

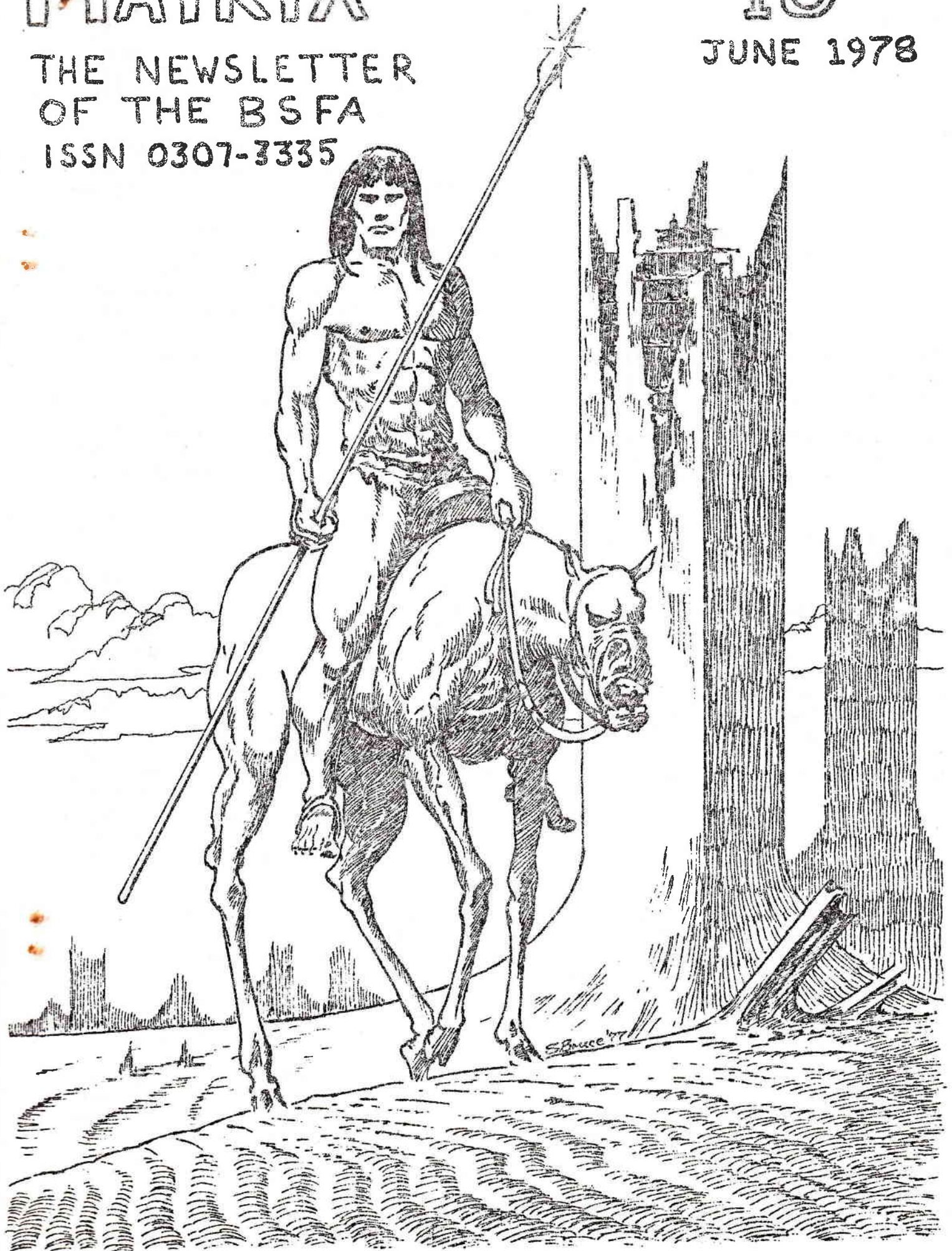
MATRIX

THE NEWSLETTER
OF THE BSFA

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EDITOR: Andy Sawyer, 59 Mallory Road, Tranmere,
BIRKENHEAD, MERSEYSIDE L42 6QR. (Tel. 051-645 0426)

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Dave Cobbledick, 245 Rosalind
St., Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9AZ.

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Tom A Jones, 39 Ripplesmere, Harman-
swater, Bracknell, Berks RG12 3QA. (Tel. Bracknell
50003)

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are to be taken as personal ones except where stated
otherwise.

Proofread by Dave Cobbledick who has pointed out far
too many mistakes.

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Cover by ; Interior art by Dave Wingrove,
(p.5) and Derek Harkness (p.26)

((How embarrassing... empty space, when I'd chopped var-
ious items because of space problems! May I thank all
the Newshounds who sent me snippets; sorry for not putt-
ing your names in! Welcome, former colleague Dave Reeder
(Newham Library Service) as editor of British Fantasy Soc
Bulletin. Read STARLORD, it's better than 2000AD...))

JACKSON'S ISLAND

Back on the island once more, I'm feeling quite
moved - what else can I do but say 'thanks' to all
those BSFA members who sent their greetings and re-
gards concerning young Harriet's birth, announced
last issue. *choke* - I didn't know you cared.....!

Despite a statement to the contrary elsewhere in
this issue, I HAVE seen STAR WARS - and I shall not
let myself be tempted into going over ground which
has been well covered before. Except to say that I
heartily agree with Han Solo's opinion of THE FORCE -

poor old Alec Guinness was fighting a losing battle in
more ways than one if you take his script into consid-
eration! No, unfortunately, perhaps, I've no surprises
to report; I thoroughly enjoyed what I expected to like,
and disliked those aspects I thought I would.

To business: One erratum - I notice that having typed
up the Terry Jeeves interview I have missed out the ERG
editorial address (230 Bannerdale Rd, Sheffield, S11 9FE)
Error rectified.

I have been reading the result of the questionnaire
which members were asked to fill in a few issues back,
and to all those who responded, as well as those who took
the time to write to me with their comments and sugges-
tions, many thanks. I shall be taking account of your id-
eas and I hope to please at least some of you in the near
future. There are a few surprises lined up.... but remem-
ber that it is YOUR response which will aid me to produce
a better MATRIX. I need YOUR contributions: articles on
items of interest to other BSFA members, artwork (espec-
ially cover art and logos), ~~file/proof~~ ~~files~~, news items -
even a cutting from a local paper about an SF-related topic
makes all the difference. MATRIX is YOUR magazine - and I
know many of you can write and draw, so come on and pro-
duce! Otherwise... I won't reveal quite what I'll do, but
I have been looking in the Yellow Pages for someone who
can supply me with 500 little wax dolls....

Last issue's competition produced a good response;
many thanks to all who entered and congratulations to the
winner, SANDY BROWN. (Who must have sent off his entry
before he recieved his mailing!) On consideration, I
think that competitions which ask for a 'first correct
entry' are a bit unfair as they don't allow for delays in
mailing, etc., not to mention people who live abroad (I
had one entry from Hong Kong!), so in future I'll save all
correct entries until a deadline and draw the winner out
of a hat or something. Deadlines will be, taking into acc-
ount that BSFA mailings are scheduled for the middle of
the month, the last day of the month AFTER the mailing
is recieved. ((And for all else except news items which
can be sent anytime, deadline is third week of the month
after mailing.))

And now the solution, for those who forgot to enter,
is as follows: THE SANDS OF MARS; THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER;
THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS; ORBITSVILLE, THE WAR OF THE
WRLDS. This issue features a crossword. Don't forget to
have a go!

Now for a polemic which has been gathering steam for
a few weeks and which has finally boiled over....

Remember ALTERNATIVE 3, the spoof documentary about
plans to remove a civilized elite to Mars which had Mary
Whitehouse blowing her banana and the Daily Express ponti-
ficating in an even sillier fashion than usual? recently
I saw that it had been made into a book, and took the
opportunity to skim through it....

Call that thread one.

During the last few weeks there has been much radio
and TV discussion about programmes which are actually

fiction, but are presented in such a 'realistic' or documentary style that they might influence people into thinking that they are true. Or plays which concentrate heavily on one aspect of reality and in so doing give an impression that this is 'The Truth'. An obvious example is the recent LAW & ORDER series which painted a depressing picture of corruption and tacit alliance among the 'criminal industry' of police, villains, lawyers, and prison staff.

Call that thread two.

The threads interweave into an interesting and maybe disturbing pattern which you may like to think about.

The book ALTERNATIVE 3 relies heavily on rehashing the material of the TV programme, plus alleged new information which was supposedly censored out. The basic premise is that it WAS all true after all, and there IS a gigantic international conspiracy to abandon 99% of us to a dying civilization and skip off to Mars. I have, as I said, only skimmed through the book on my last visit to Smith's, but I did look for some evidence that this was meant to be taken as entertainment, a work of fiction.

I couldn't find any. What I did find were claims that there had been pressure upon the TV company to pretend that the original programme was a hoax. Now this is silly enough. A conspiracy wide enough to organise secret spaceflights to the Moon and Mars would hardly do that. More likely, the whole thing would have been blacked out altogether, or very quietly and discreetly suppressed with whatever force deemed necessary. (But are They playing on the assumptions of people like me that the whole thing is fiction? - But some people will believe anything so the secret is still likely to be taken seriously. - But such people are only the lunatic fringe whom you can dismiss..... of such is paranoia made. ILLUMINATUS! showed this brilliantly.) Let all that pass, what annoys me is the arch pretence about the whole thing. The programme was brilliant. But a joke, as they say, is a joke. To perpetuate this one is to make it boring and a little bit sinister. Thread two weaves a spooky pattern. I don't, to be honest, hold much brief for the position outlined there. It's easy, generally enough, to tell a play is a play and various elements - a sense that people are acting (if not over-acting) a cast-list among the credits, etc.) - help differentiate a play from a documentary. It is possible to abuse these conventions, by, for example, using an authoritative programme such as PANORAMA to put forward false views, but by and large, the TV companies, especially the BBC, are so wedded to the idea of 'balance' that they would rather lean over backward to be 'fair' to every little fascist that ever crawled out from under his stone than give it up.

But a book has a different kind of authority. You can't tell, from appearance or tone of voice, what the author is 'really' saying. Textual criticism, or research into the facts presented, may help,

but few people have the resources for this sort of activity. Many people have the idea that if they read something in a book not obviously marked 'fiction', it must be fact. AS is portrayed as truth. People are going to take it as truth - if not total truth than in that curious doublethink which allows people to believe in Erich von Daniken one minute and Brinsley Le Poer Trench the next. It will become part of that mythos of loony lore which everyone knows and the real conspiracy of governments - the simple but effective conspiracy of powerful against powerless, haves against have-nots, will go unheeded.

I take this book as an example: perhaps the silliest in the line of books which offer the shadow of thought without the emotional involvement of entertainment. Perhaps the publishers are to blame - it seems anyone can claim anything nowadays: why bother to write a novel when you can dress it up as 'truth', have the publishers slap "Read the controversial FACTS about...." on the cover and make ten times as much money. (maybe the Trades Descriptions Act - see the newshounds-item on IN HIS IMAGE - can do something about that?)

Myself, I prefer my fiction as fiction.

Charles Fort, perhaps the founder of the 'pseudo-scientists' filled four books (THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED, LO!, WILD TALENTS, & NEW LANDS) with speculation about facts which had not been admitted into the scientific canon. Ford, unlike the modern writers, not only did not believe a word of his theories - he admitted it. He shares with his reader a giant, if somewhat spooky, cosmic joke called Reality. Fort was a humourist. Can you imagine von Daniken cracking a joke?

Another thread: Yesterday morning I actually heard someone on the radio (discussing the flying saucer she was building) say the immortal words I thought only existed as apocrypha (PLEASE let it have been a spoof!) "They thought Einstein was crazy, they thought Jesus was crazy...." The cloth these threads make is fit, as they saying goes, for an Emperor.

And we all know what the little boy shouted when he saw the Emperor's New Clothes....

MEMBER'S NOTICEBOARD

Any under 16 (or junior member) of the BSFA who would like to correspond with other under 16 members and form a club, please send SAE to Alex Pillai, 32, Mingle Lane, Stapleford, Cambs. CB2 5BG. Also could anyone contact Alex if they have a copy of THE PRISONER by Thomas Disch that they would like to sell.

Who goes to Leicester Poly and wanted BSFA badges???? Someone of that description sent in a P.O. for 2 badges but forgot to sign the letter. Please get in touch with Keith Freeman and your badges will be on their way!

IAN GARBUTT, Branacoile Lodge, Loch Katrine, Byallender, Perthshire Scotland FK17 8JA, is looking for any Fleetway Annual DAILY MIRROR BOOK OF GARTH (apart from 1975) by Frank Bellamy. Condition not important provided all pages are intact. Will pay any reasonable price.

 RECORD THE CLUBS
 with
 BILL LITTLE

Just a few notices before we hear about the Leicester SF Group...

SCOPE, the magazine of the Keele University SF Society, has just been published. This attractively produced zine features fiction from Andy Darlington, a review of the stage production of "Illuminatus!", and a critique of Fritz Lang's "Metropolis". Editor Dace Penn would like the usual contributions for future issues: stories, articles, reviews and so on. You can contact Dave via the Students Union at Keele.

Nick Brown would, I'm sure, be very interested to hear from any fans in or around the Cardiff area with a view to forming a group. Nick's address is 44 Bronwydd Avenue, Penylan, Cardiff.

University groups are popping up all the time. I have just had news from Helen Roper of a group established at Hull University. Not much yet in the way of solid information, but I'll keep you posted on their development... Any BSFA member who is off to university this year, and who wants to know in advance whether there is a group at their respective choice, drop me a line and I'll be pleased to let you know.

A new venue for the Ribble Valley SF Group: The Brown Cow Inn, Moor Lane, Clitheroe, meeting the last Sunday in each month. Richard Bancroft has also asked me to put out a call for any UFO-logists out there. He has a member who would like to correspond. Contact Richard at 7, Woone Lane, Clitheroe, Lancs.

KADU FLYER, the fanzine of the Stafford Group is now out and all it will cost you is a few stamps. Well worth it to obtain the "Monty Python" of the fanzine world. Editorial address: Steve Cowperthwaite 84, Marston Rd, Stafford, Staffs, ST16 3BY.

Finally, before we get to the featured group, and at the risk of sounding repetitive, can I send out, loud and clear, a request to all group chairpersons to get in touch with me? Especially, those who haven't yet been featured in RTC. I am sending out cards asking for info but replies are slow in coming back. Up to now I receive info regularly from only a few clubs, e.g. Norwich, Ribble Valley, Stafford and Keele. There's nothing I'd like more than to be inundated with info. To those groups who have been featured before, well, I'd still like to hear what you're up to. Even if you folks don't really see RTC as the be-all and end-all, you might know something that another group need to know, you might have the experience and/or expertise to advise, and, who knows? you might be in the position of requiring advice or assistance one of these days. I'm not saying I'm any sort of oracle, just that if I don't know personally how to assist then I may well have something on file saying that

the Outer Hebridean SF Group are past masters at hiring films and that they know all the ins and outs of the people to contact, the firms to avoid, the facilities you need and so on. It can work, you know...

As I said at the top of the column, this time around we're hearing from the Leicester SF Group. Thanks are due to Janet Hunt for a letter that makes the Epic of Gilgamesh look like a doodle on the back of a matchbox. I've not heard from Janet for a while, so I can only assume she's still recovering from a massive attack of tenosynovitis (that's writer's cramp, to the medically ignorant) as a result of that marathon epistle. Not only did Janet provide a detailed history of the Leicester Group, she also very kindly answered the questionnaire that I'm slowly but surely circulating to all the clubs on my list. To those of you who've not yet seen it, beware!

Janet had the germ of an idea to form an SF Group in '77 when she visited the Eastercon for a day, as a result of promptings from some of the people she met there. Like the rest of us, she was a little reticent to start the ball rolling on her own. Then, through the auspices of the local radio, Janet got in touch with Steve Lovett, another fan who wanted to get a group going in the Leicester area.

Posters were distributed to all the libraries in the area (just a note here: all library authorities have a central distribution point and if you want blanket coverage all over your area send your posters there. That way you'll reach all the libraries and not just the local ones.)

