pringle was doing (old-fashioned politics, drives me mad! I felt betrayed and got depressed. Perhaps everyone else did too, and like me just couldn't overcome the sensation of futility to write and complain at the time? Thatcher's made me old).

By the way, for the record, Pringle eventually apologised in a letter to me, but without acknowledging that he's understood even now what I got, so since I'm blicking of this subject (and have been from the start, see above), I want to just give it up now. In any case, I've no other quarrel with Pringle, not knowing what else has been going on between him and Steve Grover and IZ was responsible for bringing me back to SF after many years of ignorance, so I don't want to completely destroy the memory. I am a fringe fan, having loved SF as a child and adolescent, and thus knowing the buzz from inside, but I stopped reading (and writing) for a number of years, while I "experienced" the world we live in (and don't, too, but that's another story).

As to the National SF Magazine tag I added to IZ, the above may explain how I naturally tend to think of it so. Now *BBR* is getting there (we hope!) and *New Worlds* might thrive soon, but still it is really only IZ which comes regular and smoothly pumping, with the biggest circulation. I'm sure, so in objective terms it really is our only National SF Magazine. To Helen Bland: I subscribe to *BBR*, *Works*, *REM* and *SF Nexus* and will be subscribing to *Far Point* and *Foundation* as soon as I can get some money. I also read poetry and non-SF fiction and science books too, so I don't think that my narrow-mindedness has anything to do with my dis-satisfaction with what I got for my money in joining the BSFA. The rest of us have real SF to discuss? I'd like to see it for a change! For me *Focus* was the real SF forum. And if you had two *Focus* in '91, you had more than me!

Finally, I'm sure everyone will be overjoyed to hear that I was a lot happier with the type and printing job on this mailing, and with all the talk about improving things, I've decided to give it another year before leaving to see if things do look up. But remember, all you well-meaning hard-working Fan Activists, us hapless fringe fans who join and leave, join and leave each year, are bewildered by the ferocious society roaring through the incestuous chambers of the BSFA. We are outsiders, and we don't really know if we want to be inside that cacophonous brawl. So, whilst wishing to keep in touch, I might be writing fiction or poetry during the coming year, instead of becoming a Fan.

## Positively the last word on l'affair Millizone...

Nick Wood, 63 Bathurst Road, Kenilworth, Cape Town 7700, South Africa

I know this letter is late, but I only received *Matrix* 100 yesterday (20/7/92). I guess that's what comes of living on the other side of the world.

In reply to Steve's letter, no, him and Syd were not the only ones to complain about the "Millizone" issue. Having made a choice not to subscribe to *Millizone*, I was extremely angry to receive a *Millizone* in disguise at my expense, and wrote to complain to David Pringle. I received no formal reply, but my subscription was extended by one issue. That meaning I had ostensibly received "Millizone" for free, I saw no reason to pursue the matter further.

I think David Pringle's explanations for "Millizone" are long rationalisations to cover up what Andy Sawyer called an "error of judgement". But the fact that he was willing to extend my subscription (and others?) makes me think he implicitly acknowledges (however small) some culpability in the matter.

Given the shit that's happening in this part of the world, I think "Millizone" is a relatively innocuous affair, and should be put to rest. I think the man has learned his lesson (at least, I hope so). And I guess it is a pretty tough job, putting out a monthly magazine on top of other employment (although that does not qualify as an adequate excuse for a mistake such as "Millizone").

((The "Millizone" correspondence is now closed unless David Pringle wishes to respond... Eds.))

## Is the BSFA Name-ist?

Ellen Blanding, Coventry

I wonder if anyone else has noticed that the BSFA seems to have a "thing" against people with an "ing" in their names? First it was David Wingrove, then it was Simon Ings and now it's poor David Pringle's turn...

David R Smith, 42 Macfarlane Place, Uphall, Broxburn, West Lothian EH52 5PS

I just can't take it any more! Maureen Speller has finally driven me to putting ink onto paper. She says, in *Matrix* 100, that we will accuse her of being abusive and she is dead right. She calls me (not by name, I admit) someone who "sucks up the considerable energy of people like her", someone who takes but does not give, someone who is apathetic, someone who likes to have someone else to stick the knife into and she goes on (and on) in that vein. I freely admit that I don't contribute anything to the BSFA except my subscription. Over the years of my membership, I have written a handful of letters, entered a few competitions (gaining a rare mention in *Matrix* 52, way back in 1984), and that's it. So, presumably, I am one of the ones Maureen is writing about. Well, OK, in the past twelve months my total contribution has been my sub and one competition entry (which was for the competition where the entries got lost ... story of my life, really!). However, I don't even remember agreeing to do more. I am sure that, when I first joined, the agreement was simply that I would send money, and receive magazines in return. Back in '87, when I was receiving *Ansible*, I apologised to Dave Langford for not being more fanfanih and he (in *Ansible* 50) assured me that he "never demanded signed certificates of fanfannishness ... and promises not to run the E-meter over prospective recipients". Assuming he is still not using his E-meter, perhaps Maureen would like to borrow it.

For a spell, I went to one or two cons a year, but haven't been to one since, I think. '87. I don't read all that much SF these days, but do like to be fairly selective about what I do read, which is why I still stay in the BSFA: for the book reviews. I used to subscribe to *Locus* and *SF Chronicle*, but there came a time when I couldn't justify the subscriptions, so the BSFA magazines are now my sole source of SF reviews and information.

There is very little I could actually do which would help the BSFA. I can't write about any current SF issues, but I am not sufficiently close to them. I can't help collate, as the south of England is just a bit too far away to pop down for a day. Either the BSFA has to accept that there are people like me in it, or start screening people who join (the Langford E-meter again!).

Maureen seems to feel that if I am not actively helping the BSFA, then I, by definition, must be a bad person (at least that was the overall impression I got from her letter), whereas it is simply that I choose to direct my energy elsewhere (as a church treasurer, for instance).

Sorry to go on at such length, but Maureen's letter touched a nerve, perhaps I should write more often, even if only to say that you are doing OK, but such letters can seem a bit pointless, when other people are writing letters full of carefully thought out (and sometimes very silly) arguments. As a final aside, I often don't enter the competitions, because, due to my lack of exposure to current SF, I often can't do them - in the *Matrix* crossword, I managed 7 answers, and I confess that I have only got one of the "Initial Thought" answers.

## BSFA Awards: what really happened

Nicholas Mahoney, (BSFA Awards Administrator), 275 Lonsdale Avenue, Intake, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN2 6HJ

First of all, I am fully aware that putting the final ballot in the April mailing was far from ideal. I was trying to organise a special mailing for the final ballot. The reason I did go ahead with it was that I found it difficult to elicit the support of a key committee member, in order that I could be confident of being re-imbursed with the costs of this measure. Kev McVeigh backed me, but neither of us was aware at the time that our Treasurer had resigned his post. It seems obvious now what went wrong and what should have been done to rectify it. I lost my nerve. My job, though not a particularly high profile one, involves a fair bit of expense. I have not received any expenses for some time, this above all is my fault. I look forward to the time when I can get these sorted out. All the problems I have encountered during my three years in this job have been tied up with a lack of communication. Tim Robinson's conspiracy theory has no basis in fact. I've very little idea what the other officials of the BSFA believe to be the best SF around because I might only meet them once or twice a year. It's not the first time there has been a conspiracy theory about the workings of the BSFA, before I was involved I didn't know what to think. Now that I am involved, the whole idea becomes ludicrous. We live many miles apart and do not come from a common background. Five years from now, Tim Robinson could be the awards administrator and be faced with an equally preposterous conspiracy theory.

Some of the other points he puts forward are interesting and worthy of discussion. The very simple fact is that the nominations go to the items that gain most nominations. The only reason I haven't published the numbers involved is because they are so low. In the past few years, it would have been easy to sway them, I did not want to tempt fate by revealing this. The only

reason I feel confident enough to actually say this now is because I am introducing reforms, with the backing of the co-ordinator, seeking to end this weakness in the nominating ballot. It's amazing, in my view, that the lists have been as good as they have been. I certainly haven't swayed them beyond the act of voting myself, but even this responsibility has seemed heavy sometimes. My personal favourites never seem to win, as people who know me well will now. I never publish comments which I feel would be prejudicial to any party; this is not always easy, the sentence previous to this contains a comment that I decided, on balance, was only justified by the nature of this article.

What Tim would do well to recognise is the fact that no matter how much I rant and rave about the apathy of members not sending nominations, only a minority will take part. His letter indicates that he cares about the award more than most.

It is people like that that I am looking for to form an informal jury to smooth the operation of the nominating ballot. This body, which you need not be a part of to vote, should be linked by a newsletter summarising the views of its members on what the rest of us should be reading. Kev has kicked off with a list of material that he thinks those voting should read, what do other people think? If you want to take part or feel you should then please write to me with your views. Since saying this is not likely to have the appropriate effect, in tandem with Kev's comments last issue, I will be writing to various people who have shown commitment in the past. **Anybody who has never got round to getting involved in the past, this is your chance.**

Finally, there are always ways of improving any award, we have all the problems of it being run on a shoe-string. There is no reason why this award should always be run on a shoe-string.

## Soapbox Counterblast

In *Matrix* 100, Chris Baker suggested that one reason for the current "bad" image of SF is the lack of worthy SF films.

Martin Potts, 38 Barcliff Ave, Glascoate, Tamworth, Staffs. B77 2BJ

I feel compelled to write after reading Chris Baker's article about SF cinema and the phrase "absolute twiddle" springs to mind. His argument that SF cinema is for kids does hold a little water when qualified, but the charge that *Star Wars* et al have caused SF cinema to regress is, in my opinion, a gross injustice to Messrs. Lucas, Roddenberry and Spielberg.

All three gentlemen are involved in the entertainment business and thus their primary aim is to have a product that entertains. *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* certainly achieve that and can prove it by the record of "bums on seats" and TV ratings figures. Each one has chosen the SFF field in which to set their action stories. Gene Roddenberry also attempted to address a variety of issues within the scope of a TV series (the BBC's fondness for banning *Star Trek* episodes is not generally based on their violence, but their political content) and for me any film/show that can appeal to a wide audience and still attempt to suggest the benefits of co-operation, mutual respect and conservation etc., has to be welcomed - even better when it is in a futuristic setting.

I think that what Chris Baker does not appreciate is that SF is also allowed to be entertainment (oh no, what have I said? Have I committed some heinous crime? Is that the BSFA faithful I can hear marching down the road, noose in hand?) I suppose that, like other genres, SF has its snobs who rubbish anything that appeals to the masses and argue "Oh well, it's not really SF, the stuff I like is way above them to understand".

But I ask Chris, what is SF? He admits himself that it is hard to define; to me, it is more often than not like beauty - in the eye of the beholder. I'm sure that I could pick numerous scientific holes in his favourite works, so the scientific accuracy premise has always been a very weak definition.