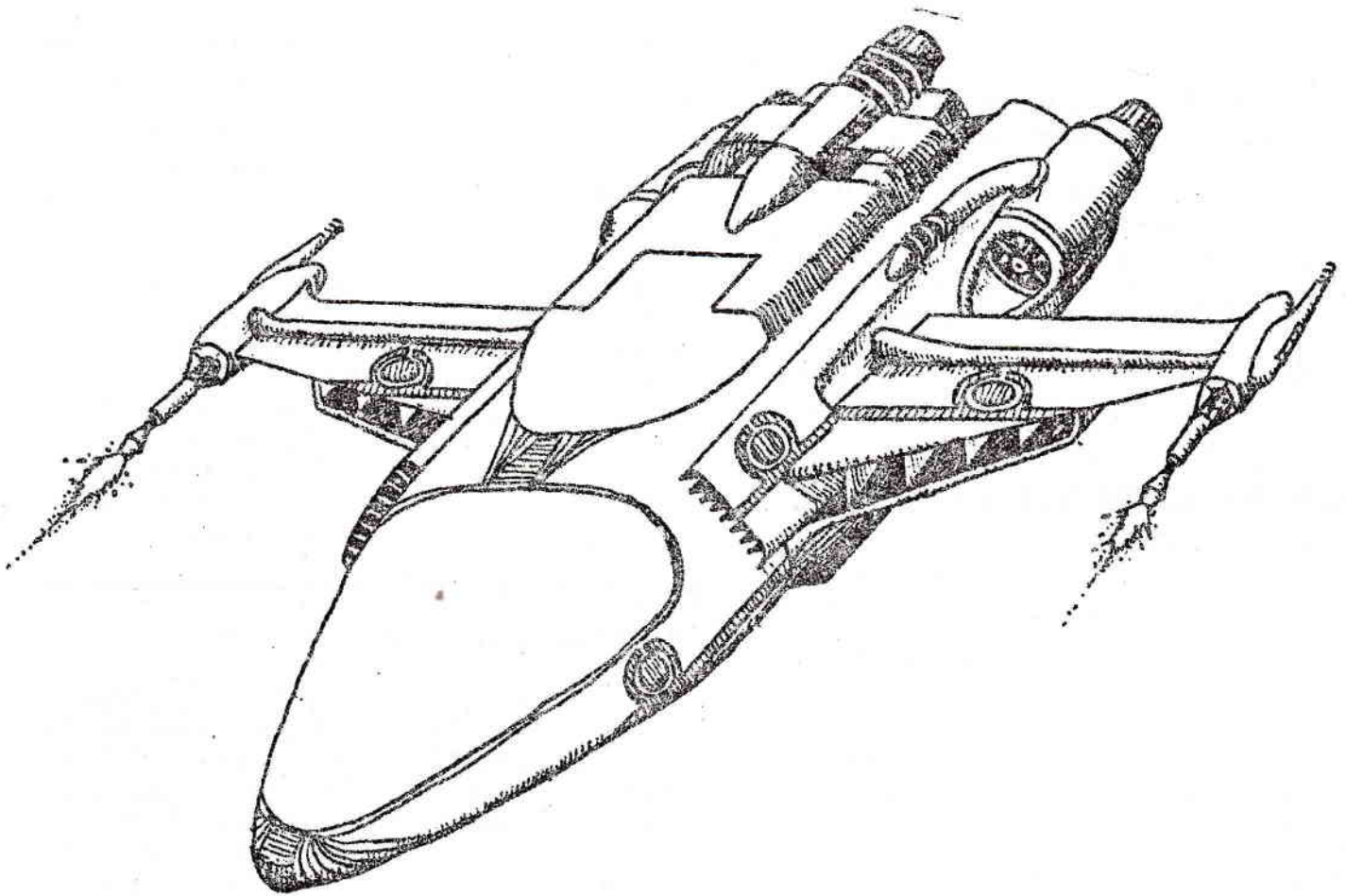
Janet and Steve paid for an ad in the paper and got quite a good response, though she feels, on reflection, that the programme the group could offer at that time was not sufficiently strong to hold on to the enquirers. There's an obvious lesson there, I think.

By far the most obvious venue for SF groups is a pub, and naturally it was to a room in a pub that the group gravitated. This is when the group first hit problems. The average age of the group dropped to around 16, they weren't buying drinks and also potential new members were put off. They lost the pub and the group closed down.

During this enforced hibernation a proper programme was organised and new premises were found (again, in a pub). The group started up again, much the wiser for its earlier mishaps. Membership is now up in the twenties, and in my experience, that ain't half bad. The group meets for a programme meeting on the first Friday of each month. For this, the group have a policy of keeping the local media informed of guest speakers and other events. In this way the group can pick up the casual fan who wants to come along and hear the talk but who doesn't really want to be a regular member.

On the third Friday in the month the group members have a social get together. This allows everyone to have a natter and a drink without the more formal atmosphere of a programme meeting and will obviously create a very distinctive group flavour and, to some extent, help keep the whole thing together.

Publicity is an important thing for any group. It gets you known and draws in those fans who've somehow, miraculously missed seeing any of your posters or articles in the press. The Leicester group are putting on a display in a local department store (complete with life-size R2D2 and C3PO) in August. They have even gone as far as dressing up



in costume and wandering around the local park in order to attract custom. Unfortunately, Janet says, a seven-months pregnant Princess Anne turned up in another part of the city on the same day, when it comes to a choice between a pregnant princess and a local SF group, it's not hard to guess which one the press would prefer.

The group does charge a subscription (in common with most others) of £1.50 a year, which is a bit like supporting membership, since they also charge 30p for a programme meeting and 10p for a social meeting. A book auction last year raised £12. The money goes, naturally enough, towards hiring guest speakers and arranging outings. So far, they have visited 'Dark They Were And Golden Eyed' and the NovaCon, and even go out together for a Christmas meal. Talks have featured David Hardy, Peter Weston, Vernon Brown as well as lectures on Astronomy (always popular with SF groups), cybernetics and the Tolkien society. The group would like to entice more authors along to their meetings but a big barrier in this direction is, of course, expense. There's nothing SF fans like

as much as having an informal natter with the authors, so if there are any philanthropical authors out there reading this....

The group does produce a fanzine, called ETHEREAL SKIE. The first issue was very good containing reviews of BLAKE'S 7, a look at the role of best bitter in SF by someone with the improbable name of Red-nosed Mulligan, and a whole series of excruciating jokes. What was nice about it, for a clubzine, was that there weren't any in-jokes and that anyone could pick it up and have a laugh. I don't know when the second issue is planned for, or even whether a second issue is planned (I hope it is) but I've no doubt that if the group want to keep it going then they'd welcome contributions. Check it out with Janet first if you have any material you want to submit.

The group is to be commended in that whenever someone enquires about the Leicester group but lives too far out to attend meetings Janet always informs the writer about the existence of the BSFA. If all groups plugged BSFA to their members and those that enquire then we might have a healthier BSFA. In reply to the part of my questionnaire about the BSFA Janet reports that only two others, beside

KRAFTWERK 'The Man-Machine' (Capitol E-ST 11728)

The Kraftwerk's approach is to purge rock music, normally heavily dependant for its appeal upon wild emotionalism and spontaneity, of all such traditions, creating instead a music that is cold, ultra-mechanical in structure and bereft of all but the most simple of melody lines. Such a concept may sound off-putting to many, but Kraftwerk's realisation of their perverse ideas is compelling, hypnotic and full of paradox. As part of their masterplan, the group have renounced the use of guitars, drums and most conventional forms of rock instrumentation. Their music is virtually all electronic - in fact it is a celebration of modern sound-making technology. The opening track, 'Robots', is a superb example of their style at its most sophisticated and paradoxical. To a musical backdrop of incessant staccato moog rhythms the band sing - in cold, clipped German accents - "We are the robots" over and over again. Simple but haunting little melody lines thread through the song. The cumulative effect is one of contrived stylishness; a satirization of the disco syndrome that itself works as highly danceable disco music. The second track, 'Space Lab', once again utilises the same concepts and is a kind of seventies answer to the venerable old Tornadoes hit, 'Telstar'. Cool clean note parrens throb and pulsate beneath highly linear melody lines...visions of cold, sterile futuristic technology flood the mind. The last track on side one, 'Metropolis' - inspired by Fritz Lang's legendary SF epic, I would safely guess - commences with siren-like synth noises that eventually dissolve into a highly disciplined, precise rhythm over which the band occasionally interject with the title, each syllable lovingly enunciated.

Throughout the album one is constantly amazed by Kraftwerk's genuinely strange and original vision.

More than punkrock ever can, these guys from the industrial heart of Europe - remember, Dusseldorf - are creating and performing music that is truly contemporary. A music that represents a real stepping stone toward the future.... By contrast, punkrock is merely a high energy recycling of past traditions.

Unlike, say, Tangerine Dream, whose whole stance is based upon an intuitive grasp of moods and atmospheres; a belief in the need to escape to some kind of pastoral paradise - if only through the medium of musical impressionism - Kraftwerk's music is an active embrace of modern technology in all its myriad manifestations. It could be argued that Kraftwerk's approach is a complete negation of the ideals of most 'techno-rock' bands such as the 'Dream, Pink Floyd, ELP, Hawkwind, etc. The one thing all these bands have in common is a commitment, in varying degrees, to the 'alternative culture' first spawned in the mid sixties. They wanted to escape from the modern world and its increasing complexity.... The paradox is that much of their music is dependant upon technology for its realisation. Kraftwerk have resolved this conflict.

Other Kraftwerk recordings:

'Ralf und Florian'

'Autobahn'

~ all on Vertigo (Phillips)

'Radioactivity'

'Trans-Europe-Express'!

- both on their current label

(James Parker)

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND: A Listen For Pleasure reading by Brian Aldiss of his own novel.

For those of you unfamiliar with the novel, Aldiss' FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND deals with a future plagued by 'Time Slips' as nuclear tests destroy the fragile balance of Time itself. Joe Bodenland, the narrator of our tale, is carried back into a past where he encounters Victor Frankenstein, Mary Shelley (authoress of the novel), Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley in the Switzerland of 1816. Fact and fiction merge in a tale that mixes adventure and image perfectly. It is one of Aldiss' best novels and here he reads it with a natural charm and warmth that captures all the nuances of the original book. It is a marvellous interpretation, over two hours in length and cutting only a certain amount of repetitive and didactic material from the book. Available in two cassettes from Music for Pleasure it is far more than a simple case of media transference. The reading brings out the flow of the book whilst perhaps glossing over the delightful stylistic balance. Brian does far more than read it straight, however. The voices of the children, Nurse Sheila Gregory and the Monster are all given their own characteristics. The story itself is never mutilated and, where, as in Chapter 12, entire sections are cut, it is only the garnish (important enough in the novel but not missed in the reading) of criticism and literary dalliance that is missing. Stylistic embellishment becomes concise expression under Aldiss' interpretation. The result should be listened to. Get this one as soon as possible....

(Dave Wingrove)

***** COMPETITION TIME!!

And the competition this issue is a crossword (no!!) compiled by Colin Hingston - many thanks, Colin; I'm bad enough at doing crosswords without having to think of them as well!

If you don't want to mutilate your copy of MATRIX, list the answers to the clues of a piece of paper and send it off to the MATRIX editorial address from whence a book will be sent to the person who gets all the clues correct. In the event of no-one getting the whole thing right, the prize will go to the nearest correct answer - in the event of a tie I'll use the traditional hat. All entries to be in by the First of August, please.

ACROSS

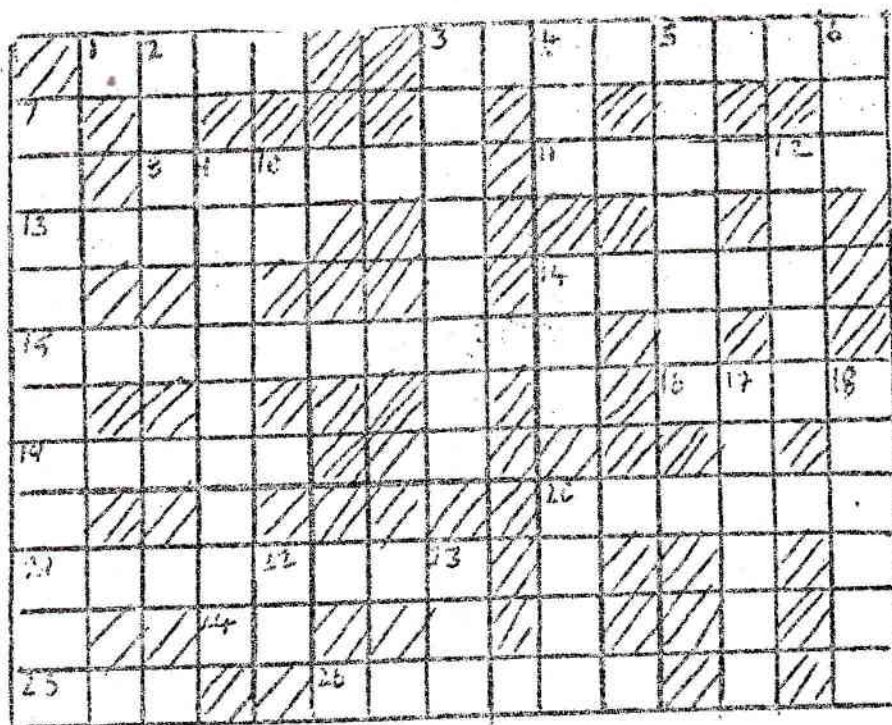
1. Mr. Seldon of FOUNDATION fame. (4)
3. The Master of Scatology. (8)
6. The heaviest metal. (6)
11. Judith changed her name several times. (6)
13. The Doors of his Face, the - - - - of his Mouth, (5)
14. A novel by Richard Cowper. (5)
15. Lew Nichols was this. (10)
16. The - - - - (s) of Time. (4)
19. Anagram of suns? Ask Bob Marley! (5)
20. Hindu politics-philosopher whose sys-

- tem of civil disobedience inspired E.F. Russell's 'And Then There Were None'. (6)
21. The editor of ASTOUNDING before Campbell. (8)
24. The Doc's initials (2)
25. A unit of absorbed radiation dose. (3)
26. Light reflected by a planet. (6)

DOWN

2. Small unit of matter. (4)
3. The product of a body's mass and its velocity. (8)

4. Author of 'The Cyberiad'. (3)
5. A fantasy writer gave Mars this name. (7)
6. He of the Long Arm. (3)
7. Frank R. Paul was Harnback's favourite. (11)
9. A continuum. (9)
10. Manuscript. (2)
12. SF is full of them! (5)
14. Harry's Space Rats. (3)
17. Norfolk-born author living in Oxford.
18. Ex-Futurian & gossip of SF world. (6)
20. Agorophobic editor of GALAXY. (4)
22. The Dutchman's initials (2)
23. Creator of 5 down. (3)



THE MATRIX INTERVIEW.

Terry Jeeves is the name behind Britain's longest-running fanzine, ERG. Within the context of this interview are revealed the innermost secrets of editing, as well as the opinions and expressions of the most (or one of the most, to stop the grumbling) experienced editors of British fanzine....I give you Terry Jeeves....

DC: What prompted you into the world of fanzine editing and can you name any major influences which can be accredited for your debut?

TJ: Well, I had been an actifan for years (my first illo appearing in '48 as did my first written piece) so when in (I think) '56, Messrs Gestetner sent a salesman round to my house, I couldn't resist buying a Gestetner duplicator and getting into fan pubbing myself... so I guess you can blame them...plus, possibly, Eric Jones and Eric entcliffe. Together we put out a one-shot titled 'Con-Science' which purported to explain what cons were all about, and what to expect there. Then for a while I worked with E.J. in publishing SPACE TIMES for the Cheltenham Group and I had the title of 'art Editor' which looked good, but meant nothing. I think these were the main influences in getting me into fan pubbing.

DC: When did fandom first see the appearance of ERG?

TJ: The first issue of ERG appeared in April 1959 and was the first totally Jeevian fanzine. There had been interim periods between CON-SCIENCE and SPACE TIMES when the Erics and I, drunk with the power of having a brand new Gestetner to play with, started TRIODE, which saw 17 issues in its first incarnation - although it is now in action again. This, of course, was a joint affair. Solo, I have also published A CHECK LIST TO ASTOUNDING, Part 1 (30-39), Part 2 (40-49) and part 3 (50-59), plus, of course, DUPLICATING NOTES. DN and 'Part 3' are still around and are

available for £1 and 60p.

DC: What are your reading influences as regards authors, pastime, etc?

TJ: Pastime authors? Phew...gotta ream of paper handy? Well, among others, Clarke's INTERPLANETARY FLIGHT, Bonestell's CONQUEST OF SPACE, Rouse Ball's MATHEMATICAL RECREATIONS AND ESSAYS, Gardner's MATHEMATICAL PUZZLES AND DIVERSIONS, Hogben's MATHEMATICS FOR THE MILLION, Escher's drawings etc. etc. Favourite authors are Clarke, einlein, Herbert, Clement... In general, the hard core writers as exemplified by ANALOG, in the years up to, say, the mid sixties.

DC: Would it be fair to say that these have any influence over your 'Errgitorials' and do you try for variety so as not to become repetitive?

TJ: Yes, I think it fair to say that all these have their innuings, such as when I run puzzles, or waffle about aircraft, spaceflight, and so on. But then, we all tend to talk about what interests us, don't we? I do try for variety, though, and looking back over the last few 'Errgitorials', I rather think I have managed it: conventions, sf-nal boobies, FTL travel, Writing sf, and pro-Concorde...

DC: You seem to display a natural talent as regards your drawings. Is this natural, or did you attend art school?

TJ: No, I never went to art school, but have always loved to draw and so I have kept trying, read books on painting and sketching, etc, and just kept drawing. I feel that sheer practice more than anything else has improved my stuff, but I don't really class myself as an artist, more a plodder with perhaps a bit of flair.

DC: Does your profession in life bring any influences into the pages of ERG, or do you keep the two completely separate?

TJ: My profession began as a wireless operator in the RAF (prior to that I did four months as a Steel Analyst) and since 1948 I have been a schoolmaster teaching art, maths and English. I think the RAF experience and interests keep cropping up, but as for teaching, well, I find the writing and spelling helped by that, and I suspect it is also a factor in the various series which have appeared in ERG on How To....make cine film, tape record, fanzines etc. etc.

DC: The page count in ERG seems pretty consistent; have you ever had thoughts of expanding the number of pages or are things just to your liking as they are now?

TJ: Yes, ERG's page count does remain pretty consistent, at the paper weight which just comes in at the very top of the first postal price step. I have often thought of putting out a larger issue, but several facts are against it. If I increased the page count by, say, ten pages, this would be £1 on stencils and for each 100 copies £1.50 on paper and £2.50 on postage, so that extra 10 pages would cost me a minimum of £5, bring in no more LoCs and also change ERG from a fun thing and a labour of love (which I can just manage every quarter) into a monster which kept demanding that X many pages be filled regularly. As a result

I'd probably gaffate. So, to keep ERG as fun, and on up to the 100 mark, I don't anticipate any change in the page count.

DC: Your lettercolumn in ERG shows that many people have a lot of respect for both you and the zine, but are there any letters of a nasty nature which come your way and how do you deal with them?

TJ: Strangely enough, I don't get any nasty letters. I had one from a well known and still active fan, but it was so vitriolic and unbalanced that I put it down to some form of mental illness, 'shoved it on one side and didn't reply to it. Indeed, it was a year later that the bloke asked why he hadn't been getting ERG lately. So I sent him the latest, and all seems well again, yet ERG hasn't changed that much. I do get letters which dislike this, that and the other, but they are fair comment more often than not. I seem to get more vitriol slung at me in letters to OTHER fanzines, usually in response to something I never said.

DC: Have you ever been tempted to produce ERG in offset litho or would the overall costs make it more of a luxury than an everyday thing for your readers?

TJ: Occasionally, when looking at a zine such as MAYA (adv.) or SPANG BLAH (further adv.) I have wondered idly at the thought of producing a litho ERG, but immediately I have dismissed the idea because of costs. I can produce, say, 150 copies of ERG much more cheaply than a similar number of lithoed editions, unless I cut the page count. Again, these costs can be spread, paper this month, stencils in two months, ink when I feel like it. With litho, the bill comes in one lump, and, also, I fancy I'd lose much of the fun involved in the zine by losing the ability to experiment with colour work, brush stencils, etc not to mention lino blocks and rubber stamps and suchlike, which I have employed in the past.

DD: On the subject of printing, what would you recommend as being the best of the bunch for a person who is just starting up; best in terms of cost, clarity of production, etc. etc?

TJ: I would strongly recommend any faned to look carefully at his own resources, abilitywise and financial, before embarking on any cash outlay for a process (this is assuming he lacks access to any office, college or suchlike equipment). A good way, if he/she can manage it, is to help out with another faned's chores. I would not say that any way is better than another for a beginner, but I would point out that photocopy zines tend to be limp, singleside, variable in

print colour, and, overall, slightly off-putting. Banda zines give cheap colour for runs up to about 100, but, again, generally singlesided, blotchy or faintly unreadable material and, as with photocopy, not so inviting nor easy to read. For cheap clarity and uniformity in production, use a rotary duplicator, Gestetner or Roneo. If cash is unlimited, the photo lith.

DC: All this talk of production brings me to some of the other problems which face zine editors, and one of those which I place on top of the list is that of Material. Do you find that this is becoming an ever increasingly difficult barrier to overcome?

TJ: Getting material can be a problem, which is, of course, another reason for not upping ERG's page count. However, so far I have never had that problem with ERG, indeed, my problem is what to hold over until the next issue, and since reviews, letters and current news can't be held, I tend to cut the letters to make the room. I appreciate getting them, but, after all, if I cut out editorial matter to allow them to appear, there would be nothing for the next generation of letters to comment on.

DC: Deadlines can be another problem; do you find this can be a bit of a headache?

TJ: Here, again, I've been lucky. The people who I have asked to write for ERG almost invariably come through with the goods in short order. Occasionally this fails, but I try to have several options open, of material written by me, and this can then plug the gap or go back in the file.

DC: What do you find to be one of the major problems of zine editors?

TJ: Dare I suggest that intolerance and narrow outlook might qualify? What I have in mind is the currently increasing attitude that "he disagrees with me, therefore he is a screaming nit and I shall say so long and loud." Whatever the virtues (if any) of such an attitude, it can only alienate one fan from another in the long run. We are supposed to be fan because of a common bond; OK, let's make allowances for the other areas where we differ. Just because I love Space Opera, and Joe Soap loves Sword and Sorcery, doesn't make either of us nits. Fanzines should publish whatever the editor desires, but that doesn't mean that the readers must like it. I detest permissive language in a fanzine, but that's up to the editor. I also dislike reading about current pop music, fantasy, or 'poetry'. but I want to see editors tackle all these and NOT limit themselves to one area. I speak in general here; there is room in fandom for zines to cover every item which interests the editor. So, let's not narrow our horizons down to one aspect of SF.

DD: Problems come and go, but has there ever been a time when it looked like the end of ERG?

TJ: Yes, ERG very nearly folded between 1962 and 1970. I was crippled by Asthma, could hardly walk, typing was almost impossible, and at one stage ERG only appeared because Brian Jordan came round and cranked the handle for me. Happily, change of doctor got it under control (NOT cured, just under control) and ERG has never looked back since.

DC: What do you dislike most about being a zine editor (if anything) and do you think it is a dislike shared with almost all editors?

TJ: My main dislike(s) with editorship: People who write in... "Please send me a copy of your fanzine"... and never have the gumption to enclose a stamp, and then they never write to acknowledge or comment when they have free-loaded a copy. People who condemn ERG as a rubbish zine simply because the material therein doesn't meet their tastes. I imagine that those two are shared by most faneds. My next is more personal. I dislike the fact that the counter on my Gestetner has packed up, being a hand-turned and inked machine, I also dislike cranking and squeezing the last ink out of a tube.

DC: Do you find the present huge influx of new zines to be of benefit to fandom (zineland??) or are some of them so bad that it could damage the reputations of well-founded and decent zines?

TJ: The influx of new zines will benefit the field, I feel. Admitted, many are poor, and will fall by the wayside, as will many of the good ones but, to survive for more than a few years, any fanzine must have something going for it. So, I reckon that the field will benefit from the editors, writers and artists who get their 'blood-ing' in ephemeral zines. I can't see any harming the field unless the harm is from those who judge fandom by one minimal exposure and their opinion doesn't count much anyway.

DC: Is there anything you would like to see major publishing companies do for the amateur magazines, such as helping them with production, on a low level, naturally, so that they can see the potential that lies in editors of respected zines?

TJ: One thing major companies might do to help us (and themselves) would be to buy reams of duplicating paper, run THEIR advertising matter on one side only and then give (or sell very cheaply) the pages to faneds so that a faned could get free paper for the running of the firms adverts. This could be extended to mailing envelopes bearing advertising matter. BUT bear in mind, one crudzine with objectionable language, and any publisher would pull out fast rather than be harmed by contagion, and this is the key reason for publishers generally avoiding fanzines.

DC: Finally, Terry, we have seen over 18 years of successful ERGs; do you have any plans for the near future?

TJ: Well, one is to keep ERG going until I can no longer crank the Duper. I also have the nubbin of an idea to publish an anthology 'The best of ERG' if the response is adequate to such a project, or maybe a 'Jeeves Omnibus'. What do you think of that?

DC: These things I shall look forward to, and if you are acquiring votes for such, then you have mine....

My thanks are extended to Terry Jeeves for bearing with me while I compiled this interview and after reading this, you will realise that Terry is a fan to the heart...

DAVE COBBLEDICK

NEWSHOUNDS OF THE BSFA

MEDIA NOTES..... by Martin Hatfield

1. STAR TREK

Paramount have announced that they are to go ahead with the STAR TREK movie, which it has been estimated will cost \$15M. Plans to make the film were originally shelved due to costs growing above \$9M. The revival is primarily attributed to the success of Paramount's SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER which has earned a large revenue on both the US and British markets.

Leonard Nimoy has agreed to repeat his role as Spock, with all the other principal cast members recreating the characters from the TV series. Meanwhile William Shatner (Capt. Kirk), currently filming the new STAR TREK TV series, can be seen in the THIRD WALKER - a Canadian film which "contrasts French and Scottish cultures in Canada".

Paramount, anxious to exceed STAR WARS in visual effects, hired Douglas Trumbull (2001/SILENT RUNNING/CLOSE ENCOUNTERS) as a special advisor to assemble the 'advanced film technology' team. They have hired one of the most experienced directors/editors in the business in Robert Wise, with over 40 films to his credit including THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, WEST SIDE STORY, THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN and more recently, AUDREY ROSE. Lavish attention has also been paid to the script, taken from an original story by Alan Dean Foster (author of STAR TREK LOG vols 1 - 5) and producer Gene Roddenberry (originator of STAR TREK). The original screenplay was written by Roddenberry and Harold Livingston, but will be revised by Dennis Lynton Clark. Production will commence this summer, with a planned release date for summer 1979.

2. LEIGH BRACKETT 1915 - 1978

Leigh Brackett died on 18th March after a short illness. She was aged 62. Her major credits as a screenwriter included THE BIG SLEEP (1946), RIO BRAVO (1959), HATARI (1962) and RIO LOBO (1970) all for director Howard Hawks, and THE LONG GOODBYE (1973) for Robert Altman. She was perhaps best known to SF fans for her contributions to PLANET STORIES and is noted as the creator of the 'Half-ling' series and the character Eric John Stark, to whom she returned in the '70s with a new series starting with THE GINGER STAR. She was married to SF author Edmond Hamilton who died last year. Hamilton had edited THE BEST OF LEIGH BRACKETT, and jointly they had written the story 'Stark and the Star Kings' which will appear in Ellison's THE FINAL DANGEROUS VISIONS. Her most recent project was the script for STAR WARS TWO, of which she completed the final draft. An interview with Leigh Brackett and Edmond Hamilton appeared in SFR 21 (May 1977)

3. DARK STAR CREW.

Dan O'Bannon, co-writer, editor, production designer, special effects designer and star of John Carpenter's DARK STAR, recently took part in a question and answer session at the Paris Pulman cinema, London. He was also scheduled to appear at the first 'Breakaway Weekend' which was to feature a selection of SF films including DARK STAR, at the Aldeburgh Cinema, Suffolk. O'Bannon is currently working for FOX on SW2 and has finished writing an original screenplay for the SF/Horror film ALIEN which is due to commence production on July 3rd (See MATRIX 17).

John Carpenter, director of DARK STAR, was awarded a special citation from the BFI for both DARK STAR and his second feature ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13. He has co-written the new Faye Dunaway film EYES and an interview with him is featured in the Spring issue of 'Sight & Sound'. It is revealed here that Carpenter attended the same film school as George Lucas, both achieving critical acclaim after making SF films. Carpenter goes on record as wishing to direct a film from the novel THE STARS MY DESTINATION/ TIGER! TIGER! by Alfred Ester. However, he admits "It would cost millions and millions of dollars., I'll never be able to do it. I also... would love to do Edgar Allan Poe's A DESCENT INTO THE MAELSTROM. I think it could be a tremendous film."

4. JOHN WILLIAMS

John Williams, who won his second academy Oscar for best music in STAR WARS (the first being for JAWS) has written the scores for SUPERMAN and METEOR.

'Screen International' (1-4-78) asked the question "Where did Williams get his inspiration for the CE3K theme, by which Lacombe communicated with the aliens?" It was suggested that the music is similar to Strauss' 'Der Rosendkavalier' which begins with the same sequence of notes - D E C G. A further parallel is the musical setting for Goethe's 'Der Erloening' by Schubert. Words of Goethe's poem apparently translate, from the original German as "...you dearest child, come, go with me." This is obviously appropriate to the film's scenes where young Barry Guiler (Cary Guffey) and power worker

Neary are respectively kidnapped and attracted by the aliens.

'Screen' also reveals that the combination of music and aliens is not new. Gian Carlo Menotti's opera 'Help, Help the Globolinks' (1968) used music to drive away alien invaders.

5. HOME MOVIES

Those who have been able to afford the £750 outlay for a video Home Recorder will welcome the news that FOX are making available over 50 feature films on video cassette. Films include THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951) (a US best-seller), BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES (1960) THE FRENCH CONNECTION (1971) and M*A*S*H (1970) The only drawback is the price \$50 per cassette. An alternative is to wait until the film comes on the 'Glass Teat' and record it on a blank cassette - cost \$11.50.

6. CHOP SUEY BIONICS.

"Tightier and stronger than KING KONG... Faster than the Six Million Dollar Man.... Deadlier than the Bionic Woman. . More powerful than the supersonic Jet Fighter and Atomic Battleship combined..." No, this isn't an ad for the new SUPERMAN film (see below). The above superlatives describe 'Dynamite Johnson' alias master Johnson Yap. He plays a sort of pint-sized version of the Bionic Man, in the film DYNAMITE JOHNSON. That isn't all, just the latest in a whole series of Asian films primarily produced for the international market by director/writer Bobby A. Suarez. Included in this series, which looks destined to be dubbed 'Chop Suey SF' (cf. 'Spaghetti Westerns') are Bionic Boy, 'Cleopatra Wong', 'Superwoman' and 'Computer Boy'. Another three films, whose plots combine elements of Bruce Leem Steve Austin, Robin Hood and James Bond, are currently in production. You have been warned!

7. THE THIEF OF BAGDAD

Production of THE THIEF OF BAGDAD (Columbia), a remake of the 1924 version which starred Douglas Fairbanks, commences this summer at Shepperton with a \$3M budget and Clive Donner (HERE WE GO ROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH) as director. Another chance to see ex-ape Roddy McDowall in the flesh still attempting to fulfill the promise shown in JUST WILLIAM (1937) HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY (1941) and LASSIE COME HOME (1943). Other stars involved are the Indian-born 'Continental heart-throb' Kabir Bedi, Peter and Pavla Ustinov, and Terence Stamp (also in SUPERMAN).