The SF author effectively says: 'here is a universe that I have created and populated to illustrate a point that I wish to make or a tale I wish to spin. This universe is governed by my rules which I will endeavour to keep consistent. I hope you enjoy it'. And then the reader is left to continue past chapter 1 or not. But I'm sure that Mr Lucas et al do not say to themselves 'right, let's make a movie that will put back SF by 100 years'. They created their universes and some of us enjoyed them and some of us didn't, simple as that.

Rather than suppress SF, I think the emergence of *SW*, *ST* and *ST-TNG* will sustain SF. Chris supports my argument himself by saying that such films started his interest - surely we need more films like that, to get people interested in SF, through enjoying those popular films they are encouraged to explore further, thus the films become a gateway, not the dead end which Chris would have us believe.

Also, surely Chris would agree that there is more probability for more "literary" (for want of a phrase) SF to be filmed in a climate where SFF films are commonplace and financiers are more easily convinced of their marketability? Literary SF has been produced from *A Boy and his Dog* and the *Andromeda Strain* through Lucas' own *THX 1138* (have you seen that Lucas effort, Chris?) and Roddenberry's own *The Quester Tapes* to the recent *Navigators* and *The Handmaid's Tale* (I'm sorry, but I found *Son of* very boring). Do you see that the new *Twilight Zone* series would have re-emerged had it not been for Mr Spielberg et al?

So be thankful to them, Chris, not resentful. Your article was totally negative when, as a body, the BSFA should be positive. So relax and let yourself ENJOY those films - stop being so pretentious. Yes, maybe they are for kids, but I'm glad that there is still a child inside of me that enjoys them and the adult in me can see the benefits of having the likes of Gene Roddenberry in our corner.

Geoff Cowie, 9 Oxford Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2UA

One has some sympathy with the views of Chris Baker, but his comments are sufficiently partial to invite a response. He's right in that no major SF movies have appeared recently that were in any way intellectually stimulating. His main complaints seem to be that movies contain little Science Fiction and little hard SF, and differ radically from the original stories.

The Real Hard SF issue has been hotly debated elsewhere. It is sufficient to point out that for better or worse, text SF has moved to a more humanistic, character oriented, fantasy-mixed form. I suspect that the battle against fantasy is lost, for it becomes harder and harder to tell what is Fantasy and what is not. Is nanotechnology an amazing new fix for everything that will totally transform your life and mine, or just fantasy? Does anybody know?

Chris complains about the roar of spaceships. I suspect that most viewers are astute enough to know not to take this sound effect literally. If you go to the theatre, you wouldn't ask for your money back on seeing four actors on a bare stage (*Bouncers*) or striding around painted flats (*Macbeth*). The sound might be what you'd hear inside the hulls. What does Baker expect the movie producers to do - kill the soundtrack every time they do an exterior shot of a spaceship?

It's no use complaining that movie scripts differ radically from the source texts. Books are books. Movies are movies. Books explain. Movies show. What works well in one medium works indifferently in the other. SF texts introduce a lot of information but this is often rather a bore on film. Indeed the device of not explaining is very commonly used on film to grab the viewer's interest. What movies do well is: showing what characters look like, showing what settings look like, action.

Baker is not the only one to make snooty condemnations of mass-market SF films. Here are some of my own ratings: *Terminator 2*: The scenes of atomic and robot horror at the beginning are alone worth the price of a ticket. The two androids show excellently what nanotech androids might be like. Some good jokes too. *Blade Runner*: A fine, atmospheric film with serious things to say about hi-tech androids. *Dune*: I like this movie a lot: grand space opera with swords and sorcery influence. *Aliens*: it's a space horror movie, OK? Great stuff except for the naff ending. At least one good joke. *Star Wars*: The first one was exciting when it came out, but I now find the sequels too dumb to be really enjoyable.

It costs less than £10,000 to publish a midlist SF novel. For a movie, you can multiply this by 1,000. So nobody is going to make a SF movie just for SF fans. And anybody making an intellectually stimulating low budget SF film is likely to find it labelled, as *Friendship's Death* was, "boring" by those who ought to know better.

It's really time SF fans stopped being embarrassed and embraced popular SF cinema for what it is. You don't see Mick Jagger or Bono going around in suits pretending to be classical musicians, do you?

Mass market movies with SF or fantasy elements will continue to be made. I think, though, that they are caught in a trap of their own making: wedded to live-action, they have to use ever more expensive special effects to maintain an audience.

There is another medium, under-exploited in the West, which lends itself excellently to SF and fantasy film making: Animation. The idea of feature length animated films for adults is completely alien to British audiences and distributors who seem unable to comprehend that such a thing could exist, or that people might watch it if it did! The Japanese, on the other hand, take adult animation very seriously and make a lot of very fine movies that look beautiful and clever even without subtitles.

The strengths of animation are that fantasy elements, character's thoughts and fantasy inserts which would look silly in live-action, work well as part of an animated film. Space battles don't cost any more per minute than bedroom scenes. All sorts of fancy SF hardware can be realised by animation artists.

The fact that it is a more impressionistic story-telling medium which requires the viewer to do some imaginative work has interesting artistic implications, character's faces can be (and often are) quite stylised. Other things look startlingly real. Once one makes the mental adjustment, some curious perceptions can occur after a while. Live action now looks like humans acting with props, a pretence to be real when it is clearly not. And animated horror (which looks quite realistic anyway) can be very scary indeed.

I'm not sure that Chris Baker has grasped what SF movies are FOR. Perhaps he should watch *Tomorrow's World* or *Horizon* instead. While the Japanese take animation seriously, they've never lost sight of the fact that SF movies are meant to be FUN.

## Reports of the Death of Fanzines...

Joseph Nicholas, 5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH

"A relative decline (in fanzines) seems natural and predictable" says Terry Hunt in *Matrix* 100; and continues "Fanzines are in large measure a form of communication, and ... communication (including travel) is now easier and more diverse and fans in general more affluent".

BSFA members who read other fanzines may recognise this argument as strikingly similar to one I've been advancing at various moments during the past couple of years, in publications as diverse as Martin Tudor and Steve Green's *Critical Wave*, Dick and Nicki Lynch's *Mimosa*, Robert Lichtman's *Trap Door*, Ian Sorensen's *Con Runner* and others I now forget. It may be, of course, that Terry Hunt is simply unaware of such contributions to this ongoing debate; and if so (and I may make so bold a suggestion) it might pay him to seek out the articles and letters in question before taking his own arguments any further. If only to save himself from the tedium of repeating what everyone else has already heard. (Vine Clarke's Fanzine Heritage Library should be able to supply him with photocopies of the relevant extracts).

Assuming, of course, that Terry Hunt wishes to make serious contributions to the debate. I expressed mild regret that he hadn't been able to study the totality of the argument advanced in my original letter to *Matrix*; this is now transmuted, in his response, into a sarcastic suggestion that he was "terribly remiss in not reading the parts of [my] letter that you didn't print". This is more an inane debating point than a serious contribution, but if that's the level on which he wishes to conduct the argument then good luck to him.

\* The fanzines Joseph mentions are excellent. If anyone wants to read them, write to:

- ✉ Vine Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN (he has a huge collection of fanzines and would probably be pleased to photocopy extracts on receipt of a request and sale).
- ✉ Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton ML3 7HY
- ✉ Robert Lichtman, PO Box, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA
- ✉ Dick and Nicki Lynch, PO Box 1270, Germantown, Maryland 20875, USA

(the above fanzine editors work on the "usual" system, in that they would be pleased to send you a fanzine for free, but they would appreciate some form of response - a letter, article, illustration and your reaction so that they can amend future issues if necessary).

✉ Martin Tudor and Steve Green, 845 Alun Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham (*Critical Wave* is not a fanzine, but a news magazine, and requests should therefore be accompanied by some form of payment or agreement for future payment).

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

A few weeks ago, Jo Nicholas was kind enough to send me the original full text of his letter to *Matrix* 97 and I must agree with him that the edited version to which Dave Bell and I responded did not properly convey his meaning. Evidently his references to "community awareness" and "collective endeavour" were in the specific context of fanzine fandom, not SF fandom as I thought. That the two are different, even if highly overlapping, is too often ignored, so it's a pity that Joseph's distinction was lost ((We are all guilty -- eds)).

In the same communication he referred me to his *Critical Wave* 17 article, one of several items I had seemingly skipped in that issue. Had I reproduced his arguments there knowingly, I would certainly have made due attribution, in accordance with both my personal nature and professional training. Nor would I have been so long-winded in the light of his own more succinct presentation. I'd like to think, and believe I did, arrive at the idea independently, and I'm only too pleased to have reached the same conclusion as someone who has a much wider and deeper concern with fanzines than myself.

However, I don't agree with Jo's implication that before contributing to "this ongoing debate" one is obliged to have read a plethora of items in diverse fanzines. As a BSFA member, I've been following and to a small extent commenting on a debate in *Matrix*. I don't regularly read most of the other titles he alludes to: I'm sure the large majority of other *Matrix* readers don't either, and I'd assumed that in courtesy to them, letters in *Matrix* should not presume their familiarity with items published elsewhere. Jo's "everyone else" who "has already heard" everything previously said would appear to be an elite handful who have encountered it over a whole range of fanzines, and most *Matrix* subscribers merely "hoi polloi" not expected to understand it from the various fragments vouchsafed them.

Perhaps we all ought to deluge Vine Clarke with requests for every relevant offprint, but personally I'm not going to put either of us to the time, effort and expense because while the topic interests me, it frankly doesn't interest me as much as that. My original difference with Jo was mostly over logic: he flatly asserted (sorry for yet another boring reiteration) that filkers, masqueraders and con-runners don't produce fanzines, even though his (unedited) letter almost immediately cited *Conrunner* and, as I think has been established, other such fanzines exist. Had he said that there are relatively few such zines, nearly all short lived, he would have been factually accurate and still in perfect accord

with his main argument, and either Dave nor myself would have found much to complain about.

The opening of my letter in *Matrix* 100 may have sounded a little more sardonic than I intended, for which I apologise. I was seduced by the semi-cleverness of the construction, and was attempting to lighten the mood a bit, believing both that the points I was addressing were peripheral to the more serious central issue of The Death of Fanzines, and that the BSFA milieu ought to support an element of good humour and enjoyment. My mistake, perhaps, but I must say that for someone who has wielded a pretty damned sharp tongue on occasion, I'm beginning to sound a little thin-skinned and, if I may say so, po-faced. I can't be alone in thinking that this whole side track is about played out (if I may mix metaphors) and that it's time to return to matters of more interest to everyone. On the venerable question of "Whither Fanzines?" I welcome further enlightenment from the more knowledgeable, including Jo, but I will not renounce the right to pounce, in the spirit of "advocatus diaboli", on flawed argument and evident errors of fact.