8. MISSILE X

Final editing has now been completed on MISSILE X (The Neutron Bomb Incident), which was shot on location in Iran, Austria, Spain and California. The \$3.2M movie stars Curt Jurgens, Peter Graves, Michael Dante, Karin Schubert and John Carradine. Leslie Martinson, best known for the BATMAN movie and his work on US TV, directed. No

9. TITUS GRCAN.

A loan from the National Film development Fund should enable TITUS GRCAN to start production in the UK later this year. Dennis Rolfe will produce a script written by Steven Roberts, based upon Mervyn Peake's novel from the 'Gormenghast'

ghast trilogy' (Penguin) by Mervyn Peake, John Hurt and Peter Sellers will star.

10. NOSFERATU

Some confusion exists in the media over which film new wave German director Werner Herzog will make next. 'Time' (20/3/78) suggests FITZGERALD set like his AGUIRRE WRATH OF GOD in the jungles of Peru, telling the story of Jack Nicholson as a prospector in the South American rubber boom at the turn of the century. 'Screen International' favours NOSFERATU, a remake of the classic silent version (1923) of DRACULA in which Max Schreck played the original screen incarnation of the blood-loving Count. Herzog has acquired a devoted following in this country and a growing reputation based upon such films as THE ENIGMA OF KASPAR HAUSER, STROSZEK, and FATA MORGANA. The latter film, regularly shown at film theatres up and down the country, has been described by critic Roger E. Wolf as being "... the nearest thing yet to a genuinely political science fiction movie." Recommended viewing.

11. SF TV MOVIES

A multi-million dollar series of SF TV movies based upon the stories of Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke will commence filming in Paris at the end of July. Eight films are being co-produced by Leslie Goldsmith (currently making THE PASSAGE, starring Anthony Quinn & James Mason in France) and David Wickes (who will also direct several of the films). Isaac Asimov has been approached to present each film.

12. SUPERMAN

Release of the SUPERMAN film, based on the DC comic strip character, has had to be postponed until the end of the year. The special effects unit are re-shooting scenes of Superman, played by Christopher Reeve, flying. This was found necessary after audiences, at special showings of the film in the US, burst into laughter when they noticed the wires supporting Superman were visible. The film has been directed by Richard Donner (THE OMEN) and also stars Marlon Brando (as Superman's father), Gene Hackman and Terence Stamp. Only Brando's face will be visible on the screen. The production, at Pinewood studios UK, was judged to be in trouble earlier this year when the writer, Tom Mankiewicz, arrived in the country to supervise extra scenes for a new ending.

13. CREEPING TITLES

SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN SPACE DWARFS and THE ASTRONAUT AT THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR forthcoming from Disney.

STAR WARS completely flopped in the Phillipines where it only made £101,000 compared to THE SPY WHO LOVED ME's £437,000.

GODFATHER PART 3 will star John Travolta as Al Pacino's grown-up son.

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY is Michael Chrichton's latest film project as a director (after COMA) and

stars Donald Sutherland, Sean Connery and Lesley-Anne Down.

Star Wars rip-offs include STARSHIP INVADERS and the Japanese MESSAGE FROM SPACE.

Brian Johnson, British special effects expert, will be in charge of special effects on ALIEN and STAR WARS2. He started his career on ZOO and supervised effects for SPACE 1999 and THE MEDUSA TOUCH.

Imagine if you can Dustin Hoffman (Popeye) bursting into song with "I am what I am and that's all I am..." as he woos the lovely Lily Tomlin (Olive Oyl) away from his arch-enemy Peter Boyle (Bluto), watched by Jason Robards (Poopdeck Pappy and Buddy Hackett (Wimpy). If you can't, then wait until Xmas 1979 when the film POPEYE, scripted by cartoonist Jules Feiffer, hits the U.S. large screen.

(Martin Hatfield. 30/4/78)

AWARDS.....

SF Film awards presented by the Academy of SF, Fantasy & Horror:

Best SF film... STAR WARS.

" Fantasy Film... CH GOD!

" Horror " ... THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVES DOWN THE LANE.

" Actor... GEORGE BURNS in "Oh God!"

" Actress... JODIE FOSTER in "The Little Girl..."

" Supporting Actor... ALEC GUINNESS in "Star Wars"

" " Actress... SUSAN TYRELL in "Dad"

" Director (Tie)... GEORGE LUCAS for SW
STEVEN SPIELBERG for "Close Encounters."

" Writing... GEORGE LUCAS for SW

" Costumes... JOHN MOLLO for SW

" Special Effects... John Dykstra for SW

" Make-up... Rick Baker & Stuart Freeborn for SW.

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1978 NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS:

NOVEL:

IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT - Gregory Benford (Dial)

GATEWAY - Fred Pohl (Galaxy & St. Martin's)

MICROSTAR ODYSSEY - David Gerrold (Signet)

CIRQUE - Terry Carr (Babbs-Merrill)

SWORD OF THE DEMON - Richard Lupoff (Harper & Row)

NOVELLA:

STARDANCE - Spider & Jeanne Robinson (Analog, March)

AZTECS - Vonda N. McIntyre (2076: The American Tri-Centennial).

NOVELET:

THE SCREWFLY SOLUTION - Raccoona Sheldon (Analog, June)

PARTICLE THEORY - Edward Bryant (Analog, Feb.)

THE STONE CITY - George R.R. Martin (New Voices in SF)

THE 9th SYMPHONY OF LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN & OTHER LOST SONGS - Carter Scholz (Universe 7)

A RITE OF SPRING - Fritz Leiber (Universe 7)

SHORT STORY:

TIN WOODMAN - Dennis Bailey & David Bailey & David Buchoff (Amazing Dec 76)

THE HIBAKUSHA GALLERY - Edward Bryant (Penthouse, July)

CAMERA OBSCURA - Thomas Monteleone (Cosmos, July)

JEFTY IS FIVE - Harlan Ellison (F&SF, July)

AIR RAID - John Varley writing as Hank Boehm (Isaac Asimov's SF Mag, Spring)

HUGO AWARD NOMINATIONS:

NOVEL:

THE FORBIDDEN TOWER - M.Z. Bradley

TIME STORM (G.R. Dickson); DYING OF THE LIGHT (George R.R. Martin); LUCIFER'S HAMMER (Niven & Pournelle); GATEWAY (F. Pohl).

NOVELLA:

A SHARK IN THE NIGHT (Benford); THE WONDERFUL SECRET (Laumer); AZTECS (McIntyre); STARDANCE (J. & S. Robinson); IN THE HALL OF THE MARTIAN KINGS (Varley)

NOVELETTE:

ENDER'S GAME (J.S. Card); PRISMATICA (deLaney); THE 9th SYMPHONY OF LUDVIG VAN BEETHOVEN... (Scholz); THE SCREWFLY SOLUTION (Sheldon); EYES OF AMBER (J.D. Vinge)

SHORT STORY:

JEFTY IS FIVE (Ellison); LAURALYN (Garrett); DOG DAY EVENING (Robinson); TIME SHARING ANGEL (Tiptree); AIR RAID (Varley)

DRAMATIC:

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS...; BLOOD! THE LIFE & FUTURE TIMES OF JACK THE RIPPER; THE HOBBIT; STAR WARS; WIZARDS

PRO ARTIST:

Vincent Difate; Stephen Fabian; Kelly Freas; Rick Sternbach; Michael Whelan.

PRO EDITOR:

James Baen; Ben Bova; Terry Carr; Ed Ferman; George Southers.

FANZINE:

Don -O- Saur; Janus; Locus; Maya; SF Review.

FAN WRITER:

Charlie Brown; Don D'Amassa; Dick Geis; Don Thompson; Susan Wood.

FAN ARTIST:

Grant Canfield; Phil Foglio; Alexis Gilliland; Jeanne Gomol; James Shull.

JOHN CAMPBELL AWARD:

ORSON CARD (Ender's Game); JACK CHALKER (A jungle of Stars); STEPHEN DONALDSON (Lord Foul's Bane); ELIZABETH LYNN (We All Have To Go); BRUCE STERLING

(Man-Made Self)

GANDALF AWARDS:

Grand Master of Fantasy:

POUL ANDERSON, RAY BRADBURY; URSULA LEGUIN; MICHAEL MOORE; COCK; RUDY ZELAZNY.

Book Length Fantasy:

REPELL FOR CHAMELEON (Anthony); LORD FOULT'S BANE (Donaldson); THE SHINING (Stephen King); OUR LADY OF DARKNESS (Leiber); THE SILMARILLION (Tolkien).

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ANALOG gets into book publishing with Baronet bringing out the hardbacks and quality paperbacks and Ace the standard paperbacks of ANALOG BOOKS. They'll cover novels by new writers, reprints of classics from ASTOUNDING, anthologies of all new stories. ANALOG are doing this partly in an attempt to let the book buyers know there still are SF magazines. The first novel will be by Orson Scott Card called HOT SLEEP.

F&SF rates go up to 4¢ for 10,000 words and 3¢ for the rest if you're established or they think it's a special story. Otherwise a straight 3¢. (Submissions to Ed Foreman, F&SF, PO Box 56, Cornwall CT 06753, USA).

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WHAT ARE THEY DOING....?

CHRIS PRIEST's story in Andromeda 3 is more than likely a novelet called The Cremation.

BRIAN ALDISS' short novel Enemies of the system (see last issue) will also appear in the June F&SF. Non-Isotropic is in Galileo no 7.

ROBERT SHECKLEY has The Alchemical Marriage of Alistair Comp-ton due from Sphere next year, along with 2 new collections of stories: The Robot Who Looked Like Me and THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF ROBERT SHECKLEY. At the moment, he is starting work on his first anthology for Ace, writing a new novel for Bantam and putting together a collection of various works for Baronet. He has recently completed the text for a non-fiction book Futuropolis. It is an illustrated book of speculative future cities to be published by Bergstrom & Boyle. For those of you who have access to American paperbacks, Ace will be reissuing a dozen or so titles in the coming year.

BOB SHAW has just finished a new novel called Vertigo.

GEORGE HAY'S new original Penguin anthology series is called PULSAR and no. 1 contains work by Ian Watson, John Taylor, Josephine Saxton, Angela Carter, David Langford, Stan Gooch, A.E. Van Vogt, Bob Shaw, Chris Blyce, Michael Coney and H.G. Wells. (A few familiar names from STOP-WATCH...)

JACK CHALKER is a rising American author who appears to be quite prolific. Del Ray books have brought Dancers in the Afterglow; Analog have Forty Days and Forty Nights in the Wilderness; Asimov's have Dance Band on the Titanic.

(Compiled by Paul Fraser in the midst of exams.)

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DISTANT ENCOUNTERS is a season of four '3-Dimensional plays' presented by Inter-Action productions at the Almost Free Theatre, 9-19 Rupert St, London W1. (Tel. 01-485 6224). The plays presented are DISTANT ENCOUNTERS from Stories by Brian Aldiss, directed by Anthony Matheson (a review of which is elsewhere in this issue), ONE OFF by Bob Wilson, directed by Stuart Owen (opened June 7th, so you've missed that as well!) and THE ALIEN SINGER by Ed B. directed by Philip Haas, which opens July 5th so there's no excuse for missing that! Times of these lunchtime shows are Tuesday to Saturday 1.15p.m., Sunday 3 & 5p.m. The fourth play is PLAYER PIANO adapted from Kurt Vonnegut's novel by James Saunders, directed by Peter Sothcott. This opens June 14th, Tuesday to Sunday at 8.00p.m..

There is/was a possibility that the opera based on THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD by H.P. Lovecraft, written by Camilla Saunders and directed by Ken Campbell, which appeared at the ICA in April may transfer to Covent Garden!

There is to be a SCIENCE FICTION EXTRAVAGANZA at Brunel University on September 8th - 10th. Leading 'an event of cosmic magnitude' will be Philip Strick, author of SF MOVIES and lecturer on SF at University College, London. Further information from Brunel Science Fiction Festival, Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middx. UB8 3PH.

Douglas Adams, scriptwriter of THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY has written an episode of DR WHO due to be transmitted in the autumn. There are plans, according to the Radio Times for another series of the 'GUIDE' later this year. ((I hope to have more on this next issue.))

CHILD EDUCATION QUARTERLY has a special feature on SPACE in its current issue, with a cover by David Hardy, a centre-spread poster from his NEW CHALLENGE OF THE STARS plus colour pictures from STAR WARS featuring our best-loved metal people. Not bad for 35p....

Don't forget your STAR WARS pop-up book, due out from Collins (June).

QUATERMASS could return to the small screen. Four 1-hour episodes with a total budget of £17M have been

scripted by Nigel Kneale, who originated the character in the 50's. Production, for a subsidiary of Thames TV, is unlikely to start before 1979.

The SUNDAY TIMES recently interviewed librarian Pat Gould on the subject of large-scale book thefts from public libraries. One recent case apparently involved a west-country lad who stole 600 science fiction novels. "He was a science fiction fan," commented Miss Gould.

150 people & organisations have paid deposits for trips on the first space shuttles due to take place in the mid-1980's. For as little as \$3,000 small payloads of one to five cubic feet can be booked for those who want to try out their ideas in space.

CLONE OR CON?

And also from the Sunday Times... the newspaper challenged the author of IN HIS IMAGE: THE CLONING OF A MAN, to sue them for libel by calling him a liar and a fraud. Author David Rorvik declined to take up the challenge, calling the ST's allegations "Fair comment... And it adds a certain amount of mystery to the book."

Rorvik claims in the book that an American millionaire he calls 'Max' paid a scientist to produce a clone by taking one of his body cells, putting it in a woman's egg, from which the nucleus had been removed, and implanting the egg in the womb of a virgin. The result was an identical genetical replica of 'Max', now 16 months old. Despite denials from leading scientist that human cloning as yet is an impossibility, Rorvik insists that his account is true - hence the Sunday Times' challenge.

The paper's next move was to inform readers that they are legally entitled to their money back if they buy IN HIS IMAGE and it turns out to be a hoax after all. Apparently, Rorvik's American publisher's, Lippincott, put a disclaimer in front of their edition: "The author assures us it is true. We do not know." The British publishers, Hamish Hamilton, have omitted this. Section 13 of the Sale of Goods Act, 1893, says that it is an implied condition of a sale that the goods shall correspond to their description. Rorvik has said the book is true, and Hamilton have published it in their non-fiction list. So if it does turn out to be a hoax, the Sunday Times claim that the book will contravene the terms of the Act and that anyone who has bought it in Britain can claim his money back from the bookseller!

CONS OF A DIFFERENT AND MORE WELCOME KIND....

SEAC II - the 37th World SF convention, to be held at Brighton 23rd - 27th August 1979, now has around 1500 members. Rates are now £9.00 attending, £4.50 supporting until the end of 1978, after which they will increase, so book now if you want to go. Enquiries to 14 Henrietta St, London WC2

FAIRCON '78 will be held in the Ingram Hotel, Glasgow, July 21st - 23rd. GoH is JAME WHITE, and films including DARK STAR, CHARLY, SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5, DR STRANGELOVE and DESTINATION MCCON have been booked. Membership is £3.50 (£1.00 supporting): contact Bob Shaw, 3/1 11 Barrington Drive, Kelvinbridge

Glasgow.

NOVACON 8, at the Holiday Inn, Birmingham, is 3rd - 5th November. GoH is Anne McCaffrey, membership is £3.50 (Supporting, £1.50). Contact Dave Holmes, 1222 Warwick Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham B26 6PL.

THE SCIENCE FICTION ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION aims to trace recordings of conventions, interviews, and old radio programmes, and to arrange the recording of important events at all SF conventions. Such recordings are an important part of SF history and they are often simply unavailable, or of low quality (all recordings controlled by the SF Oral History Association will be placed in official depositories at major universities where they will be available to scholars and students. (Bearing in mind that the use of recorded materials depends on the consent of those recorded.) Those wishing to become charter members of the Science Fiction Oral History Association are invited to contact George Laskowski, 47, Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013, USA.

A star is required for the forthcoming feature film of THE ANGEL, planned by Hollywood producer Robert L. Munger, who co-authored the book and previously originated the idea for THE OMEN. The story concerns an angel who comes to earth as a young man named Michael Messenger, on a mission of love. If you are a 'fresh, different face' looking about 17 or 18 and possess 'that indefinable something', contact Robert L. Munger, c/o The Burbank Studios, Burbank, California 91522, USA.