While there was clearly a problem with this year's BSFA Awards, I must decry Tim Robinson's unpleasant insinuations. I don't believe there's the slightest grounds for suspecting that the nominations were rigged, the ballot papers deliberately delayed, voting cliques organised or the count falsified, and those hardworking volunteer organisers involved are owed an apology. That Tim Robinson subscribes to the absurd notion of a BSFA "politburo" (who exactly; organised how?) that "hates David Wingrove" demonstrates both his ignorance of the BSFA's structure and the way his mind runs.

How deliberate was the timing of the April mailing? It would have reached everyone (in the UK) around the 9th if efficient members had turned up at the collating session on the 4th/5th. I confess I didn't, on the thin excuse that my arm was in a sling. Why were only five novels on the ballot? To keep the whole process within reasonable bounds. Who chose them? Everyone in the BSFA, including presumably Tim Robinson if he was then a member, was sent a nomination form, and the five most nominated novels went on the ballot. Seems pretty democratic to me, even if Tim's favourite author didn't make the grade. Perhaps your vote would have helped swing it, Tim, if you'd bothered. (To be fair to Tim, he received his mailing, with ballot paper on April 16 with a note that his votes had to fly from his home in Newcastle to Nicholas' in Doncaster by April 17, or else he had to go to Illumination at very short notice - cd.). Much as I regret it, I fear Tim Robinson has an exaggerated idea of a "BSFA AWARD WINNER" flash's selling power (assuming the publisher bothers at all). Thousands of pounds? To earn an author £2,000 it would have to sell 4,000 or so extra copies of a £4.99 paperback. I'd be very surprised if this was the case. As for author cliques, UK fans are much too individualistic and bloody minded for this to have a prayer of doing anything but blowing up in said author's face, messily.

Nevertheless, problems there obviously are. Even a successful collating session would probably have seen overseas members disenfranchised. The April mailing is too close to an Easter(con) vote, while February's squeezes the nomination period and pressures the organisers, bearing in mind that many books are published for the Christmas market. Putting back the vote a year (eg voting on 1992 published works at Easter 1994) would widen the effective franchise admirably, but probably would be too late to catch paperback editions, lessening what value the awards have to publishers and authors. As a compromise, I propose closing the nominations at Easter (or just after, to allow for Eastercon purchases) and holding the vote around October. This should allow enough time to request the nominees from the library services, if necessary, possibly improving hardback sales and library stocks in the process. If desired, presentation of the awards at the following Eastercon should satisfy egoboo requirements.

Finally, Peter Tennant is absolutely right; the awards definitely need a catchier name to increase their acceptance. The magazine titles, *Vector* and *Matrix* don't have very stelfal associations outside the BSFA. The "famous author" theme leads irresistibly to "The HG Wells Awards" or perhaps "The Herberts", but this might run into legal or ethical problems (I believe there's an HG Wells Society which might have something to say on that score). Not unnaturally for an astronomer, I favour the other popular approach, and suggest "The Quasar Awards".

## Hir today, gone tomorrow

Mike White, 62 Goodmoor Crescent, Churchdown, Glos. GL3 2DL

Are you really serious in thinking that Ken Lake's use of "hir" is "rather sensible"? It seems an unnecessary complication to any writer's task to add an arbitrary and, presumably politically correct, asexual pronoun to the language, just for the sake of it. It doesn't roll off the tongue very well in general conversation and even if it did, who would know what it meant? Not only that, but you have the problem of universally introducing an alternative to his/her. Do some people start to use it unilaterally until its use spreads by hearsay? Is anyone who resists its use said to be hard of hearing; will those who do use it be greeted as heroes? There are actually two solutions in this case: one is to avoid the singular pronoun entirely, and substitute the plural whenever possible, although this can sound rather awkward after a while. I came across the second solution in a Mothercare manual of all places and they simply alternate the use of his and her in alternate chapters. This can make for a difficult read, in fact. I also noticed chapter 3 states "baby will give her first smile at about 6 weeks," whereas chapter 4 mentions "his first nappy will be particularly unpleasant".

the sugar and spice effect, I suppose. My personal solution would be for any writer to use the forms appropriate to their (sic) gender, in fact, I tend to use "he" and "his" myself, so I can't see any objection to "she" and "her" as generics. This might have caused a bit of a problem for Alice Sheldon, of course. A number of other sex-neutral alternatives have been tried at various times including co, they, xe, po and heesh; to my mind they all sound artificial, and I think I prefer he/she. Is hir today gone tomorrow too much to hope for?

With regard to the substance of Ken's letter, I find I share a considerable number of his views. In the attempt to heighten public knowledge of SF really relevant any more? Most of the general public in this country are all too aware of the presence of SF, or Sci-Fi to be more exact, but the level of their awareness probably stops somewhere after "Terminator" or the latest David Eddings. "Star Wars" may bring people into contact with SF, but what keeps them coming back for more - another dose of the same with even better special effects or another series featuring the lovable characters we met in books 1-10? In the long term, I don't think so. What we need to be doing is highlighting the things that we admire in the genre, wherever you draw its boundaries. If a book wins a Hugo or a BSFA award, we need the publishers to put a display in the bookshop to say so, not just to stick a note on the cover. I have to admit that until I re-joined, I couldn't have named more than one or two of the new generation of award winning writers, simply because I don't take every book off the shelf to look at its cover and, however talented a new(ish?) writer is, they don't get the display space that established authors do.

On to professional administration for the BSFA. About a year ago, there was a similar argument running through BUFORA (British UFO Research Association, in case you hadn't guessed). Their plan was to hire a permanent secretary and even a management consultant to spruce up their image and pay for it out of the proceeds of the vastly increased membership this would attract. The flaw, of course, is that both BUFORA and the BSFA are basically hobby organisations, with membership restricted to those with an existing interest in the subject, and all the efficient management in the world won't bring in more people than would have been likely to join anyway (Number check: we have just over a thousand members, CAMRA has 35,000 and the Jane Austen Society has 2210). If we are talking about targeted advertising, then that's a different matter and a raising of the status of the BSFA award would go some considerable way towards achieving this. Peter Tennant has suggested changing the name of the BSFA award to make it more snappy, but this defeats the object of gaining the BSFA the publicity it needs. Of course, we could always compromise - "Winner of the 1992 BSFA" has a certain advertising ring to it.

Finally, don't write off that 99% who do nothing but pay their subs, and wait for their mailing. Everyone is in that category at first (think back and be honest!) (cough!) for some time at least. Too much of the "get out there and DO something, you parasites" attitude could cost the BSFA some £16,000 in 1992, and what happens then?

## Clubs

### Fantasy Fair - A Movable Feast

Cardinal Cox

We started organising the Fantasy Fair late last year. There were four of us - Bruce King, Mel and Chris who run the local gaming shop and myself as head of the local SF club. Bruce is an organiser of specialist hobby fairs and he had noticed a gap in the market as none catered for fans of Fantasy. The Dungeon, a local gaming shop, had organised a gaming event back in 1988.

Bruce wanted to run an event that would have aspects on gaming events and comic nats, but would also have attractions from outside these fields. These were plastic modelling kits, porcelain figures, film and TV memorabilia and other ephemera. The club offered to sponsor guests (Jamie Delane and David Lloyd), run a demonstration fantasy wargame, organise a figure painting competition and on the day provided bodies to move tables and sell tickets.

Bruce sold fifty tables to various dealers, some taking two or three. From the point of view of an organiser, Bruce needed 10 people through the door for each individual dealer table. Therefore he needed 500 customers to make this a viable event. On the day we had 800 which, I will admit, was a pleasant surprise to me. These people were not what could have been considered fans in the hard-core Acifan sense, they were the people who make some author's bestsellers and some films blockbuster. At the Fantasy Fair, they discovered that other people shared their enjoyment in the more visible end of the genre. I didn't think that for one moment every person through the door would automatically reject Mundania and become a "fan". What I did want was for people to become interested, if only momentarily, in something new, be that RPG/Wargaming, comic collecting, kit modelling or something else that was on show. This I think it did.

Peterborough's next Fantasy Fair is to be held on February 21 (not, as earlier stated, the 14th - sorry) in a larger hall at The Cresnet. However, it was never intended that the idea would be the sole property of our Club. Bruce has run his other Fairs across the country, so he knows about possible venues. What he is looking for is local support for the Fantasy Fairs. I've detailed what we did, no doubt other groups will come up with their own ideas.

If you are interested, write to Bruce, detailing what you'd like to do at a Fantasy Fair near you. He's Bruce King and his address is: #1 The Hallards, Eaton Sonorh, St Neots, PE19 3QW.

Peterborough SF Club have also published "EG Swain Tribute", a leaflet on this local clerical ghost story author with details on the club. Peterborough itself and a couple of short stories. Canon Swain was a friend of MR James, but his own stories have an elegant spookiness with the lovable Rev Roland Batchell. He used local scenery as backdrop, for example in "The Place of Safety" where 16th century ghosts sail down the Lode stream carrying the church treasures away and in "The Richpins" where the policeman protagonist might have lived. This policeman said - initially - "There's lunatics, and deserters, and dead bodies, but no ghosts". By the end of "The Richpins", he would almost certainly have changed his mind.

**BSFA (London):** Andrew Seaman (128 Pickhurst Rise, West Wickham, Kent BR4 OAW) is the new organizer for the London meetings. They are being held at the Victoria and Albert pub "surprisingly quiet for a pub actually located in Marylebone Station" comments Dave Langford, who adds that "the beer is acceptable".

**Glasgow:** Kilgore Trout are leaving Sloanes because the beer is too expensive (though the food is good and plentiful) and will now meet at Ghillie Browns in Central Station from the beginning of August on Thursday evenings.

**Cardiff:** This club meets on alternate Saturdays 11-4pm at St Peters Youth Hall, Roath. There is some bias towards T.V. Details initially from Nigel Parsons, 46 Pembroke Road, Canton, Cardiff CF5 1QR (tel: 0222 355165). Look out also for Reminiscence 40 in September at Cardiff (see con section for details).

**Hull:** Subjects for future meetings are **Humour in SF** on August 25, **Joanna Russ** on September 8, **Diana Wynne Jones** on September 22, **Religion in SF** on October 13, **Roger Zelazny** on October 27, **SF Poetry or Clifford Simak** on November 10, **Cyberpunk** on November 24 and **Christmas Meeting** on December 8. More details from Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JB (tel: 0482 445804).

**Birmingham:** Pam Wells, last year's TAFF winner will talk to the Brum Group on August 21 followed by Ian Watson speaking on October 16. The annual debate with Birmingham University SF&F Society will be held on November 20. All events take place at the White Lion, corner of Thorp Street and Horsefair/Bristol Street in Birmingham City Centre from 7.45pm onwards. Kim Stanley Robinson is scheduled to talk on the Friday September 25 as part of his national tour.