Shades of WESTWORLD: Wishfulfillment Co. are an organisation which call themselves 'fantasy brokers'. They specialize in arranging for their clients to realise their fantasies. One recent customer wanted to relive the days of the West. Wishfulfillment Co. procured a ghost town in the Midwest, hired script writers, actors, stunt men and props, and set to work. The client participated in the oldest Western scene of all, the brawl in the saloon. Naturally he won. "He killed a lot of people.... he won the fast draw too." The whole episode was videotaped so that the client, a New Yorker who possesses virtually every cowboy movie ever made, could watch the action over again on his home screen. But don't all rush - Wishfulfillment Co. don't touch sexual fantasies.

Shown on US TV: BATTLE STAR, a SW-influenced SF adventure drama starring Lorne Green; SPACE FORCE, a half-hour SF comedy series about a starcraft and its 'zany crew';

Ralph Bakshi's animated LORD OF THE RINGS 'hopefully' scheduled for November release... More next issue.

HARLAN ELLISON walked off the William Freidkin film project based on THE WHIMPER OF WHIPPED DOGS; apparently because "the vibes weren't right; no rancour; no arguments; I simply didn't feel like writing the

script. Ellison has now been signed by Warner Bros to script a film of Asimov's I, ROBOT.

To be released in the UK: Ivo Dvorak's film of Franz Kafka's novel METAMORPHOSIS, about a man who wakes up one morning to find he is transformed into a gigantic beetle.

Niven/Pournelle's THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE is 'being considered' for filming.

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BOOKS

Niven/Pournelle's LUCIFER'S HAMMER has already set a record for the largest paperback advance in the history of SF. Fawcett paid \$236,500 for the paperback rights.

Sidgwick & Jackson are publishing (August) THE VIOLET APPLE by David Lindsay, author of the classic VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS. The novel has never before been published in its entirety; only extracts have seen the light, but it is a very powerful fantasy, not in the least like ARCTURUS.

From Methuen in September: THE MAN WHO JAPED by Philip K. Dick and a new edition of ODD JOHN by Olaf Stapledon. October sees publication of FORGOTTEN TALES OF TERROR edited by Hugh Lamb. Methuen's childrens list have THE BRASS DRAGON by Marion Zimmer Bradley and THE DELICON by H.M. Hoover. Due in October is THE JOHN PERTWEE BOOK OF MONSTERS, edited by Richard Davis.

ORBIT/DEL REY have launched a new paperback series, QUANTUM. Launching titles (June) are THE GPHIUCHI HOTLINE by John Varley (85p) and Gregory Benford's IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT. (85p). Quantum titles will be published in hardback by Sidgwick & Jackson.

THE ILLUSTRATED HARLAN ELLISON is due this autumn from Baronet in the USA. Baronet also have THE ILLUSTRATED ROGER ZELAZNY, illustrations by Gray Morrow.

Anne McCaffrey's WHITE DRAGON out in June from Del Rey/Ball.

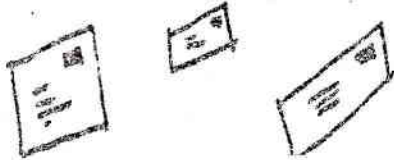
Frederick Pohl will be in London during June, signing books and doing interviews, etc. as will Joe Haldeman whose ALL MY SINS REMEMBERED is scheduled for publication in September.

STOP PRESS: Pohl's GATEWAY has won the 'Best Novel' section of the Nebula awards. Best novella is J & S Robinson's STAR DANCE, which will be published here as a full length novel in Orbit's "Quantum" series next year.

The new SF/fantasy mag from 'Penthouse', titled NOVA, will be monthly from September.

Proteus books are introducing a new paperback series, 'Prize'. Promised for August is a new series by "the modern master of science fiction". Which one? I suppose we have to wait and see....

LETTERS



STEVE HOWKINS, 117 Stanley Rd, Hinkley, Leics.

I have been a member for 6 months now and have received 3 mailings. I had no idea what I was letting myself in for. I have enjoyed most of what I have read, especially Newshounds and Media Notes, and Gordon Johnsons article on SF in Libraries ((M16)) although as a full-time Librarianship student I'm probably biased. The swearing controversy and the lets-have-a-dig-at one-of-the-others syndrome are all very well for a publication which promises a free and frank exchange of views, but don't you think it is becoming a little extreme? Our membership secretary does not deserve to be publicly castrated with such vitriolic scorn.

I'm not too keen on the stapling. My copy usually falls to bits about ten minutes after I take it out of the envelope. What about a combination of MATRIX and VECTOR and possibly TANGENT also? This could mean each copy could be bigger, in a more durable and attractive format, and the work load could be split, thus avoiding so many typo errors because of last-minute deadlines. Editorial control could be retained and extended each of the present editors doing every 3rd issue, or they could co-operate on each issue. There are obviously administrative problems involved, but what do people think? BSFA's publications not only have to be good, but they have to be seen to be good. ((At this point my mind boggles... an intriguing idea, but I think the 'every 3rd issue' style of editing doesn't stand a chance of working, if only for the simple human fact that that one of the editors will probably make a better job than the others - if we try to fix standards we'd just end up being mediocre and it would be inevitable that, after a few issues one editor would hit the tastes of the membership more than the others; after all, we each have our own ideas. But if we have to wait until two issues have gone by before we regain control, this would result in frustration. As for co-operation, it is extremely difficult to cooperate on editing a mag when you are separated geographically. So on the one hand 3 editors are redundant, on the other, for

different reasons, equally redundant!))

On the other hand, all that glitters is not gold. I was one of those who bought Brian Ash's Visual Encyclopedia of you-know-what, thinking that it looked attractive and authoritative so therefore.... I read it and was impressed, but then I had nothing to compare it with. The BSFA reviewer claimed to have spotted 20 errors or omissions on the first page of info. I wouldn't know, but if it's true I want my money back!

The argument about TVSF that has been raging for several issues is intriguing. I was disappointed with the finale of BLAKE'S SEVEN. The characters were developing well, and with the addition of the ultimate computer to a huge alien spaceship (which made it Blake's 8, by the way), I could see great things ahead. And then what happens... it all goes up in a puff of smoke. And why did we never come into contact with the aliens again? It seems the imagination is willing but the budget is weak. It is the best we have seen since STAR TREK, however; certainly a cut above the recently axed LOGAN'S RUN, which became the ultimate cure for insomnia.

A complementary season of SF on the telly would be a good idea but perhaps the secret lies in adapting famous stories to the small screen instead of writing especially for TV.

All those who thought the good disaster novel was extinct read Niven & Pournelle's LUCIFER'S HAMMER. One interesting section is where the diabetic astro-physicist seals several hundred books in plastic bags and dumps them in a septic tank to be used to rebuild civilization. Just what would those books be? What would we give priority to? Agriculture? Politics? Which specific titles? ((An interesting concept - perhaps MATRIX readers could suggest what books they would save to help rebuild civilization - would we get a consensus, I wonder, or would everybody choose different books?))

BILL J. FRASER, 36 Campbell st., Newmilns, Ayrshire, Scotland KA16 9DT.

As someone who has only recently joined the BSFA a couple of weeks ago and received my first package only a couple of days back, I'd like to say that I am sure not impressed by either.

TANGENT: though I've not fully read it, does show some promise of being future worthwhile reading.

VECTOR: I guess is OK if you like lousy artwork and bland and ultra-dull reviews of dated paperbacks.

MATRIX is excellent though I did wonder at first if I'd made some Godforsaken blunder and had joined the Tory party instead of the BSFA after reading those first few letters. Reading all that nonsense about 'expletives' (a real crap word), as someone who numbers authors like Norman Spinrad among their favourite authors, among a few others, I'll say that 'expletives', like sex, have their place in SF. Only if they are used out of context do they become boring. And they are OK in letters for the same reason. If a point can be made in a few words with the use of the odd expletive, than a page of up-market English, its more sense to use it than to bore the reader with a load of long-winded crap.

Any nut who expects SF in the mass media to be real SF must be thick around the ears. The mass media is in business to entertain a wide audience, and unless some media guy is intent on committing commercial suicide, you won't get real

SF in the mass media. Films like STAR WARS are made for mass entertainment, it may have a SF theme but it isn't aimed at piss-elegant SF nuts. It's a good film and is good entertainment....

Films like DARK STAR are a pain in the ass to watch, that kind of hard core SF is sheer crap. But between such crap and the mass entertainment films like STAR WARS there are a few good SF films of which SILENT RUNNING is a good example. Of course even today the film industry makes films to make a fast buck like that egoistic cultisy film CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND; as in the entertainment industry there are third rate films produced just to cash in on a current bandwagon.

There is a right load of crap talked about SF, be better for it if there was more good SF produced and less piss-elegant talk and trying to put SF on a pedestal. The idea of a BSFA award sounds good, though the standard for it will be pretty low, going by the crap that's published in the UK at present... be better left on the shelf until SF got out of the gutter. ((Hmmm... some hard punches there; I'm not really sure what you mean by good SF - certainly I find it hard to believe that you criticize DARK STAR while praising SILENT RUNNING; both seemed to me to be about the same standard, with DARK STAR perhaps inching in front because the humour was wilder with more of a black edge to it, and SILENT RUNNING catching up because of the special effects (although I must admit I only saw DARK STAR on b/w TV. And the list of contenders for the BSFA award had some excellent stuff on it and the winner, THE JONAH KIT by Ian Watson, is in my opinion a good novel by any standards. Maybe you could let us know your standards for good SF?))

MARTIN MACGILP, 76, High St., Grantown-on-Spey, Morayshire PH26 3EL, SCOTLAND.

I liked the cover of M17. I must admit the 'Smash' adverts are the highlight of my viewing week.

Did you get a reply from Her Majesty? ((No - but at least I haven't been arrested for recruiting for a subversive organization...)). I liked the 'What are they doing?' column.

I was somewhat disturbed by Paul Harris's comment that the political system will 'never change'. I hope you're wrong, Paul - though I have a sneaking suspicion you're right. As SF fans, what we should do is start a (oh, no!) revolution. Anyone who doesn't like SF gets deported and we could elect Bob Shaw (the real one, not that Glasgow hooligan!) as Prime Minister. Or maybe King! Maybe it's a crazy notion, but at least it's not racist. (although it is, really, isn't it?) Talking of racism, why is it that SF hasn't really shown a future where black and white etc can live in (yeah, man!) peace - a future where inter-racial marriage has no social stigma. Perhaps there is such SF around and I haven't read it - if so, please list! I'm fully aware of the resentments that unemployed white

people feel towards employed black people - but surely there's no reason for it to turn to hate and loathing. For instance, I'd like to be a writer, but I don't feel any resentment towards successful black/white/green/pink/orange writers.. Pardon? What has this to do with SF? Nothing. But it seems to me (big deal) that MATRIX could well develop into a think-tank - and in my opinion, there's nothing wrong with that.

Why does so much TVSF (and printed SF) deal with people rebelling against society? Is it because the writers hope the readers/viewers will identify with the rebels - wish fulfillment etc. - or is it because the writers can't think up an original theme?

((Racism: There is a certain amount of SF in which racism is played down as something irrelevant - obviously showing the absence of a conflict is less dramatic than showing the conflict itself, so you tend to miss the point of those tales which show racial peace as a fact - try Arthur Clarke's IMPERIAL EARTH, for example. Rebellion: the same factor applies - one man against a society is a classic dramatic theme. As you say, wish-fulfillment. And maybe something more? There are elements of our society which need to be rebelled against - I can't think of a society where there aren't. Who was it said, 'Art is subversive'? - And now.... in glorious technicolour, which even the magic of the Freeman duplicator is unable to reproduce, we hear fro.....))

TERRY PARK, 4 Douglas Rd, Briercliffe, BB 10 2JQ.

Yes, you too can relax in the freedom of the BSFA Bickerer's Corner. Tell them BSFA-neo's what the real facts are. Make last years scandal this years controversy. (Dead corpses make an interesting study) And don't forget your repertoire of ADJECTIVES. Show them stuffy liberals that you're as articulate as them (even if you sound like you have got a turd in your mouth.) Make those aging 'Keepers of the Flame' aware of the NEW WORDS in language. And so on.

I find some of the bickering (political in-fighting) informative. Perhaps it ought to be a regular feature. For new readers, confusion may arise in reading the 3rd in a series of long drawn out slurs upon someone's character. It helps if the BSFA Bickerer gives his particular biased version of the facts before discussing politics and dead corpses. Perhaps I draw the metaphor too far...

What might be of interest is to see in prints discussions on what makes SF tick for that particular reader. SF has always been a difficult (for me) subject to define. Today's definition says that the inner boundaries of SF border upon our culture and how it works, and the cultures that have helped give birth to it. The outer boundaries are as infinite as the universe. The initials SF mean to me, Speculation, Fantasy. There may be better words more suited to the taste, certainly Science Fiction works, but not for me.

I read SF and enjoy some of it. Philip K. Dick can give me a kick and so can Michael G. Coney. However, mentioning names sort of reminds me of two dogs sniffing at each other, not sure if the other dog is strange or not. We congratulate ourselves on appreciating good SF writers. But there really is so little SF (and even less that is good) that it is hardly surprising the same names turn up when we start evaluating the genre. Literary criticism will eventually rub off onto SF readers; it certainly has on to me. My tastes tend to be bored now by

the clichéd plots and straitjacketed stereotypes or perhaps I mature in my outlook and expectations.

Early perceptions: In Junior school I would get examination prizes. My interest was C.S. Lewis and the Narnia cycle at the time. To my ignorant teachers that obviously meant SF. To my surprise and disgust I got a Patrick Moore book - THE INVADER FROM SPACE. My immediate reaction was NOT to read the book because I knew there were some Narnia books I hadn't read and they were in print. My reaction was neither effective nor evident which should have told me something about silent protests.

Eventually, over a year later, I did read the book and it was rather gripping at the time. From there stems my interest in SF. The rest is a history of eye-strain and headaches; the average SF tale is about as subtle as a (insert undesirable culture group) performing brain surgery with a hammer and chisel.

This genre, of all genres I would least expect to attract the self-complacent and the lazy. But then again, I have written no work that is marketable; should I criticize only after I have produced work of recognised value. Or perhaps the image of SF will mysteriously upgrade itself while I apply myself to problem of inserting a size 9 foot into a size 3 mouth.

((And now a long and probably controversial letter which I must urge you to read because James raises several issues which are valid and disturbing if we believe that SF is in any way related to the 'real world'. I'm not sure how far I agree with James - a long way, certainly and more, I think, than I would like to; but I can make no specific arguments as I still have not seen STAR WARS and circumstances which have just come to light this night of typing have caused me to postpone my visit to next week, maybe.... anyway, to you,))

JAMES T. PARKER, 18 King William St., Old Town, Swindon, Wilts. SN 1 3LB.

At the time of writing both STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS are playing locally. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS has just been held over for the 6th successive week, in fact. STAR WARS will certainly emulate, if not beat, that record. Not since JAWS have the cinemas known such profitable business. The point about all this is that I ought to be pleased that SF has become so popular with the general public... And am I? you ask. No I'm not, I would reply, I'm anything but pleased... OK, so SF is big business. There's already dozens of cheapo cheapo STAR WARS in production; by the time this gets printed, I expect some of 'em will already be - um - set free... Just yesterday I spotted an advert for fried chicken fingers featuring a STAR WARS type comic strip. And of course the merchandise pouring out in connection with the 'monster' is quite mind-numbing. esp. in

the States. I don't think I need detail the whole crazy phenomenon any further. You know the picture, right?

I wonder, though: is all this healthy for the SF 'image' - that is, assuming that SF has an image? I know what my feelings are and - being an opinionated bastard - I intend to unload 'em on to the poor, unsuspecting readers of M.