**Manchester:** The Manchester Pub Group is called "FONT" and meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday at the Crown and Anchor pub on Hilton Street in the city centre from 8pm onwards. They haven't been around long so don't have an extensive library, contact address and so on - but turn up and see what happens.

**Fairy-Tales R Us:** This is a new fantasy-based club in Las Vegas emphasising story-telling, acting, role-playing, costuming and whatever else people get interested enough to do. In case you are wondering why I am distributing this worldwide (including in the BSFA magazine), I am also interested in other such clubs around the world, so we can figure out what not to do. Also, what we really should do. I make no promises as to whether we will follow anyone's advice, it is appreciated. Alex Borders, PO Box 4657, Las Vegas, NV 89127, USA.

**N3F:** This is the (American) National Fantasy Fan Federation and is recommended as being one of the best all-round SF/F fan clubs around. For more details, write to William T. Center, President/Secretary, 1920 Division Street, Murphysboro, IL 62966, USA.

**Star Wars:** The UK Star Wars Fan Club offers a membership package (of a full colour photographic membership card and three colour prints) plus quarterly newsletters, special offers and an information service for only £8 UK, £9 Europe and £12 Rest of the World, from 8 Victoria Close, Thornbury, Bristol BS12 1JE.

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

Given that the comments were as follows, can you match up comments and films? Answers at the end of the media section.

- 1 "Spectacular effects, even if the story was, shall we say, obscure" - Ray Harryhausen.
- 2 "Amazingly imaginative and sinister, with wider applications ..." - Nicholas Meyer
- 3 "... a giant sleazebag Times Square ..." - Peter Biskind
- 4 "was" "astonished at how powerful it was" - Neil Gaiman
- 5 "A consistently cracking good thriller" - Patrick Stewart
- 6 "Because it's long" - Terry Gilliam

## Across the Ether

The nearest version to the truth of the Harlan Ellison/*Terminator* incident is that Ellison filed suit against the studio claiming that *The Terminator* was plagiarised from his two plays for *The Outer Limits*. One was "Soldier" (based on a short story he had written years before), in which a soldier is zapped from a future war zone into the present and causes all sorts of problems. In addition to basic plot similarities, the scenes of the future in *The Terminator* are very similar in look and feel to those in "Soldier". The other teleplay was "Demon with a Glass Hand", in which a lone man with a glass-and-computer-chips hand and a woman he meets up with are on the run from some unknown enemy. He has amnesia and doesn't know a thing about who he is, or why he's in his current situation. Eventually, he finds out he's from the future and was sent on a mission to save the human race. Taken together, it would seem as if James Cameron got the idea from Ellison's stories, in which case, Ellison is owed something. At any rate, as the story goes, the studio was going to fight the suit, but in preparing their defense, they found out that Cameron had quipped on the set about how he'd "ripped off a couple of Outer Limits episodes". At that point, they decided to settle out of court. Incidentally, the concept of Skynet, the military supercomputer that sees all humanity as the enemy, was taken from Ellison's short story "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream". Ellison's computer called itself AM, and kept five people alive to torture for all eternity because it hated its creators so much.

The latest rumours about the "*Star Wars*" saga are that Lucas will be releasing the next trilogy one a year starting in 1997 (though it is also mentioned elsewhere that he's "tired of the whole thing").

Ben Wharton reports from Brooklyn on the latest series of ST:TNG: "Worf has just had some massive injury and is in need of a new spinal column! The subtext is euthanasia; social responsibility to the last. Oh, and he has a young child (where from, I've no idea). For people like me, there are re-runs played on Thursday. I'll tell you one thing: Dr Crusher's hair is a lot worse than it was in the series we've seen in the UK".

## Get Real...

### A review of *The Lawnmower Man* (1992)

Ian Mundell

Sometimes a character in a film will speak a line that inadvertently expresses your thoughts at that very point in time. There is such a moment in *The Lawnmower Man* (1992, Brett Leonard), a movie about the perils of virtual reality. Caroline is leaving her scientist husband, who is obsessed with his work in VR. "I'm into real reality" she says "not this shit". My thoughts exactly.

*The Lawnmower Man* has very little to do with real reality. Come to that, it does not have much to do with real virtual reality, or a real Stephen King story called "The Lawnmower Man", although young Stephen's name rides high on the movie poster. Nevertheless, the film is being touted as "The UK's first virtual reality film", although quite what this means is unclear. Granted, there is a lot of computer animation being passed off as VR, mainly in relation to games played by the principal characters, and unsurprisingly this surpasses the capabilities of VR-as-we-know-it. All very fine and interesting, but things turn sour when the characters start climbing into computers - the fabled cyberspace - and it appears just like the games. Where are all the stacks of data, the tedious number mines which make up real computer architecture? Nowhere. Then someone suggests that the VR machine also plugs directly into your endocrine system, so it can influence things like your growth hormones. Really?

Now, there is no reason why King's "The Lawnmower Man" (from the 1977 collection *Night Shifts*) should not have made it as a film - it is visceral, horrific and witty, and would have given the prosthetics funds plenty to play with. It is the simple story of a nature spirit who mows people's lawns in a rather distinctive way, under the patronage of a lawn-care company run by the Great God Pan. Oh, and there's a blood sacrifice involved too.

However, the story is a short one and something extra needed to be added for it to make feature length. At first it looked like the writers would use VR to bring out the nature spirit in one of the characters, in much the same way that prehistoric man was conjured from William Hurt's subconscious in *Altered States* (1980). Well, they did not do that. Instead, they junked most of King's story apart, rather perversely, from a stretch of dialogue at the end of it between two policemen. What they came up with takes place in three phases, all rather familiar.

Firstly, the *Chirps* phase. Dr Angelo is hampered in his work enhancing the intelligence of humans ("That was the best thing I ever had" when his moral integrity clashes with the military uses (ahem, "covert sector applications") that his employers have in mind. However, once on leave this lets up enough to let him on the retarded Job into becoming his first human subject. Job comes on

## Media File

The August edition of "Premiere" magazine put together a top jury to decide what they thought were the ten best Science Fiction movies ever.

The jury was: Martin Amis, writer; Peter Biskind, executive editor of "Premiere"; John Carpenter, director; Neil Gaiman, writer; Bob Gale, writer-producer; Terry Gilliam, director; Ray Harryhausen, special effects designer; David McDonnell, editor of "Starlog"; Nicholas Meyer, director; Dennis Muren, senior visual effects supervisor of ILM; Carl Sagan, author etc.; Patrick Stewart, captain (actor, really).

The films were, in no particular order: 2001: A Space Odyssey; Metropolis; The Day the Earth Stood Still; Invasion of the Body Snatchers; Blade Runner; Star Wars: War of the Worlds; Forbidden Planet; A Clockwork Orange; Alien.

in leaps and bounds, discovering how unjust people have been to him and the benefits of at least being someone the local bimbo can look up to. Sound familiar? Try "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes, Hugo award winner as a short story, later a novel, a film called *Charly* (1968) and at least one radio play.

Not only does Job get smart ("He absorbed Latin yesterday in less than two hours") but he also develops psychic powers. Here we enter the *Currie* phase - Job goes and exacts telepathic retribution on all the people who done him wrong. One is lobotomised by a sort of Super Mario with a lawnmower, another is hacked up by the real thing, and the local padre spontaneously combusts.

Next we enter the Colossus phase, named for the computer in the *Forbin Project* (1970) which gets a God complex and decides mankind needs taking in hand. Job decides to tie himself into the mainframe which has been running the VR and from there travel through the phone lines inside the computers of the world. He and Dr Angelo fight it out inside the computer, etc., etc., etc.

*The Lawnmower Man* is a truly awful film, its only vaguely redeeming feature being the much-hyped virtual reality sex scene (also known as cyber-sex or teledildonics). As visually interesting as this is, it does have something in common with real reality sex - it doesn't last half as long as you might want it to.

\* It appears as we go to press that Stephen King has disassociated himself from anything to do with this film and has insisted on having his name blacked out from the publicity material.

## Skywatching

Mark Ogier

Are superheros SF? Possibly - although the frequently pseudo-scientific explanations for special powers (like being affected by "gamma rays", bitten by a radio-active spider, or having a freak accident in a laboratory) probably give well-informed SF fans hysterics.

While big budget movies have managed to bring a couple of comic book heroes to life successfully, TV has given most of them a pretty rough ride. All you have to do is think of the travesties of entertainment masquerading as Wonder Woman and Spiderman to know what I mean. Even what was meant to be the cream of the TV shows, *The Incredible Hulk* - while undoubtedly successful - did away with the sense of wonder of the comic character and replaced it with a musclemans covered in green paint.

All this brings me to what has to be the best ever super-hero TV show, which viewers of Sky One have been able to enjoy for the last couple of months - *The Flash*.

This US series concerns a police forensic scientist, Barry Allen (played by former soap star John Wesley Shipp) who has the misfortune to be hit by lightning while standing in front of a shelf full of chemicals (this is the pseudo science bit). After being doused in these, he emerges with the ability to move at phenomenal speed. Taking up with a research scientist, played by Amanda Pays, he does a specially designed costume which doesn't disintegrate when he moves too fast and sets about becoming the local vigilante hero.

It all sounds pat and derivative of every other hero from Batman onwards, but where the series scores over all its predecessors is in its approach of the material and its look. One of the problems of having someone running around in broad daylight in a red costume with wings on his ears is that, compared to your average man in the street, he is going to look a complete twit (like Spiderman). But the producers of *The Flash* have solved this problem by rarely having their hero show himself in the day. And although the series is apparently set in the present, with computers and other scientific aids used frequently, the costumes and exteriors have a 1950's feel to them. This gives the show a timeless appearance and this environment makes it easier to accept *The Flash*, in the same way as the movie *Batman* is more at home in the surreal film set of Gotham than if you put him on the streets of today's America.

Episodes to date have veered wildly from standard cop stories to entertaining romps involving oddball characters like the Mirror Master (played by 70's idol David Cassidy) who uses sophisticated holograms to pull off his schemes. But whatever an episode's subject, it is always treated with the same lightness of touch that makes comics such fun. Violence - so far - has been kept to a minimum and often happens off-camera, which is a refreshing change in itself.

Complementing the stories is some acceptably square-jawed acting from the star, and a reasonable performance from Amanda Pays - although at times her character has little to do with what is going on. To cap it all are some amazing special effects. None of this *Six Million Dollar Man* slow motion business; the illusion of speed is created in a unique way that is both entertaining and convincing within the context of the programme.

Sadly, the series has since met its end in the US - largely, I understand, because of unsympathetic scheduling (remiss of a certain well-known 60's space adventure series ...). But there are still several episodes to go, and I, for one, intend to miss none of them.