First, I must reiterate my feelings about SF itself. In a phrase I regard the genre as an artificial creation of mainly American origin. I hate the 'ghetto' mentality and all that goes with it... 'Science Fiction' is a marketing concept, a synthetic creation... baked beans, washing up detergent, Star-sky & Hutch, rock music, Op art and SF - it's on that kinda level for me. PRODUCT RULES OK? STAR WARS is a competently made movie, and was even exciting in parts. I failed to be once moved by it though. It signally failed to involve my mind; only my eyes were treated to a feast... a visual feast of special effects, colourful scenery and marvellous costumes. On the level of 'dramatic art', it was OK, provided I reverted to a mental age of five. Of I call the 'philosophical content' (I almost throw up at the phrase) of STAR WARS Facist and I use the appellation advisedly - then you'll understand my feelings towards the movie and all that it has generated. The movie is immoral - and quite a trick, sexless! - and, even worse than that, it revives every one of the old Hollywood clichés concerning was, heroism and tolerance. It's basically an Errol Flynn, Flash Gordon, Lone Ranger type movie. Don't think! Just enjoy. Of course, if the moviem had been done as a simple camp comedy, like 'Flash Gordon', say, it could've been very palatable indeed. Lucas could have treated space opera in the same hilarious fashion that Mel Brooks treated the almost sacred-to-America-myth-of-the-Western in BLAZING SADDLES (an excellent SF movie in its own way - I kid you not; Brooks exploded the myth as just a cinematic concoction, potent because it fed upon itself.) SF is also a myth that feeds upon itself. Lucas' movie merely revives a clapped out tradition.

Harmless fun, many will claim. and will doubtless accuse me of lacking a sense of humour. But anyone believing this is deluding themselves. Millions of kids will be hypnotised by the action in STAR WARS. Their impressionable imaginations will feed upon its banalities and simplistic sloganeering. STAR WARS is, frankly, just American propaganda. I find it disturbing that millions of adults are also flocking to see the movie, to mindlessly join in with its essentially immoral platitudes. For me, it represents a massive wish on the parts of millions of people to escape from the complexities and moral dilemmas of the real world. Lucas may claim that STAR WARS is just a fun movie. but kids are not that sophisticated. Remember that the thousands of Americans who went to fight in Vietnam were brought up on this kind of jingoistic, sabre-rattling tripe. Read Michael Herr's DISPATCHES (Picador) and discover how it was when movie and TV-weaned individuals had to face up to the grim and horrifying reality of physical combat. STAR WARS is a perpetuation of this terrible and immoral tradition. It is, in that respect, not surprising that the movie is completely devoid of sexual interest; sexual feelings represent human irrationality - such feelings don't fit in with the sterile, clean visions of the most pervasive forms of American fiction. SF, the countless Private Investigator shows and the Western are all part of the same deceit. They are cultural ghettos each and every one. They never deal with the world as it really is... they only retain

credibility in an adman's universe. If the description of SF means anything at all then might it not be an investigation of the complexities and dilemmas of the modern world; an investigation of the many possible futures that are open to us, both bad and good, the trashing of myths of every kind. A genre, in fact, that is iconoclastic, satirical, witty and perverse. A medium that always retains its 'outlaw' status in a world that is becoming increasingly stereotyped and stale. We live with the constant threat of computer domination, neutron bombs, orbiting warheads (they'll be with us soon, friends) nuclear missiles, an Earth that is choking upon its own polluted air and sea and land. And along with all this the nightmarish prospects suggested by the 'new' biology and the heady new theories widespread in astrophysics etc. etc SF, in its most meaningful and daring mood, has dealt well with these perplexion manifestations of the real world. When it has had the courage to sweep away all the dead traditions of its cheap and nasty past it has constantly surprised by its clarity and the uniqueness of its perceptions. STAR WARS plays no part whatsoever in this field and is, in fact, an insult to the genre in its contemporary guise. Of course, much modern SF is bullshit, but there are some real gems as well. For every Heinlein there's an Ellison. For every Star-Trek novel there's an ATROCITY EXHIBITION...

We must not let the bankrupt traditions of SF blind us to its potential. Writers like Ballard, Moorcock, Ellison, Sheckley and Vonnegut have shown us the way, have broken away from the ghetto and shown us that the individual vision is what really matters. And that some arbitrarily designed literary prison is just that - four stone walls that limit the freedom of the occupant.

SF is possibly the only genre that all other genres could fit into. In other words, SF's area of exploration is the whole of creation; the very substance of reality itself. Thus the only real definition of SF is that it is beyond definitions.

SF is social satire. An entertainment, yes, but an entertainment that, like the best comedy, contains deep truths. Its goal should be to take the ground from under our very feet and make us laugh at the same time. SF is about madness and reality and unreality. Modern SF is the true literature our electronic age in the same way, for instance, that MONTY PYTHON is the most representative and valid ~~expression~~ of our age. The time is ripe for a literature that is anarchic, satirical, and resolutely anti-facist and anti-Militarist. STAR WARS represents the sick side of the death-culture perfected on Madison Ave. and perpetrated from the candy-floss world of Hollywood. America has produced much that is

fine, but it has also unloaded more drivel into the cultural sphere than any other nation. In a perverse kind of way, I hope that STAR WARS sounds the death knell of SF - the American Myth. Maybe then, our writers and movie makers can really let their imaginations flow...

((I find much to agree with and much to disagree with in your letter; on the one hand, a bit of escapism never hurt anyone, on the other, a complete diet of escapism is bound to have its effects. And with that classic expression of hermaphroditic liberalism, I'll say no more and clear the way for the replies that I'm sure there will be next issue....))

A change of mood now from someone who obviously listens to my current favourite radio programme - or have we really been infiltrated by Zaphod Beeblebrox and his chums....?

T.W. FRANCIS, 32 Studley Rise, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 0PH.

So there I was, hitch-hiking across the western spiral arm of the milky way with a fish in me lug-hole, listening in on my multi-directional, multi-wave, multi-versial cod fillet, when I suddenly heard what was to befall old Sol Three. Aye- aye, I thought, here's one in the eye for those pesky ape descendants. It's not that I mind you sending your space-probes into the void you understand. But I do wish you would put some hazard warning lights on the things. Last time I was through your system that Jamn Pionce Ten almost ran me down. Being a furry little creature from Alpha Centauri you can imagine how pleased I was that those show-off white mice got their come-uppance for instigating such an egregious folly as the Earth. Just to find that 42 is the answer to the ultimate question. Pleasur'er still that those butch Vegans were about to blow Slartibartfast's crinkles to smithereens.

Then I thought of my BSFA mailing and decided that perhaps you ape-descended beings weren't all that bad. And perhaps I'd better drop off of the Magatherean Star-cruiser I was hitching a lift on and pick it up. Before it vanished in a cloud of ionised particles or some such.

Noting your discourse on politics you asked David Lewis "Such as?" when he speculates on a completely different political system. A recently broadcast programme - I was able to pick it up over the cod fillet - 'Earth Two' seemed to have a working 'Total Democracy' as does Joan D. Vings's 'The Outcasts of Heaven Belt' with its postulated Demarchy. Would this be a workable system or just 'mob rule' as Joan D. Vinge calls it. The question that springs to mind is, would power shift to the people or to the question setters. This was the theme of an SF story by...um? Entitled...Darn! Can't remember. Still, to use the stock phrase 'you know'. But I doubt you do... do you?

Re your discussion on bad language. Having a sub-ether casserole in one ear and a cod fillet translator in the other one does tend to pick up a certain amount of excess verbiage. Mainly from beyond the Beyond. Wich is a nasty dark place just outside Trowbridge. I do not swear much being content with such anachronisms as Balderdash and Godswallow. Which does on occasion earn one some strange looks from fellow travellers on life's highway. I think swearing adds a certain colour to a language but does not necessarily indicate the user to have a lack of vocabulary. That does not mean I'm in favour of it. For it seems to me to be somewhat craven to insult someone with it via a fanzine column. Your plea MR Sawyer, for reasonable criticisms stirs my ideas of moral rectitude when dealing with strangers. Offensive abuse serves no

real purpose other than to give the user a certain air of filibuster. And that's all it is really. Hot air. Much better a constructive debate.

Re. J.T. Parker's letter. To the casual viewer much TVSF is superficial and unimportant. And eschewing important subjects of today, agreed. Yet the most important issues of tomorrow (as seen through today's eyes... who knows what muck-ups you apes will make in the future) ie. the survival of the human race after Post-Holocaust destruction - LOGAN'S RUN - to the hopeful view of a pan-human federation - STAR TREK - are there. Both these series give/have given the viewers a hope for something better/other than that around today. They both showed mankind as being around in those far-off days (Vogans or others not counting), STAR TREK especially, since it showed that today's problems had more or less been solved. Yet in accomplishing such a future it may be that someone or something gets stepped on. Thus it has been, thus it always will be. (You can't please all the people all of the time, etc.) Or so it seems to me. I wish it were otherwise. Turning back once more to the validity or non-validity of TVSF; Tom Jones in his review of THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION in VECTOR 86 makes the comment "All good literature is subjective. the reader can put something into it, can read things which he wishes to read there." This is also true of good TVSF which would include some of the STAR TREK and LOGAN'S RUN segments. And BLAKE'S 7 and others to a lesser degree.

I liked the BSFA A.G.M. minutes for it gave one a view of the workings of the BSFA even if only an official view, (Nothing very surreptitious or spicy.) No pictures painted of the board with their feet up on the table smoking grass. Nor what was going on under the table while all the talking went on above.

((You want home movies and candid photographs next time????))

BILL LITTLE, 183 John St, Stoke on Trent, Staffs ST8 6HP.

You may be interested to know that MATRIX 17, along with the majority of other items in the latest mailing, has just disintegrated. Those poor little staples hung on for all they were worth but it just wasn't enough. Maybe they'll last longer next time if I don't actually open the material up, just stare at the front and back covers wishing forlornly that I knew what was inside. Now I know that the binding isn't directly your responsibility, but if someone in charge gets to read this (Are you listening, Tom?) they might decide that something needs doing. I realise that the financial balance of the BSFA is precarious but surely the purchase of a larger step-gun won't break us? I'm not just getting at

MATRIX either (says he, picking up the scattered pieces of VECTOR from the carpet).

Newshounds this issue was very good. A pat on the back to Paul Fraser. That was the sort of material that doesn't really date and is probably the right type of stuff for the col. Ditto to Martin Hatfield.

Then, by Gog, page 14 and we're into the lettercol. Looks as if quite a few people are writing and responding these days. A 14-page lettercol can't be bad! It was more than a little lively, too!

Can't help agreeing with Jim Parker about DC's crusade to improve the standard of TVSF; I think he's on to a loser, but I wish him luck all the same... I see ITV have bought THE INCREDIBLE HULK for showing later in the year, but it remains to be seen what calibre (if any) it has. Hulk was never one of my favourite Marvel titles. He did, however, fall into the same category I mentioned in my last letter: guy afflicted by a terrible deformity, both physical and mental, is misunderstood and is hounded and hated by society. I just hope that the TV show is scripted half as well as the comic.

Paul Harris' comments about the unfairness of our electoral system really make my blood boil. Paul is obviously a frustrated Liberal, cos no-one but frustrated Libs rant so much about it. The plain fact is that proportional representation is blatantly undemocratic. Yeah, I know that sounds strange but it seems to me that when discussing possible changes to the electoral system you have to look first at the drawbacks each system has. In the case of PR the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages. Mainly, my gripe with it is that it takes power away from the people. It allows the politicians to decide who is to become the next government. Look at Italy, that bastion of Western democracy. They've had PR for god knows how long. They've also had about 40 governments since the war, which probably accounts for the fucking awful mess they're in. No administration can stay in office long enough to get something done before the power base shifts and new alliances are made (even as absurd as the far-Right and the Communists who surely can't have any common areas of interest?) Now I accept that Italians are probably a little more temperamentally volatile than your average Brit, and, therefore, that precarious power-base is likely to shift more often, but, even so, if you were to just cast your memory back over the past two years of our own history I'd like to bet that there have been about three or four 'crises' that could have precipitated a shift in any power-base if we were in a PR system, (one that immediately springs to mind: the Leyland Slush-fund thing.)

As for Paul's comments about the influence (or not) of any pressure-group, I certainly take his point that size has something to do with it. But not always. Child Poverty Action Group are hardly the biggest organisation in the country, yet their influence on the new Child-Benefits scheme can hardly be denied. It all depends, I think, not on size, but commitment, and a willingness to participate. There is a vast inertia behind the institutions of our society, despite what appears on the surface to be great change. We don't change that much. Therefore, it takes a long time to get things done, But it can be done.

I was only reflecting the other day about how much time SF occupies in my life. It's really becoming all-consuming, and, unfortunately, where one might normally respond to in-

dividuals in the lettercol, I find that I have to make do with writing a single letter to Andy and hoping that I've managed to respond to some degree to some of the issues others have raised. If I was to write just one letter a week to each of the friends and acquaintances I've managed to make via the BSFA, I'd never be away from the typewriter. How on earth do you, Andy, managed to edit a magazine, hold down a job, and still have enough time to devote to your wife and children? You on a 36-hour day or something?

((In a word - yes. Or it feels like it! I, too, find myself with less correspondance done than I'd wish. I hope that MATRIX, to some extent, can act as a substitute for the replies to many of the Locs I receive with personal greetings, news, goodwill, which I would love to reply to but never get round to doing so.))

LESTER HANNINGTON, 28 Low Cross, Whittlesey, Peterborough, PE7 1HW.

The tone of nihilism and despair at the political system at present was near to pathetic. This shows how some can be apathetic and still attribute all their blame on to others. Participation, an active discussion, an active mind - these are what are necessary, not the evasionism and denial of responsibility that has been promoted. However, extremists currentrac MATRIX occasionally appears, James Parker trots in with another equally silly diatribe. His position was that "moral conflicts cannot be resolved without genuinely radical upsurges often of a violent nature," His mistake, if I may so opionate, is to confuse a moral problem with a problem of a physical, material nature. Yet a moral question can only be answered, if at all, in purely 'moral' terms.

James Parler shows better sides of his mind than his 'action senario' - sounds like one of the worst moments from SPACE1999 to me. His attack upon the sheer bulk of negativity in TVSF is timely. However, must point out that at least partly because of the background of semi-juvenile content of SF, it is not likely to be ALLOWED to 'come of age' as it were, and begin to face true problems. For TV items that do you must refer to Panorama etc. - to play of the month or week. Hardly surprising, was it, that PROFESSIONAL FOUL won so many accliams? Fine acting, capable presentation are already present insuch drama productions, but SF is considered and used as visual slop-swat for the millions of ~~young~~ ~~profit~~ ~~leagues~~ who are tp be expected

Perhaps one day (probably when pur world is in an even worse mess than now an SF writer

will first write good drama, then, possibly, help create adult SF televised drama - something not relying on SF cliches but something formed from the true concerns of SF for the world.

This brings me to another aspect of certain fans' that I have noticed, namely, their unwillingness to have their intelligence raised, opinions questioned or changed, and to grasp any other literature, art or aesthetic field other than this, as John Clute put it "stinky little ghetto".

From here the odure smells awful. "SF" per se does not exist - nor should it be considered so. Certainly it's not a seperate field, but rather a sodden umbrellla udder which a variety of activites take place. (Nudge - nudge) "SF" does not need to be expanded, defended, or segregated. but matured, improved, and probably torn limb from limb - the latter action being in an effort to stir this literary detritus back, not merely towards the rest of literature but towards a semblance of life, of purposeful existence.

DAVE GBBLEDICK, 245 Rosalind ST, Ashington, Northumberland, NE 63 9AZ.

Hmmm, hmmm, ahumm...yes, well, uhuh (GET ON WITH IT!!)... Right; M17 saw me being called two names, 'Master hot-shot' and 'Cretin'. Now, as accustomed as I am to being shy, cool, calm and collected... AAA.GGGGHHHHHHHHHH.... Ahem, these two people should not try to exert themselves so as to avoid the possibility of a heart attack. Besides, if this continues I'll have to send my fleet of plastic 'Enterprises' to deal with you both.

Taking a serious attitude (what other do I use?): Dave Lewis: sorry, Dave, but your letter was trivialised by the fact that you are an egocentric. Yes, I'm wet behind the ears (I don't mind admitting it) have a lot to learn about fandom and genre, but if I were to take notice of you, being a fan of gr at standing who has done this abd that, I doubt very much if I would renew my membership. Anyhow, your letter was based upon emotional outbursts concerning the way in which economic limitations placed upon the working committee of the BSFA treated works and contributions given by your good self. You may have done a lot and experienced a lot, but it seems that the facts and realities related to what the BSFA can do on its present budget escapes your notice. Just one more thing before I move on to this other guy; the committee members and officials of the BSFA pay their membership dues and as such they have every right to write to MATRIX. ((Now there's a thought...ahem! Dear Andy, I think you are suave, goodlooking, cultured, and extremely sexy.....(Well, it's about time someone said it.))

Now for this guy who calls me a cretin. Another emotional outburst!! Paul Harris, old son, the BSFA may not be perfect, but it is organised and working. If you can point out a viable and basic fault concerning the BSFA which is objective and impersonal then shout it out and I'll accept it. If you can't do that, then I suggest you keep your deflectors up 'cos my fleet is now stationed above your house....

Who else has attacked me? Ah yes, Alison Hutton. Why have you taken two objective phrases from my previous letter and made them appear to be related to the specific point you were trying to knock me on? "A writer is in full control of a situation and uses expletives and other colourful phrases, etc. in a deliberate and objective manner." The objective is to impress upon the reader the emotional levels and character of the protagonists in acts which are related to stress and excitement. "The use of

expletives in a careless and thoughtless manner" - this was/is directed at those people who write simply to offend and show how big they are, by using language which is NOT NECESSARY.

Simon Green, next! I don't take the viewpoint that violence is to be encouraged in kids' comics. I simply understand that to give them anything else, which is less than what they want, would be wrong; now, before you pick me up wrongly on that point, I don't say to give them EVERYTHING that they want. Comics are for kids, kids read them and like what they read otherwise there wouldn't be any on the market. As for the violence, they don't perceive it as such, but as right against wrong, and it is here where the problem lies. Comics are often based around the theme of good guy vs. bad guy, or simply good opposed to bad. The way in which violence is carried forward into adulthood is through a misunderstanding of right and wrong and I'm sure that the publishers take great care over how their stories are presented, so as not to give a wrong representation. It's not a case of encouraging violence, but a case of encouraging what violence gains the bad guy.... no-one wants to be a bad guy, just listen to kids arguing as to who it's to be in a game. You can take this to be an answer in reply to your comments, Andy, and I say again, "What alternatives?" There's no alternatives to good and bad, right and wrong.... only a choice to make. Another thing that may be worth mentioning; boys, like excitement, adventure, war etc. and all of them are, to a degree, violent by nature.... girls like soppy romances and love stories. And don't forget, we're talking about children here, not adults, so don't view the comic as an adult, but through the eyes of the child you once were.... I think you'll understand then.

((Good grief, I've, you virtually prove my case for me! Good and bad aren't as simple as all that to define. If it were so, the world would be in a much better state. Granted comics have to simplify, but in so many cases they simplify values so much as to distort reality. Excitement and danger, the thrill of which you rightly point out attracts many kids to comics, aren't always to be found in competitive sports and war. To suggest that they are is misleading. And, while you bring up the subject, to suggest that boys get all the thrill and danger while girls stay at home and wash socks, dreaming romantic dreams, is another way in which many comics distort reality. Both serve to limit the expectations of the reader by suggesting that there is NO OTHER REALITY and that is the root of my uneasy reaction to comics (and a lot of other media.) Girls' comics are probably more insidious as women tend to be second-class in the way they're treated, but the approach is basically the same.))

James T. Parker: the thing which motivates any TV establishment into the making and producing of ANY programme is the thought of making a lot of money; there is nothing naive in that. To

make a successful programme, the producers have to view their audience on past experience of what has and has not been successful and base their new productions on that; of course, there is the bandwagon for them to jump on. Programmes are, by and large, not made for a specific audience, but for THE TV AUDIENCE. The problem with today's TV audience is that they are more technically advanced, and the thought of a spaceship flying into space is less of a wonder. TVSF programmes, if you'll note, are all the same, in as much that the individual episodes are stereotypes of what has gone before. Only the initial concept/idea is different. What it boils down to is a case of 'Seen one, you've seen them all.' Which is why TVSF is not a success. Future programmes will have to be more imaginative and interesting; however, Mr. Media is not aware of the great stories that abound in novels, of the concepts and ideas that are born out of a writer's mind and how readers of SF interpret these ideas and concepts. This is my reason for a TVSF census; the idea is to give to those who have the money and the ability to put into practice, the ideas we perceive. Only then will we see TVSF that is worthy of being classed SF. As for a programme depicting all the things you mentioned; what you need is a 'Current Affairs' programme, because all the things you mentioned are not SF, but factual. They're happening now!

Cl., threats, blows arguments, explanations, questions and general HOO-JAHHH now over, I'll give a few quick comments on M17. SF YOU MAY HAVE MISSED.... How much longer must we endure crud like this? It was totally irrelevant, boring and silly. As the basis of the theme is childish programmes I can't see what interest it has to SF fans as probably none of them watch them.... besides, it failed to mention THE MAGIC ROUNDOUT which is my favourite, I mean, ahemm, yes well.....

Enjoyed RTC which I'm happy to see back... good report, Bill, keep 'em coming like that. I wonder if Martin Hatfield has got his figures correct; S. has grossed over \$250M in the States alone, so his figure for worldwide is a little low... Didn't like the fanzine column... I like concise and impersonal reviews which get to the heart of the matter, which is what it is. What it contains, who its by and how much it costs.... personal opinions shouldn't enter a review which is supposed to be objective. Other than that, all I can say is that I enjoyed this issue more than the last... letters were much better and longer this time. I still think there could be a vast improvement in the artwork.

RICHARD BANCROFT, 7 Woone Lane, Clitheroe, Lancs.

After considerable and deliberate thought I came to the opinion that new members to the BSFA must on reading MATRIX become aware of the inwardly looking letter column. Could they assume that there is no love offered to one and all? Do the vehement messages of some columnists fall short of true and positive feedback? Are aggressive debates brought about through devious and cunning means to provide bait for any fish foolish enough to rise to it? Next month, will I be out to catch YOU? The deep ocean of SF fans is well stocked by all types, yet as in true life are not the big sharks thrashing it out on the surface - waves foaming and crashing - yet when the fight is done do not the lesser mortals keep the SF genre simply alive? I have fallen into the 'fight me' trap and have been known to grin gleefully when I pierced an opponent badly. My negative attributes enjoy an overactive stab at someone from time to



time but thankfully not all the time. My next choice of weapons shall be either a stapling machine at 20 paces or 87 BSFA bundles (string wrapped) dropped on to an opponent's fingers.

May I say that I am concerned about the lack of any objective views (in the sense of other than feelings of dislike or disagreement) about SF.

It is clearly apparent that I can ascertain what is not found favourable with SF, its critics and its friends; but where can I find a germ of understanding or tolerance. I throw out a challenge to all fans to elevate your present awareness of SF and let us have it in print straight from the shoulder. Where has the Wonder all gone? Where the majesty of celestial hopes? Where the closeness of human communications? Where the fire of creation in every heart? It's there at your fingertips! What wonder can you inspire for new readers to see? Get aboard a new ship, trek a new path, make the BSFA sing with new life. Write your best about the best.

Have not the SF fans of today been fortunate, in seeing the visions of their childhood days come true? Has familiarity bred contempt? Wonders of science thought ludicrous years ago surround you. The harsh realities of course bring terrors - Nuclear death wasn't possible when some of the greatest SF was written, but written about it was. The nuclear dream, the fusion dream, the perfect zine dream, it's all there, but reality imposes and can crush the very essence of a dream to nothing but verbal dust - arise, hold the vision and tell one another about it. Love SF, that's all, love it.

I tutor a childrens art workshop for seven to eleven year olds. In them I see the sense of wonder. One lad aged 9 produced some astonishing SF. He drew a shape of elegant length and fine proportions above : smaller but creatively no less significant designs, between them he drew a line, a simple line of ink, yet to him this line was fuel. It was his invented fuel moving by his method from one space machine to another.

"What was this fuel?" I asked.

"Aliquid"... "No.", "Laser light?".... "No."

"Fusion probe?"... "No."

He never did tell me but with a wink and a smile I knew he knew and that's all that mattered because he could hold his vision and I had my wonder restored.

IAN GARBUTT, Brenachaille Lodge, Loch Katrine, By Callander, Perthshire, Scotland FK17 8JA.

Interested to see my name being taken in vain a few times in previous MATRIXes. It's good to know that I'm stirring up some kind of response out of the apathetic S.O.B.s that comprise the BSFA membership (half of which must be permanently asleep.) I must confess I nearly killed myself laughing at Cyril Simsa though. TANGENT -24-

"consists of prozine rejects", he says. In order not to offend people I will use the word 'misguided' to describe that statement. Why? Simply because the majority of pieces in the later TANGENT projects have either been specially written or scheduled for prozines.

Actually, though this probably sounds egotistical, I can't help feeling sorry for all those fuggheads who haven't requested T. If only they knew what they were missing!

Tell me Andy, are you an editor or merely a collator? I mean, do you actually reject any of the material you receive? Because to be honest the standard of some of the articles in recent issues has been lower than a snake's belly; and as for the artwork? Well what can one say about the artwork generally except that Salvador Dali Mr. D.A. Harkness is not.

Helen Brown is a very nice lady but SF IN THE UNDERFIVES TV PROGRAMMES was just unspeakable! How can anyone compare MR BENN with Heinlein and keep a straight face? And as for BAGPUSS & BARBAPAPA.....scream.....

I really wish you'd inflict yourself on us a bit more, Andy. Editorial presence is something that MATRIX is sadly lacking and even JACKSON'S ISLAND is distressingly bland; *sigh* how I miss the sparkling humour of good ole TJ.... MATRIX is in a rut, and the only way it can be saved is if you come out of your shell, break the status-quo and actually change things. Otherwise, the mag is just going to chase its own tail and end up going nowhere.

Now why don't you write me a nice long LoC telling me how downright terrible you thought T4 was....?

((Because I've already sent you a LoC saying that I liked T4.... Oh well, I asked for the vitriol, didn't I? One point, concerning Helen Brown's piece. I thought it was amusing. I could sympathise with the thought of someone trying desperately to find SF in the thinnest materials.... "I watch these programmes hoping for a little SF stimulation. If you look hard enough, it can be found." And "I'm neurotic about SF". The piece was not meant to be a serious study, but, as I understood it, a picture of someone forced to watch under-fives' programmes by the presence of a child and trying to find in them the SF she hasn't (because of that child) time to read. Looking back at it, and having had a few comments on it, I can see that such a picture may not be so clear to BSFA members who, unlike Helen and myself, do not have young children. Perhaps I should have sent it back to have the humorous side strengthened - if so, I apologise to Helen. But, in any case, on current form I must say that I do find MR BENN preferable to Heinlein (despite the fleet of plastic Enterprises I'm sure Dave Cobbledick will send my way when he reads that!)))

MARK DUNN, 20 Pen st., BOSTON, Lincs PE 21 6TJ.

James Parker's rather strident paragraph about TVSF cannot go unanswered. Admittedly, most of it is trash. especially in America where all TV is commercial; at least we have the BBC. take another look at STAR TREK. At its worst, it was pretty bad, but at its best ('City on the Edge of Forever') it was great SF by any standards. We can only hope that the new series will be consistently watchable. BLAKE'S 7 wasn't too bad; at least I found time to watch it sometimes, because I'm an optimist at heart. I suppose the BBC will never learn that SF can't be done on the cheap, unless we tell them. They don't seem to realise either that however much they do spend if they keep using video-

tape a show will always look cheap. Tape isn't a patch on film as regards atmosphere and mood and there doesn't seem to be any good reason for not using film. (Cost of photographic materials is the least of a producer's worries.)

A quick swipe at another ball currently in the MATRIX court. Do we need a prozine? There's much more in MATRIX, VECTOR etc. than could ever go in a prozine and (I mean this in the nicest possible way) what goes into M & V just wouldn't, as far as I can see, make a prozine pay. They rely on what might be called 'fringe' sales to people who are only slightly interested in SF and who just wouldn't be interested in the sort of thing that goes on in BSFA zines. Anyway, Paul Fraser said that a prozine of standard quality would need to sell about 30,000. VECTOR might manage no more than 1,000. I find MATRIX more enjoyable than SFM could ever possibly have been, but that's because I'm a fan, which is different from being simply a reader of SF (or so I like to think).

((I think you're confusing the functions of Fanzines and prozines, Mark.... the main function of a prozine, as I see it, anyway, is to provide good quality fiction from new and 'name' writers. A Fanzine, because of its' budget, limited circulation, often irregular schedule, etc., can't consistently do this. VECTOR and MATRIX do not AIM to serve as substitutes to prozines.))

The Loccol of MATRIX must be the best part for most of us. I turned straight to it yesterday when the mailing arrived and read it right through. I'd be happy to see as many LoCs as possible without squeezing out interesting articles like 'Newhounds' the editorial and the rest. They are galways fun to read. Keep it up, chaps... if all of us threw in a page or two we could fill 60 issues a year, never mind six.

((You want to know what the bloodcurdling scream was? It was me typing that last sentence and having a nervous breakdown.))

STEEV HIGGINS, 18, St Austel Ave., Tylesley, Manchester M297FY.

I enjoyed SF YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...? I wasn't sure at times whether Helen Brown was talking tongue in cheek or not. As for Richard Bancroft, I saw an advert when I went to see STAR WARS about a white-haired Germanic professor and his long-john clad assistant who manned a space-station and were fighting an invasion of flying dishes, each with a liberal helping of ice cream or sago pudding, by covering them in chocolate sauce and eating them. I had to laugh, it was so corny.

Glad to see RTC back. I for one have no idea what may be going on down the road SF-wise. By the way, could anyone tell me what is in the Salford-Wigan-Bolton area?

I didn't like the fanzine column, mainly because FF was the only way I had of finding those fanzines which interested me, and what I wanted was range of choice, and details of how to get it. The MEDIA NOTES and WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW? were good, it was easy to get what information was wanted, and have particular subjects altogether.

I'd never thought of the Adverts as having SF connections. An interesting observation. There is SF in New Wave, such as Devo, Ultravox and the Meteors, three very different bands, as well as numerous one-offs. In fact, I once heard 'Pretty Vacant' described as sounding like the end of the world (and I don't think it was supposed to be critical).

SIMON R. GREEN, 37 St. Lawrence Rd, Bradford on Avon, Wilts.

Congratulations over Harriet, and don't worry over Rosamund's attitude to SF Monthly; everyone knows that SFM was designed to appeal to the 2½ year old mentality.

I'm afraid that I can't agree with Dave Cobbledick. Sure, we all happily watch violence on the small and large screens, but we don't for the most part watch it for the blood and guts. It's rather the simplest way to portray good overcoming evil; it's very satisfying after having watched the bad guys getting away with murder for the past half hour to see Paten Pureheart planting a couple of stiff blows between wind and water. Such use of violence is as old as man and will always be part of our psychological make-up what I've been objecting to in 2000AD and elsewhere is the continuing trend for gratuitous violence, i.e. blood and guts for the sick weirdos who really dig that sort of stuff. The two audiences are completely different, and watching for different kinds of satisfaction, and should not be confused. I dunno, Andy, isn't this getting a little deep for an SF lettercol? Let's put it this way; the violence in an Ellison story is entertainment, even in the gory 'Bleeding Stones' or 'Basilisk'; in 2000AD or blood-up-the-walls thrillers it's titillation of the most obvious and repulsive kind.

A quick word in re Cyril Simsa's letter: editors accept Big Name stories irrespective of merit for a simple reason; Big Names sell magazines. One big name on the cover means that issue will be bought by readers who will also read the other stories by lesser-known authors. I'm by no means defending what is basically a shoddy practice that does nobody any good, least of all the Big Name Author's reputation, but as long as fans will read any shit as long as it's by their favourite author, that's the way things are going to stay.