Over the two movie channels, there has been the usual parade of dreadfully cliché-attempts at SF (one of which, *Arena* looks like a turkey of quite gargantuan proportions and which I will review in a later column. You have been warned).

Perhaps the biggest blockbuster to appear in the last month or so was the sequel to Paul Verhoeven's violent but satirical *Robocop* 2 (I wish they'd think of more original sequel titles) once again stars Peter Weller as the eponymous cyborg, with his co-star from the first series, Nancy Allen, taking even more of a back seat role this time around. The plot involves the city police going on strike, the distribution of a highly addictive drug called Nuke, and the Big Bad Company's efforts to improve on Robocop with a newly designed, less human model called - wow! - Robocop 2.

It's all pretty much a re-read of the first film, but without Verhoeven's wry poking at the media and society in general. As a result, the whole thing comes across as rather unpleasant, and simply an excuse for violence and special effects (these are, of course, first class). The fact that one of the chief bad guys is a foul mouthed 12-year-old adds to the impression that this is simply a ploy to attract a younger audience - although with the film carrying a 18 certificate it's difficult to see what the point of this was.

Written by Frank Miller (who scripted the superb comic book "The Dark Knight Returns" and has thus proven that comics and film aren't as similar as some would have us believe) and directed by Irvin Kershner (who should have known better), *Robocop* 2 is a major disappointment. I hear that Weller has declined to appear in the inevitable third movie and frankly I can't say I blame him.

## Until the End of the World

Ian Mundell

There are two parts to *Until the End of the World* (1991, Wim Wenders), two separate stories that tangle just enough at their intersection for neither to be self-supporting, it is 1999, and an Indian nuclear-powered satellite has left its orbit. If it were to break up in the atmosphere, there would be considerable damage to whatever part of the world were directly below, but a more serious concern is that it could trigger off a chain reaction among other satellites. The end is night, and the people have panicked.

In the first part of the film, Wenders has his characters pursuing each other across the face of the planet, apparently involved in some sort of criminal/industrial conspiracy. This is just a facade - despite the global catastrophe, they are concerned only with personal obsessions. The key is Sam Farber (William Hurt) who is using a camera that records brain activity along with light to collect images of the world for his blind mother. They move from country to country - Germany, France, Russia, China, America - crossing and re-crossing paths, until they all meet in the isolated aborigine settlement where Sam's parents are hiding out. Here, the second part of the film, the situation personalises further. At last given the gift of sight, if only by proxy, Sam's mother dies. Sam and some of the others reverse the technique so that they can record their dreams onto video tape. These images are so seductive that viewing them in paralytically addictive.

In *Until the End of the World*, Wenders indulges in various themes and images which are close to his heart, most notably communications technology and the conventions of the road movie. But he also has an interest in Science Fiction - its past forms and images as well as its possible uses to him as a narrative vehicle, something for his characters to do. One of the chief attractions of the film is that there is no self-consciousness about this, and as a consequence it does not feel or look like a genre piece. That, along with Wenders' message that the global village need not be bland and homogenous, is very refreshing.

At present, the film runs for three hours (two and a half in the USA), but there is five-hour "director's cut" due to appear as soon as some extra footage is in the can. It is hard to say whether this will help the film overcome its slight schizophrenia, but it is unlikely to increase its audience.

## Anime: Dominion

Geoff Cowie

*Dominion Part I (Acts I and II)* (Masamune Shirow), Island World Communications Manga Video MANV 1003, 67 minutes, PAL, cert 15, English dialogue, £12.99

*Project A-KO*, Island World Communications Manga Video, 90 minutes, PAL.

Shirow wrote the "Dominion" manga, featuring the manic Tank Police, in 1986, as some light relief from his "Applesseed" manga and anime. The four "Dominion" original video animations followed in 1988 and 1989, and proved very popular with anime fans in Japan and the USA.

The premise: in the future, the world's pollution problems have escalated and toxic micro-organisms force people to wear filter masks out of doors. Crime rates are very high, and to counter it the Tank Police, a special SWAT unit, have been formed. Their main task is to catch the criminal BUAKU gang. The residents of Newport, a vast bio-constructed city, are more enraged by the destructive activities of the Tank Police than those of the criminals.

As "Act 1" opens, Leona, gung-ho red-haired female recruit to the Tank Police, reports for duty as Lt. Britten and his men are interrogating a prisoner with the

hand-grenade torture. Meanwhile, the cyborg Buaku and his female sidekicks, the Puma twins, are planning to hold up a hospital. This is rock'n'roll sci-fi, loud, flashy, exciting, rather violent, with glimpses of sexuality and often very funny. The music soundtrack is excellent and the whole thing is carried out with the unashamed panache typical of popular Japanese animation work.

Island World's release is taken from a US Manga Corps version, hence the dubbing, which is well done, uses American voices. The visual quality of the copy I viewed was excellent. Curiously, there is almost nothing on the box to indicate that this video is either an animation or Japanese. Collectors should note that the OVA's are originally 38 minutes long, including the lengthy title, reprise and credit sequences, some of which Island World have omitted. The four OVA's are also available subtitled from the USA at \$35 each.

#### Recommended.

*Project A-Ko*, release date August 3, should be in the shops by the time you read this. This anime movie was reputedly made by its creators "just for fun" and proved very popular. Several OVA sequels have been made. The story is set in the near future. A-ko, B-ko and C-ko are three 17 year old Japanese schoolgirls. However, A-ko is the strongest girl in the world, B-ko the bravest, and C-ko the cutest. An alien invasion is imminent, and Spy D lurks in the shrubbery. Meanwhile, the girls go to school, and A-ko and B-ko fight over who is going to be C-ko's best chum.

Later the fighting becomes wilder and wilder, involving giant robots, spaceships, etc. As you will have deduced, this is not serious SF, but the characterisation is excellent (it turns out that almost everybody in the movie is female), the girls are all cute, the mecha are great and it's exciting and very, very funny.

#### Recommended.

If you are at all interested in Japanese culture and language, try to get a subtitled (or original + English script) version. Dubbing, however well done, obliterates certain nuances of the original.

Island World are reportedly releasing *Legend of the Four Kings*, 3x3 Eyes, and *Crystal Triangle* over the next six months. 3x3 Eyes is a modern dark fantasy and well worth getting.

A lot more Anime has been given licensed release in the USA recently, so if you have some disposable income, you can rent or buy a PAL/NTSC dual standard BCR, order the tapes from the USA or a few specialist UK outlets and watch them too. *Dominion Acts 1 to 4*, *Bubblegum Crisis I-VIII*, *Bubblegum Crash 1-11*, *Project A-Ko 1*, *Mados-01*, *Riding Beam*, *Gunbuster*, *Dango*, *Appleseed*, *Black Magic M-66*, *Robot Carnival*, *Urusei Yatsura* and other titles are all available for about \$35. Most are subtitled rather than dubbed. Laser discs are promised soon. Japanese laser discs exist.

Contact addresses for anime enthusiasts: Anime UK newsletter, Helen McCarthy, 147 Francis Road, London E10 6NT; Anime Kyo UK (club), c/o Carlo Bernhardt, 4 St Peter's Street, Syston, LE17 8HJ, Leicestershire.

### Answers to the Premiere survey Quiz

- 2001: A Space Odyssey
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers
- Blade Runner
- A Clockwork Orange
- Alien
- 2001: A Space Odyssey

## Time Travel

In *Matrix* 100, members were asked what they would like to have in their pockets should they slip down some time stream, branch or just get hit by a giant meteor and knocked into the past (and which era they would prefer to go to, given the choice).

The overwhelming need was for some form of self-defence, preferably a big sharp knife, though a little dagger which could be tucked down one's trouser leg proved popular. When people were reassured that they would not automatically be set on and murdered, or stepped on by a dinosaur, they expressed an overwhelming desire for communication - a video camera by one person who didn't want to change history, merely to record it, a portable typewriter, preferably an Olympia, which could be used once, a Britannica microfiche, which would be readable anytime after the 17th century, radios. This led to a long discussion on how long ago such things could have been viable leading to the conclusion that the earliest historical time which the backup technology was available rather than the skills was in the Roman times, and legends could have had radio units and crystal sets. But one reader still wistfully yearning for a 9mm semi-automatic with a lot of ammunition, especially if going back to Ancient Rome, while another wanted to take back a calculator to show Pythagoras a thing or two.

Personal health came rather as an afterthought. One asthmatic SF reader insisted that he wished to carry syringes (reusable), penicillin (or some other synthetic antibiotic), painkillers, sedatives, notebook and pens, pocket computer, magnifying glass and safety pins at all times.

Ken Lake saw some of the disadvantages though: "The real problem with carrying items backward in time is that they should not appear strange: torture and death as a witch/wizard just for having a biro or flashlight is a bit tough, no?"

I'd start with penicillin for immediate problems, and a notebook with info on how to manufacture it, and any other useful medicines, out of available materials. I'd want a small gun and bullets, with a silencer, for trouble, as I don't fence or swing a mace with any facility. The notes can pass anyway; the gun would be meaningless, the bullets in a bandolier just a barbaric bit of body decoration.

I'd take a really good Sheffield steel claspknife with an imitation horn handle for disguise - not for fighting, but general use. If I could learn the art of glassblowing, I could introduce winebottles and improve quality overnight, so long as I had access to cork. If I could think of a way to disguise wellingtons, I'd wear them, but no such luck, so I'll settle for a pakamac for that slogging-through-the-forest bit.

Junk jewelry is always useful, uniformed mirrors, pins and clips galore: I reckon that fills my pockets. Time framed: OK, it's Chicago in the late 1920s, the Jazz Era, and I would need... penicillin and info on the manufacture of this and other medicines, a small gun and bullets, a Sheffield steel claspknife, and some means of stopping the introduction of Prohibition, so I could still buy that wine I like. The pakamac would be useful; the rest I could forego. Surprising how similar the lists are."

Ancient Rome was surprisingly popular in view of the out of tune violins and hungry felines reputed to be roaming every amphitheatre. Other suggestions were Ancient Egypt (because they knew how to treat women (and cats); the future (because the past is old hat); 1938 when the first major computer system was proudly produced (so that one could stroll in with one's lap top, plug in and say "Go for it"; the 1st Worldcon at New York in 1936 to get a real historical record of what actually happened (or did not) or back to one of the few cons which one enjoyed a lot if only because that would save on the room rate on the lines of David Gerrold's *The Man Who Folded Himself*.

The obvious winner though, and lucky recipient of "a book" is Dave Bell who first discussed the merits of carrying seed corn and brewer's yeast in one's pockets. Then he continued:

"First, assume that the time-traveller is in good health. A packet of assorted needles would be a good trade item up until the Industrial Revolution. They are a good example of the things which are so easy to make today that we don't realise how expensive the process was before factories. Another good item is a stainless steel mirror, the sort with a hole in the middle, so that it can be used for signalling. And have some of the needles magnetised. In some ways, we are talking about something a little like an 'escape and evasion' kit.

Sugar, up until at least the mid-17th century, was incredibly valuable. Finding somebody who could pay the going rate for a kilo bag of white sugar would be a problem, but you are talking serious money. That doesn't really fit either list, but it is another example of how something very ordinary now could be of great value then.

Take a proper fountain pen, the sort that doesn't use ink cartridges. Of course, inks are not always as free-flowing as they are now, but there is another reason for taking some things. They are examples of possibly valuable ideas. We live in a sea of inventions, even something as trivial as a fly-front on a pair of trousers didn't appear until the 19th century. Does anyone know when pockets were invented?

And what about a favourite era? Well, I am not sure that I really want to live in a dramatically different time. There is something to be said for travelling back 30 or 40 years and you would know when Wall Street crashed. I think it was in the anthology "The Purple Pterodactyls" that I read a more plausible story of time travel, which emphasised that the stranger, and the person without friends or money, was terribly vulnerable to abuse.

History and language are the least of the problems. What matters is being able to cope with the culture. I might speak fluent Latin and "know" every street of Ancient Rome. Would that make me a Roman? Would it really be a good idea to pass myself off as a foreigner, perhaps a merchant?

I am tempted by the time of the French Revolution. In one sense, it is dangerous. By the standards of the time, I would seem like a dangerous revolutionary. But it is also a time when knowledge could mean wealth. Steam engines: machines that work on a scale we can sense directly, rather than by the mathematics of quantum mechanics.

And I could come back with a signed first edition of *Frankenstein*. Now, what advice would you give to the author?"

More seriously, Dr David Ditsch of Oxford University appeared on TV recently discussing time travel. Two papers on the subject which might be relevant are:

- Deutsch, David "Quantum Mechanics Near Closed Time-like Lines" (Physical Review D November 15, 1991)
- Carroll, Sean M et al: "An Obstacle to Building a Time Machine" (Physical Review Letters, January 20, 1992)

Thanks to: Chuck Connor, Catie Cary, Nigel Parsons, Robert Glover, Iain Thomas, Ken Lake, Bob Sneddon, Tony Berry, Dave Bell, Simon Bisson and Andrew Adams.



## Fire and Hemlock

"The usual": If a fanzine editor goes to the trouble of finding or writing material, printing it, collating, stuffing and posting, then it's only fair to provide some form of acknowledgement - a letter giving some feedback, preferably with a couple of conversational hooks to keep the discussion going, an illustration, even a personal letter, an article on some subject you may (or may not) feel strongly about - doesn't have to be about SF. The fanzine editor may amend future issues in the light of your comments, but what is sure is that the chronic lack of feedback has driven many fanzine editors into different fields where future issues will appear "real soon now".

**Deliverance** is the latest D West oeuvre, a selection of his articles and artwork from 1986-92, published this September at £6.50 with a limited print run of 150 copies. This is a rare opportunity to see some of the very best recent fanwriting and art. He describes it as:

[covering] "the range from falling-down drunk to cold-sober celebration, from KTF barflies to apparition consumers, from creative artistry to critical wrecking, from the pointedly personal to the impartial truths of History, from scandal-mongering to social analysis, from sex to weirder sex, from the theory and practice of pen-and-ink art and writing to the future of electronic media. Even SF gets a mention. All the chaotic mix of ideals and idiocies - facts and fantasies - normally fragmented across the face of fandom and fanzines is brought together here and synthesised into a shape that makes some kind of sense out of the whole madness".

D West demands concentration from his readers, but it is repaid a thousandfold. The artwork is superb, even if you don't know the people concerned. As usual with D West publications, the price will go up in October, if there are any copies left, and continue rising. Write to D West at 17 Carlisle Street, Keighley, West Yorkshire BD21 4PX and please send US dollar bills (if applicable), not foreign cheques or Postal Orders).

Following the publication of the Bath SF discussion group fanzine (mentioned in *Matrix* 100), Simon Bisson reports that issue 2 entitled *Alice Sids (No Parking)* is pending. "Fanzine isn't quite the right word" Simon says "and review/description doesn't cover the amount of topics we deal with. What we're interested in is written SF, and the market it is part of. Issue one discussed the SF ghetto effect by looking at the career and works of Christopher Priest, and has on-Why... issue 2 will look at Philip Jose Farmer, cover art, small press publishing, will provide a bibliography of Kerosina books and will discuss the author of *Altered States*. It is going to be approximately 20 pages A4 Macintoshed, scanned and laser printed at present and the Bath group are considering breaking with the tradition of "the usual" as above, and requesting £2 per copy.

**Jered Pore** has taken on the mantle of *Factsheet Five* and started a system of posting reviews of fanzines on electronic bulletin boards and can be contacted at: 1800 Market Street, #141, San Francisco, CA. 94102-6227, USA. This is what he says about Nigel E Richardson's *Slubberdegullion* 4: "OK, maybe it's a fanzine, and maybe it's a perzine, but whatever it is, *Slubberdegullion* is great. Nigel writes sooo snidely about his job at IBM (and current lack thereof), about the sorry state of Labour Politics and sornier state of British SF fandom. Why hasn't anyone else pointed out that smart drugs will make you look like Durk and Sandy??? And what have to be the most entertaining letters in a fanzine".

**Doug Krick** is interested in seeing British fanzines - his address is 3 Danada Square East, Suite 246, Wheaton, IL 60187, USA.

## The US Fanzine Scene

Alexander R Slate

First, let me introduce myself, my name is Alex Slate. I live in San Antonio, Texas. My first fanzine was a one-shot called *Wormhole: Tales from Warped Space* which almost nobody saw (fortunately). In 1984, I began to edit a fanzine called *SASFactFiction*, the fanzine of the San Antonio SF Association. The club became *Ursa Major* and the fanzine was renamed *Robots and Roadrunners*. I edited this for 5 years, also *The FACTSheet*, the monthly newsletter of the Fandom Association of Central Texas (FACT) for a year and for the past two and a half years I've edited *The Texas SF Inquirer*, the FACT gazette with my friend Dale Denton.

Contrary to what you might hear, fanzines are not dying. I currently read over 50 different US fanzines, and I know I don't get all the fanzines there are. For that matter, I don't even get all the Hugo nominees. Fanzines may not be what they used to be in the "Golden Age of fanzines", whenever that was, but I don't want to get into that argument. I can't, I've really only been in the fanzine scene for less than a decade. Anyway, Jenny asked me to give you an overview of the US scene and what I would like to read out of a big stack of fanzines. So here goes. Please understand that the fanzines will be in no particular order.

I'll start with what is, to me, a new fanzine, *Astronamer Quarterly*. This is a genuine format fanzine published quarterly by the Niagara Falls SF Society. The only issue I've seen is the May 1992 issue. The production values are excellent, with a professional style of layout and crisp, clear print on light beige paper. The zine is liberally sprinkled with graphics of various sorts (art, photos,

headers and other graphics) which break up the text nicely. (Digression: Computer layout and offset printing or xerox isn't necessary for me to like a fanzine. But I do want a fanzine that I can read. If a fanzine makes me really work to just understand it, the contents had better be damn excellent! I do like to see good art too - end of digression).

But even more important than this are the contents. The editor, Joe Maragliano, has an interesting sense of humour and he has put odd, little, quirky touches through the issue, starting with the "Notes from the Editor". The two best features in this issue are articles by Leah Zeldes Smith and Sheryl Birkhead. Leah's article is a fanzine review column, "The Fanzine Fancier". Leah writes better than me, the flow of her ideas is better than mine. (Poor people, to have to put up with my halting "speech" when you could have Leah). She starts with some observations on fanzines and goes on to reviews of some of the fanzines she enjoys. Sheryl's column, "Scattered Images", is supposed to be an art review column, though it doesn't review any art. Instead, she talks generally about the covers and presentation of books in her local bookstore. Sheryl's column is only the second regular column on art in fanzines today (the first was my own column, I'm proud to say). As such, it gives *AQ* something different from what you can see in other fanzines.

Other items in this issue are a different sort of tribute to Isaac Asimov by Jay Kay Klein, an interview with Judith Merril, an interesting piece of fiction by Mary Stanton, an article on growing up in a circus family by Joy Moreau (just to let you know that not everything is SF related). But before you think that everything in this fanzine was perfect, there were a couple of things I didn't really appreciate. I just didn't get much out of "The New Shrew Review" and "From the Vidiot's Closet". But each to their own.

Now here's one you have probably heard about: *FOSFAr*: perennial Hugo nominee, but as yet, non-winner. This is a very different sort of beast. Normally it runs about 70 pages, half of these are more or less to the letter column.

The letter column is the heart and soul of this fanzine. Here is found the collected opinions, wit and wisdom of many different people, many of whom are also pros, such as L. Sprague de Camp, Judith Tarr or Paul Anderson. Sometimes the letters actually comment on the articles in the fanzine (Oh, did I mention that there actually were articles?), but more often there are continuing dialogues on topics ranging from abortion to free speech, to religion, to politics. You name it, it's probably discussed here at some time or other.

Sometimes the discussions take their root from one of the articles in the fanzine and proceed merrily from there. As to the articles themselves: a good majority are reviews, mostly of SF/F books (though a significant minority deal with history or politics or whatever). The largest number of books are read and reviewed by Joseph T Major, who styles himself "Readsalot", which certainly fits.

As I said, the heart and soul of this fanzine is the letter column. I do enjoy the articles, but it's the letter column that truly sets this fanzine apart and the reason I so look forward to getting each issue. The conversation is intelligent and the slow pace lets you think about each comment without having to worry about an immediate answer and also lets you formulate your responses with greater care than you can take in a normal conversation.

These are just two fanzines that I enjoy. There are many more to follow. But first, quick lesson number one. For those of you not (yet-ed.) familiar with fanzines, "the usual" refers to a submission to the fanzine - an article, a piece of art or just a letter of comment (know as a loc).

- ★ *Astronamer Quarterly* edited by Joe Maragliano (Niagara Falls SF Society, PO Box 500, Bridge Station, Niagara Falls, NY 14305, USA; available for the usual, sample copies \$2.25 each)
- ★ *FOSFAr* edited by Timothy Lane and Janice Moore (Falls of Ohio SF Association, PO Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281, USA; available for the usual, sample copies are £3).

## Found In Jacket And Given a Home

Some Accumulated Fanzines

- ☐ **Bob** (Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY). TAFF again, with a D West cartoon of three ramoured runners that at his expenses paid trip to the San Francisco Worldcon in 1993. D West knows exactly which weak points to caricature. Painfully funny account of Ian's orchiditis.
- ☐ **Erg** (Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N Yorkshire YO12 5RQ). Feature on E E "Doc" Smith with bibliography, the highlight is an account of an audible US trip where a "typical" breakfast consists of eggs, bacon, hash browns, toast, jelly and lashings of coffee.
- ☐ **Saliromania** (Michael Ashley, 9 Blakeley House, Kilmore Grove, Woodside, Bradford BD6 2RF). Powerful writing from last year's Nova winner. If he does run for TAFF, as rumoured, he will be a worthy representative of a British fanzine editor.
- ☐ **Slubberdegullion** four (Nigel E Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG). Countdown to unemployment - again. One doesn't exactly want to work for a She-Elphant - a time-serving, brownnosing lackey, but the options are likely to provide material for several more "Slubbers".
- ☐ **The Amazing Sentient House Seven** (Tommy Ferguson, Flat 1, 16 Wellesley Avenue, Belfast BT9 6DG). A glimpse into Tommy's life and life in the province. This article is really good.

5. **The Olaf Alternative** (Ken Cheslin, 10 Conee Green, Stourbridge, DY8 1LA). Large and interesting letter column and speculation on exactly where the dragons went. Ken is pruning his mailing list so no feedback will soon lead to no receipt of another Olaf. You have been warned.
6. **The Light Stuff** (Rhodi James, 25 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD). Conversational hooks here consist of yet another consideration of David Wingrove ("The Middle Kingdom is presented as the first book of the 'Chung Kuo' series. If the plots continue to proliferate at its current rate, and the villain continues to get away with lucky escapes, then either David Wingrove or myself will be dead before it's finished") and the annoyance of anticipating the inevitable "happy" ending, where the good guys have to win or else none would be around to write the book you are now reading. "If you know the hero has to win" means Rhodi "why not just cut straight to the happy ending and save on trees!"
7. **Wild Shaarkah** (Eva Hauser, Na Cihade 55, 160 00 Praha 6, Czechoslovakia). This detailed account of her GUFF trip to Australia praises Australian wine and comments on a lecture by Terry Prattichet whose lecture was, unfortunately "completely uncomprehensive" for her. She comments briefly on George Turner ("nice, clever man with British dry humour"), Lucy Sussex, who again appeared very British, although (because?) she is from New Zealand and vegemite ("too strong and salty").

## Profile: Elizabeth Billinger, Treasurer

I was born in 1963, 3 days after the assassination of JFK. My mother taught me to read long before I started school, and I spent the next dozen or so years reading anything and everything, including Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare at the tender age of 7 and Jane Eyre soon after. Being something of a couch potato during my first 16 years, I read an awful lot of crap and developed fairly catholic tastes before anyone thought to offer guidance or censorship.

Looking back, I think I read a fair amount of SF and Fantasy during that period - Nicholas Fisk and C S Lewis spring to mind - but I wasn't aware of the categorisation. My introduction to Science Fiction came free with my first boyfriend, as did my introductions to heavy rock, role playing games and pinball machines. I started off on Heinlein, Moorcock, Donaldson, Tolkien (hated The Hobbit, pleasantly surprised by Lord of the Rings), Asimov and Alan Dean Foster. My tastes have changed considerably since then and it seems so much more difficult these days making time to read.

Authors I particularly favour at the moment include: Doris Lessing, Ursula LeGuin, Tim Powers, Dan Simmons, Gore Vidal, John Steinbeck, Angela Carter, John Crowley and Mervyn Peake. Robert Graves is a friend and enduring favourite, likewise the poetry of Edwin Muir. Books I've recently read which made an impact are The Handmaid's Tale, Grimus and Possession by A S Byatt.

I love going to the theatre, and living only minutes away from Stratford upon Avon is a real treat. Anything tragic or historical by Shakespeare usually proves worth the trip (the comedies are rather more hit and miss affairs) and the other place being put on at the Swan Theatre or the more experimental The Other Theatre leaves me with a burning desire to get down there and join in.

Films are also something I try to make time for, especially on the big screen. Gerard Depardieu as Cyrano de Bergerac reduced me to tears at both viewings. I thought Thelma and Louise was one of the best films I've ever seen, and I enjoyed Edward Scissorhands, Terminator 2 and My Own Private Idaho. The Silence of the Lambs was entertaining, but seriously over-rated (in my humble opinion) and Dances With Wolves was contrived and tedious. Any film starring Cary Grant and Katherine Hepburn is sure to be amongst my all time favourites. The Philadelphia Story being top of the list. I also have soft spots for The Blues Brothers and The Road to Perdition. Peter Stone, and with The African Queen, Witness, Major Barbara, Bladerunner, The Name of the Rose, The Untouchables and many more.

My musical taste seems to suffer from arrested development. Many of the albums I have, or would like to have, either were made in the 70s or are by artists who had their heyday then. Lou Reed is current No. 1 - saw him recently at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, and what an experience that was. I like Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, Cowboy Junkies, Pink Floyd, Brian Adams, Neil Young, Crosby Stills Nash and Young, Billie Holiday, Robert Plant, Robert Cray, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Eric Clapton (though not of late), Aerosmith, Tom Petty ...

Paul and I live in Leamington Spa because we both came here to study chemistry at Warwick University and never got away. We live with two large and neurotic ginger cats, Holmes and Watson, who kindly allow us to share their house, and with a veritable jungle of houseplants and a large (but still insufficient) number of books.

Cooking (but not baking) I find stimulating and therapeutic. I wish I felt as confidently creative in other fields. Gardening I would enjoy, but for the fact I always seem to be trying to catch up with myself: my weeds are as tall and healthy as the vegetables are next-door. I'm trying to learn modern Greek in order to communicate on holiday, and with the ultimate aim of retiring to a small Greek island as soon as possible. I drink more than is good for me, especially red wine, though I enjoy a good pint of bitter. I eat vast quantities of curry and of pasta and I play squash and badminton to try and work off the effects.

I volunteered, in a moment of madness, for the post of Treasurer and for the time being I'm bursting with enthusiasm and good intentions. It'll be interesting to see how long they last!

## The Periodic Table

The George Alex Effinger Medical Fund has announced the "Worldcon-for-a-Buck" raffle to help defray Effinger's medical costs. Grand prize will include air travel costs, membership, hotel accommodation and a meal allowance for Confrancisco, the 1993 World SF convention. Send one or more 3x5 cards with your name, address and phone number, plus \$1 with each card to: The George Alex Effinger Medical Fund, c/o NSFA, Box 500, Bridge Station, Niagara Falls, NY 14305, USA.

Magicon will open on September 3 with a multi-media stage production and presentation which will include cameo appearances by Jules Verne, HG Wells, a reporter for the Chicago "Sun-Times", four generally costumed people and three aliens (in, logically, evil-looking alien costumes).

John Bray plans to run a First Contact game at Scone, the Glasgow Unicorn which coincided with the collating weekend. He aimed to start with one of the alien races designed at the Easter convention in Blackpool and get the alien team to plan out their approach before the convention and write an initial English message to be presented to the human teams (time is too short for any attempt at translation, and aliens who have learnt English from "I Love Lucy" can communicate with all human teams equally without worrying about the "keepers of the code").

The human teams will be groups of Politicians, Scientists, Media, Soldiers, Priests, etc., as intended to bring out the different perspectives rather than go for USA, EC, Japan, etc.

The message should have been followed up by the sighting of a blue-shifted spaceship that landed the aliens on the moon, and then brought them in Earth for the denouement. Each new revelation is intended to increase the pressure on the teams, and keep the game flowing. More details next time ...

With the Glasgow in '95 bid about to be voted on, it was disturbing to read a casual comment from Thomas Recktenwald that "you could get the impression that your fandom is more inclined to isolationism than your government". He was talking about "Critical Wave" being mailed only to British subscribers, but even so it was quite a shock, as the Glasgow bid is attempting to be thoroughly international and the Eurocon will be held in Jersey next Easter merged in with Helicon.

## They've got my money ... What now?

This year has seen an increasing number of queries about exactly what happens to a registration fee for a forthcoming con. Noone has seriously suggested that the Treasurer absconds to Brazil, or even Bolton, but there has been a groundswell of general dissatisfaction with simply hearing absolutely nothing. So when Ken Lake wrote to comment that although he had wanted to attend a couple of small cons this year, he had been left with no information and had therefore made other arrangements on the grounds that the committee had not received his money and that he was too late to book a hotel room, see a Guest of Honour he particularly wanted to see, I contacted several conrunners for their attitudes.

The ideal situation, postulated by Tim Illingworth, who is running the Eastercon, Helicon, in Jersey next year, and who is also co-chair for the Glasgow in '95 Worldcon bid, is that everyone sending money or making an enquiry should receive the minimum of a holding reply within a week and a more detailed reply later. This is echoed by Tony Berry of the Brum group, who says that a person has a right to expect a receipt for money, information about the con and how and how to get a room.

Beginning conrunners anxious about following the correct procedure should perhaps follow the Mexican model which is to acknowledge any money sent, not necessarily immediately, but certainly by the next Progress Report. Every member will receive copies of all publications, no matter what stage of con build-up they join at or as for "rights", when people hand over their money, they purchase the right to receive all publications and the right to attend the con.

## Novacon 22 presents a Writer's Workshop

Sally Ann Mella

At Illumination this Easter, beyond the chatter in the sun parade, and the laughter of the smoky bars, there was a successful writer's workshop. First on Friday then on Sunday up to thirty writers got together to chat and compare notes. Beyond the inevitable moaning about publishers and editors, writers extolled the virtues of their heroes or heroines whilst their writings opened windows onto bright new fantasy worlds and awe-inspiring galactic landscapes. Many writers were coming "out" for the very first time and the manuscript reading sessions on Sunday pulsed with enthusiastic excitement and youthful energy. This kind of success bears repetition. I therefore propose to re-run a similar workshop called "We Love Writing!" and a new experimental group called "My God, they're serious!" on my home turf at Novacon 22, 6-8 November, at the Royal Angus Hotel in Birmingham.

The "We love writing!" will meet early in the convention for the opening session called **Initial Writing**. All writers must bring one item of their **Personal Belongings to this first meeting**. Manuscripts will be collected, photocopied for redistribution and study for the reading session on Sunday. Writers wishing to participate at the "We love writing!" are asked to bring a sample of their writing. This may be an extract from a novel, short story, poetry or a play. Science Fiction or fantasy. These will be photocopied and redistributed for positive discussion and possible improvements, praise and market suggestions early on Sunday morning.

**Manuscript preparation:** multiple copies of the first two pages of any manuscript will be required. I would suggest to writers that you prepare your texts in single spacing. If you want to bring additional pages, please make 5 or 6 copies at your own expense.

In parallel to the "We love writing!" group, I proposed to run an experimental group "My God, they're serious!" This group will only be run if at least five people are "serious" about participating. Those wishing to attend, should write to me at the address below before September. Participants at the "My God, They're Serious!" must send me an extract of their work up to 3000 words and I will in return send them copies of the other participants' work by return.

Friday night, latish, with lots of beer on attendance, we'll have a session called: "Violent constraint and bloody mutilation" discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the previously submitted extracts. Saturday morning, I propose a session on "World Building", starting with a group discussion of what it is to build a credible alternative world either SF or Fantasy. This would be followed by a Quiet Creative session where the writers would be encouraged to work singly or in pairs on the ideas raised during the discussion.

The aim of this session would be to enhance the level of awareness and expertise of the writers by pooling ideas, insights and experience. I could facilitate these sessions, since I am a group leader with Barclays Bank or alternatively we could invite a guest. Suggestions are welcome. Saturday afternoon we could have another session on developing "Characters" and a discussion of the "Plotting". Sunday afternoon would be time for a post mortem and ideas for future "serious" groups. I hope at the end of Novacon 22, the "My God They're serious" will have new insights and new enthusiasm for writing.

For further information about either or the two Novacon workshops, either the "We love writing!" or the "My God, they're serious", please write to me, Sally Ann Melia, at 11 Spinney Drive, Cheswick Green, Solihull B90 4HB. Further information on Novacon 22 from Bernie Evans at 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands.

**Muse:** October 9-11, Strathallan Hotel, Birmingham, details from Gytha North, 35 Iverley Road, Halesowen, W Midlands B63 3EP, membership £10. This will be a film based con with plenty of relaxing built in and membership includes transport and entry to the Razing Arizona gig on the Saturday evening.ALCHEMY are also playing on the Friday lunchtime of that weekend at the Josiah Mason Hall, near Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Moderately detailed information about the 1994 Worldcon, Canadian (September 1-5, Winnipeg, Manitoba) is now available. The guests are Anne McCaffrey, George Barr (artist), Barry B Longyear (toastmaster) and Robert Runtz (fan guru). The function space in a three levels, connected by escalator, and apart from the usual, also includes a chocolate store, high speed copy shop and 1000 parking spaces.

## Noticeboard

Anything you want to post or ask can go on the noticeboard for free - it's a service for and on behalf of BSFA readers. Just write to Jenny and Steve Glover at 16 Avary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP.

**Second-hand ConFrancisco attending membership for sale:** It's the 1993 Worldcon in San Francisco - John Dallman has to go to another US con that year, and can't afford both. Full membership, all past Progress Reports, voting rights, etc: current US price is \$85, yours for £20. Contact John at Flat 4, 27 Terront Road, London N15 3AA.

**Outer Limits, The Official Companion:** I am looking for a copy of this book, published by Warner Books, but now out of print. This book describes each episode of this classic SF tv series from the 1960's. Steve Hast, The Aerospace Corporation, Los Angeles, USA (or contact the eds. who can e-mail and await further instructions).

**Louis Jacobs Book Service:** Thousands of US pb originals. 1st pb editions and h/b's. Louis Jacobs, 6245 N Inkster Road, Garden City, MI 48135, USA.

**Hubbard books:** I am looking for any publications by the following authors, any titles at all and would appreciate any help you can give. Authors: Lance Rankin, Morgan DeWolf, Rene Lafayette, Kurt von Rachen, Winchester Remington Colt, Tom Esterbrook, Legionnaire 14830, Captain Charles Gordon, Elron, Peter Berens, Bernard Hubbel, Joe Blitz, Captain B A Northrup, Lt. Jonathan Daly, Lieutenant Scott Morgan, Ken Martin, etc., etc. - Marie-Jose Vos, Riet 31, 1273 CR Huizen nh, The Netherlands.

**Isaac Asimov Memorial Fund:** Donations honoring Isaac Asimov's memory may be sent to the New York University Medical Center/Development Dept., for the attention Mark Watson, 316 E. 30th Str., New York NY 10016, USA.

**SF and F Writer's Workshop:** this evening class run by SF author Brian Stableford at the University of Reading will run on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm from October 8 to December 10, 1992. The fee for 10 meetings is £26; further details are available from The University, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ (tel: 0734 318347)

**The Way to Write Science Fiction** by Brian Stableford is offered to BSFA members at a reduced price: £8 in hardcover, £5 in paperback. Signed copies of *The Empire of Fear* are also available, £10 hardback, £5 in C format paperback. All are post free within the UK. Available from Brian Stableford, 113 St Peter's Road, Reading RG6 1PG.

## Competition Corner

Roger Robinson

### Results of Matrix 100 competition

A bumper postbag this time with almost all the entries including an attempt at the crossword. This appears to have been VERY well received and will become a regular feature - as long as John can be persuaded to produce them.

#### Answers: "Initial Thoughts"

1	Sixth Column	Robert Anson Heinlein
2	Styrborn the Strong	Eric Rucker Edisson
3	The Hand Reared Boy	Brian Wilson Aldiss
4	The Mechanical Monarch	Edwin Charles Tubb
5	The Screwface Letters	Clive Staples Lewis
6	Get Out the Unicorn	Anne Inez McCaffrey
7	The Shunned House	Howard Phillips Lovecraft
8	Rockabill	Harlan Jay Ellison
9	The Poison Belt	Arthur Conan Doyle

The 27 initials can be made to form the names to fit the hints - (Samuel) "CHIP" Delany, CHAD (Oliver), (Frank) HERBERT, (Edgar) WALLACE and (Laurence) JAMES.

The sticking points appeared to be titles 2, 4, 8 and the nickname "Chip" for Samuel Delany.

Of the (few) complete entries, A P Mills was first out of the hat for the £5 book token. Thanks to all the others who completed, attempted, swore at me for this one. (p.s. sorry about the typo - it is "Styrborn" and not "Styrborn" - but I don't think this foiled anyone).

### Answers - Crossword

#### Across

1 Inter-zone 6 Lease ("as" in "lee") 9 Ale-mb-ic (mb = bachelor of medicine = doctor) 10 Gandal ("G-and-a-(aa)!) 11 Orb-it (12 Turlut reversed) 13 Runic (executed = run + IC) 14 Press-or + Beam 17 Tau (T for ModelT) + au (for gold) 18 Ace (two meanings) 20 Gravity Well (anagram + 22 Elric (circle backwards minus "c") 24 Ogg ((s)-ogg-(y)) 25 Droud ("or" (gold) rev. in "dud") 27 Opt-mum 28 Sundial (anagram) 29 Ducat ("a" in "duct") 30 Dream Park ("RE" in damp ark)

#### Down

1 In-ago 2 Tremble ("m" in Tremble) 3 Robot ("ob" (=orbit=dead) in "rot") 4 Or-c 5 Engineering (anagram) 6 Lunar (launchers = initial letters!) 7 A-gain-st 8 Effectual (anagram + "I") 12 Terraforned (anagram) 14 Planefort ("plane" + (jdiov rev.) 15 Saga(a) 16 May 19 Erratic ("m" in "Eric") 21 Erotica ("ore" rev. + "t" + "CA" rev.) 23 Comet ("me" in "cot") 25 Denim ("mined" rev.) 26 Dalek ("D" + anagram of "lake") 28 Sue

I hope the above "explanations" of the answers are both understandable and helpful. Please let me know. I have passed ALL your comments (and the few curses) onto John English - the perpetrator of the crossword, for his perusal.

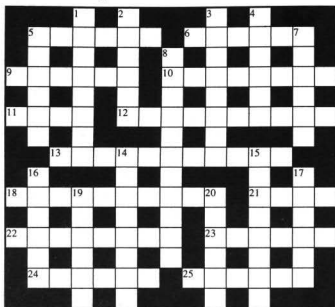
the only clue that rankled the purists was 25 Down which should really have been "Dug up blue material" and not "Dug blue material up" - I hope you can all see why!

The only clue answered/guessed wrongly was 25 Across with "Droud" not being recognised as a brain stimulus socket/device described by Niven. The only other error was an entry that omitted to enter 2 down - maybe by accident or not recognising "Trebble" as the name of a film con (it was mentioned quite often in previous "Matrix"s). Of the 25 all correct entries, the first out of the bucket (I didn't have a hat big enough) was **Jenne White** of Sheffield, who will be hearing from Colin Greenland who generously donated this month's crossword prize.

### Glasgow in '95 Competition

All the entries have been passed to the committee who will announce the result in due course.

## Matrix "Everyfan" Crossword



## Across

- 5 Dome is cracked in flight around Mars (6)  
 6 It's not unusual to hit Goulart from behind (6)  
 9 Note, tailless rodent is well known (6)  
 10 Belief in mad god? Eh, you lack class! (8)  
 11 No museum as a result of exploding 14 part 1 (4)  
 12 Right order given in meson forecast (10)  
 13 Shout "Stop!" when holding a pound, used to make 12 (7,4)  
 18 Mind reading alien is taken back by the French; it's sad to lose alien! (10)  
 21 Fate gives choice of north or north? (4)  
 22 Tolkien's upset when one replaces English framework (8)  
 23 Make transport return to route which Ballard named Mobius (6)  
 24 Weapon brought back to get gold piece (6)  
 25 Magician casts protective spell around Interzone (6)

## Down

- 1 McCaffrey's planet is around after explosion (8)  
 2 Drunk brought back to drink must make a choice (4-2)  
 3 Arm for the Spanish - one needs doctor as a result (8)  
 4 Destroyer of Seldon's plan wears a talisman at first as a protective charm (6)  
 5 Native of Pern and Gor, perhaps? (6)  
 7 Zelazny's name is this, for example, when eaten by cat (6)  
 8 Traveller in 4th dimension I hit - men came swarming about (4,7)  
 14 Five year mission: begin to raise king and queen (4,4)  
 15 Saw-off weapon and cover for 'ead constructed using ancient Viking craft (8)  
 16 Arouse, holding elbow at first, and thus enfeeble (6)  
 17 Make mistake and find job for zopher, perhaps (6)  
 19 Praise what Kirk keeps in Enterprise using your initials (6)  
 20 "S" in "Superman", for example, is universal (6)

## Matrix Competition 101 "Number Plates"

This is easier than last time - so let's have lots of entries. Hands up all those who used to play the Car Number Plate Game of trying to make up words containing the letters from the number plate of passing cars. Yes, all of you! Well, this is your lucky day. Using the sets of 4 letters below, find SF/Fantasy book titles which contain the letters in the given order. I don't know if all (any?) of the 20 can be done, so send in as many as you can. In the event of a tie, the entries will go in the hat/bucket/dustbin to draw the winner of the usual £5 book token. Please add the author's name to help me check your titles.

Examples: RANG  
 IOIO

cRystAl siNGer (McCaffrey)  
 InvOlutiOn ocean (Sterling)

The "number plates" to solve are:

ABCD	EFGH	KLMN	RSTU	AZED
AAAA	IIII	RRRR	EESS	SSEE
CRAP	FABO	ASDF	EEEE	HHHH
DUNG	WIZZ	TRIX	POIU	YTRE

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

## REMINISCON 40

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