Paul Fraser's notes on the financing of a fanzine were fascinating, but I'm afraid he only touches on the real trouble: distribution. The problem here isn't how much it costs but getting it in the first place. If SMITH'S doesn't take you up, you're in big trouble. If they decide to push you, you'll make it, if they don't, you won't. On the other hand, this does assume that you've got a worthwhile prozine to sell. VOR-TEX had Smith's' (more or less) backing, but they just didn't do well enough in the contents. On the other hand, STARBURST has been doing well because 1) Smith's pushed it, 2) it was good enough that having been pushed into buying issue 1, the public came back for more. Basically you have to remember that the public who are going to be buying this zine aren't for the most part fans; all they know is STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. Plus the usual DR WHO, STAR TREK etc. fans. Bearing all this in mind, still think you could edit a prozine?

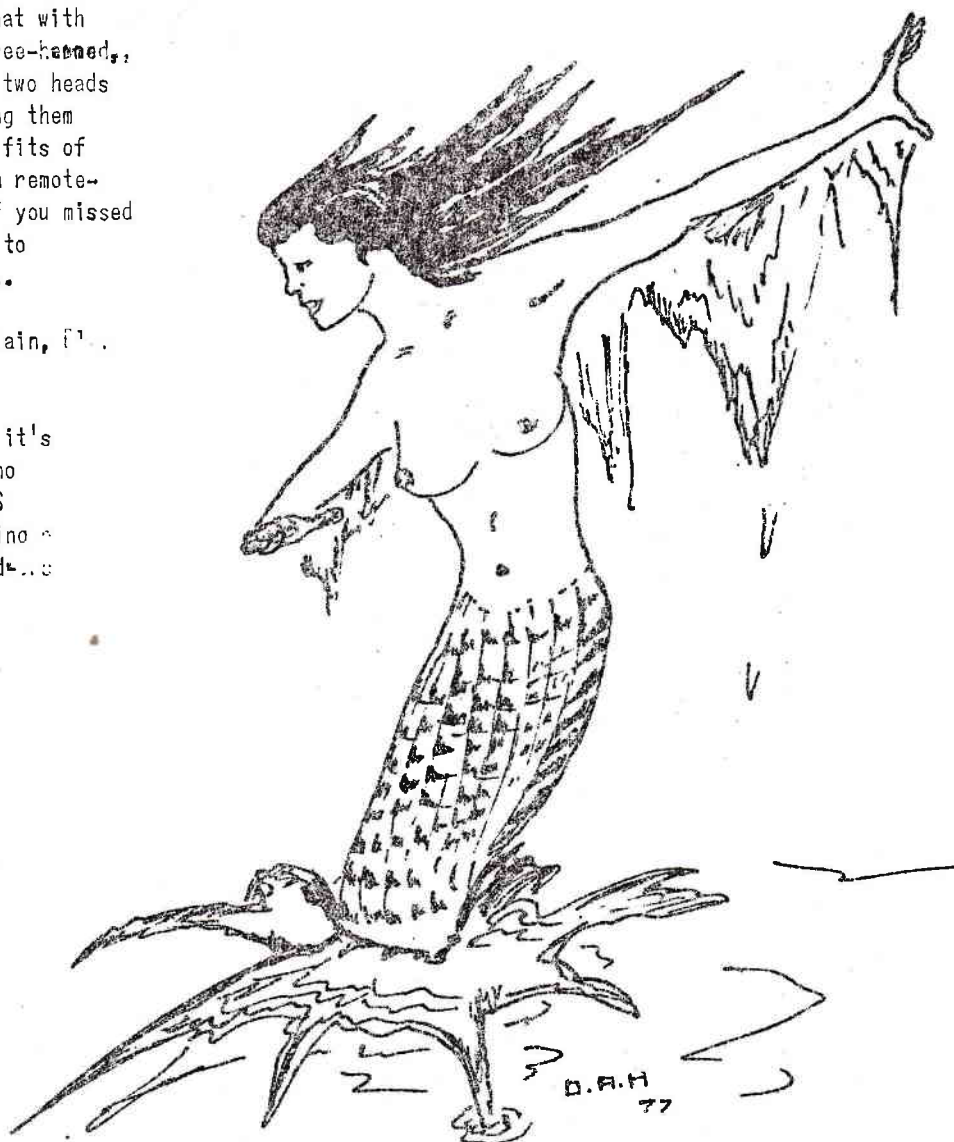
I'm glad people are beginnin to catch up on the hilarious HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE radio series, one of the funnest things ever to happen to SF! what with Marvin the Paranoid Android, and the three-headed, two headed Zaphod Beeblebrox ("If I had two heads like you I could have endless fun banging them against a wall"), it has be in constant fits of hysterical laughter. The only thing even remotely like it was Woody Allen's SLEEPER. If you missed it first time round you're just in time to miss it again on the second time round...

ALISON LOWE, 146 Alexandra Rd, Mutley Plain, F1.
Plymouth.

I must agree with you about LUDVIG, it's marvellous - especially the hedgehogs who were my favourites. Ever since STAR WARS there seems to be more SF-type advertising on the telly and incorporated into children's programmes. It's like everybody suddenly seeing flying saucers since CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. Some of the adverts are most ingenious, though, I have to admit, especially the one for 'Hamlet' cigars, where the robot gets his head on back to front. It's those mechanical eyebrows....

It seemed to be a funny issue this time. Not a lot in it, if you see what I mean. Round the Clubs was interesting, and I thought Roger Waddington did a good job with the fan-zine column. The bulk of the zine was, of course, the lettercol, which is all well and good, and is what the zine is all about, mostly, but it had a sort of empty feel about it this time.

I must yet again disagree with Dave Cobbledick. I'm afraid that I, for one, do not enjoy violence, in an SF novel or anywhere else. It certainly does not excite me, for the most part it just makes me feel sick, I work as a nurse and on occasion have seen the results of the sort of violence which Dave seems to enjoy. It's not a very pretty sight, someone with a beer bottle sticking out of their face. If man is violent by nature then he should be trying not to be, he should be trying to wean the violence from his nature, and replace it with something more akin to love and caring, concern for other people. I'd prefer any child of mine to find out about sex before he or she found out about violence. I'd rather see him kissing someone than bashing the hell out of them.



MIC ROGERS, 'Pohutukawas', 22 Campfield Rd., St Albans, Herts.

May I say that I thoroughly endorse those who reject expletives. They are unnecessary.

Many, many years ago, when I was young and innocent and very, very green I occasionally heard one or two distant acquaintances using the term "bulls - " which was never completed! I realised it was being censored and that it was something rude by my family's reaction. (And when you are the youngest and dimmest of six kids you know how much influence your elders have!)

So I decided to substitute something for the missing syllable that was satisfying but not rude. It had to be short and make up a word that referred to something that was not possible. After much thought I chose "wool", and then put it together with "balderdash". The result has always been most gratifying!

PAUL FRASER, 51 Ivanhoe Rd, Aberdeen AB1 7HA

I see the committee is having a meeting soon and just so you are not under any misapprehensions as to what I want, well, here it is. Seeing as the BSFA is more or less limited to its publications at the moment I've limited myself to them - although I would like to see a BSFA convention.

VECTOR: I think D' will maintain a sercon approach to nearly everything so there's not much point in trying to change the impossible. Note the lack of Bob Shaw's Eastercon speech, for instance.

MATRIX1 would like to see a bigger MATRIX. No doubt the collators ((and the editor!)) will scream and TJ will say we haven't got the money... I still want one. However this request is based on a radical change of content in MATRIX. It should be our media magazine and this is what I think it should contain: letters are a must. Should stay at the 15 page mark. Advance news is also a must - not last month's books and what X said about SF on TV 2 months ago - but genuine News. A couple of pages on fanzines a la Waddington - not irritating content listing dressed up as a capsule review. Don't expect to review them all, just the ones of interest. I can't see Hungarian or Canadian zines being of interest, or American ones either, come to think of it - unless they are SFR or the like.

Now I come to things that are noticable by their lack. Author interviews - a casual, light approach. Articles on authors or themes - same light approach. Anecdotal writings about when X edited Y a la Hell's Cartographers. Polemic on what's missing in SF. Consumer reviews on specialist dealers. There are lots of ideas, these are just a few. Also magazine reviews as these are the media part of SF. Well, I've had my say about what I want, I hope everybody else does too. I don't know what feedback is like, but I've got a feeling that there are a lot of people out there sitting on their fat behinds who probably don't know how much a second class stamp costs.

By the way, I am willing to do the needful in respect of what I want MATRIX to be.

((I know that, Paul and I am taking you up on some of your offers. I'm grateful for the contributions you already make to MATRIX, but as you say, there are a lot of other people out there... so how about ideas AND CONTRIBUTIONS from other readers? Look at it this way: the best way of forcing some change on MATRIX (assuming that you want changes in MATRIX) is to produce concrete examples of what you want. If you have an idea for a chatty article that you think is suitable for MATRIX, WRITE IT AND SEND IT IN. If you can draw, then the same applies. Remember, I love getting mail. I sulk all day if the postman passes me by, and you wouldn't want me to be unhappy, would you...cue the Beatles singing 'please Mr. Postman'))

Before I deal with the lettercol I'd like to interject with something else. I will take bets on the fact that now Jim Baen is both editor of Ace and

its bi-monthly magazine, he is almost sure to topple Bova from the Best Editor Award within the next 2 years. Somebody will.

Now the lettercol. This is becoming more and more interwoven as the months go by and everybody starts making cross-references. It really is beginning to feel like a 'discussion' column. All to the good.

Phil Stephensen-Payne seems to think that my magic figure of 3 for the number of magazines this country could support is purely personal opinion. It's not so much opinion as part of my own personal fantasy, actually. However, I would like to add that it is supportable by the fact that in the 50's this country supported that number of magazines and SF was a lot less popular than it is now. It is also supported by the fact that you can divide the genre into 3 rough classes: Analog cum Galaxy, F&SF, Fantastic types, or hard SF, soft SF and Fantasy, if you will. I also disagree with the idea that its 'nice and idealistic' to poo-poo other magazine failures. New Worlds/Other Worlds were horrid avant-garde magazines. I'm not trying to drag down that arm of SF either, I'm simply saying "Look, if you want to publish incomprehensible author-masturbation, ok. But don't expect your mag to survive." They didn't. Vortex actually did fail due to bad management. The total income possible was less than the outlay! New Writings is full of rubbish. It's also a paperback, not a mag. SSF Monthly was an SF art mag. Not only was there a finite amount of good art to repro but their fiction was blech.

((Interjection here: true, in the 50's there were SF mags; there were also a lot less paperbacks available. Why should the casual reader, who makes up the greater part of the book-buying or fiction-reading public, wait three months before he can complete a serialisation of a novel when he can read the whole thing complete in one paperback? Also, I don't think it's an indication of a potentially healthy magazine scene that a zine has to be FIRST CLASS before it survives. At least two of the mags you mention had enough worthwhile stuff in them to make their failure a loss to the SF scene.))

As for the statement about the US mags being in trouble, well that's probably the biggest heap of rubbish I've ever read. Two new mags, IASFM and GALILEO have gone from a quarterly to bimonthly schedule. Galaxy's circulation increased from 55,000 to 80,000 last year. F&SF's has increased by 15,000 over the last 3 years. Not forgetting Analog which is still stryggling along with a paltry 100,000 buyers. Just because Amazing and Fantastic have finally given up the ghost does not mean that the mags are in trouble.

ALAN PILLAI, 32 Mingle L. Stapleford, Cambs. CB2 5BG.

It's a pity that Fallible Freeman has gone, as even though the reviews were short they at least were numerous and gave the reader some idea of what the field was like.

The letters section of this MATRIX was long and was probably the most interesting part of the whole mag. I quite agree with Sandy Brown's attack on the preconceived idea of SF. People still think of SF as monsters and

rocketships, which we can more or less blame on the 'father of SF', Gernsback. Anyway apart from that, for people who have not the word it is very difficult to appreciate why a fan likes SF, and even if they ask most fans couldn't reply; the same happens with stamps railways, etc. The only way anyone is going to sit down and listen is when a producer who knows and loves SF has the chance to make a series, as Kubrick did with his film 2001 which at the time was the only film around which gave any credibility to SF, even if it was thirty years out of date.

((A very long letter follows... I invited abuse in a comment in M17 and I seem to have been taken at my word! But I'm glad that someone has taken the trouble to read the AGM minutes and let me have his comments, even if they are unfavourable to the BSFA....))

DON WEST, 48 Norman ST, Bingley, West Yorks, BD16 4JT

The minutes and accounts of the BSFA contained in MATRIX 17 certainly made interesting reading, and seem to call for comment. I didn't attend the AGM, and had I done so I don't suppose I would have said a great deal. It takes time to assimilate a balance sheet, and in the case of the BSFA balance sheet the points to be noted are rather those which have been left out, not put in.

In the year Jan - Dec. 1977 the BSFA spent (odd pence knocked off) £2740 on its mailings - VECTOR, MATRIX and the other bits and pieces. All the other expenses put together totalled £596, bringing final expenditure up to £3337. Throw in a little corporation tax and the excess of expenditure over income (£2991) was £349.

Not too good, you might say. Rather incautious, really, spending £2740 on VECTOR etc. when the income from subscriptions was only £1901. Still, there's the income from the sale of VECTOR to non-members: £854. (Allowing for the 40 or so subscribers mentioned, that's something over 600 copies, a rather surprisingly high sale, particularly when one considers another statement in the minutes: "Mr Freeman said the back numbers sold at a slow but steady rate. Mr Freeman further explained that Mr C Fowler had previously looked after this and after handing it over there had been a backlog of requests some a year old and he was slowly working his way through these") Anyway, add the £854 to the £1901 and you get £2755, an actual surplus of £15 on publications, assuming you take the subscriptions to be for publications and nothing else. Just the same, it does seem rather bold to rely on a rise of over £500 from the previous year's VECTOR sales (£325) in order to cover publication costs so narrowly and other expenses not at all. So who was responsible for this recklessly casual handling of the finances?

"Mr Umpleby explained the loss was due to expenditure on the Association's magazine VECTOR."

There you are - Chris Fowler is evidently the guilty party: the usual megalomaniac fanzine editor

falling victim to the Bigger and Better syndrome.

Well, undoubtedly Fowler spent the greater part of the money (though the figure "cost of VECTOR" includes the cost of all the publications) but it would be unfair to cast him as the sole villain of the piece. After all, what were the rest of the committee doing during this period of profligacy, that they let him get away with it?

"The Chairman explained that Mr Fowler had administered the publishing part of the account and it was only possible to break down the expenditure to a certain level."

Don't they even know what MATRIX cost, so that by simple subtraction they can work out what was spent on the rest? Was Fowler left entirely free to do just as he pleased with nearly £3,000 - over 90% of the BSFA's income? Did the treasurer keep him supplied with blank, signed cheques? Or was it bundles of (uncounted) used £5 notes? Were all the bank statements thrown away unread? Or was Fowler allowed to keep all the money in a sack underneath his bed, to be dipped into whenever he felt the urge for another photographic cover or an even more expensive print-job? Was there some kind of primitive superstitious notion that if the bills were ignored, they would disappear? Or that if Fowler never presented bills to be paid, they didn't exist, and he must be doing a grand job by managing to get everything for free?

These are the people who want to expand the BSFA Council to 21 members because "as an organisation gets larger it requires more members to look after administration." It would be more accurate to say that a committee like this needs more members in order that they can look after each other. It must be a struggle for any of them to cross the road unaided.

What the devil is this committee supposed to be for? Crocheting little woolly BSFA badges? Fiddling about with piffling schemes for bookmark advertisements, a promotional idea that dates back about 30 years? (And they couldn't even manage to bring even that piece of feeble business to a conclusion.) If the present BSFA committee were set down in the middle of the Sahara desert with a cargo of beer and a clientele of thirsty football fans it seems unlikely that they'd be able to do much business successfully. They'd probably pass the time debating such urgent problems as whether to offer credit to camels, and whether to advertise in the GR EENLAND GAZETTE or the NEW SOUTH WALES WEEKLY NEWS.

The function of the BSFA committee is to formulate policies and plans which will satisfy the needs and wishes of the general membership, and to oversee the implementation and successful working of such items of policy. The greater part of what the BSFA has to offer is - and always has been, its publications. Most of the other so-called advantages of members ip are bits of window-dressing which turn out to be practically worthless on closer inspection. The costs of the library and magazine chain aren't included in the membership fee - they're self-supporting and have to be paid for. The other oddments - advice service, writer's circles and so on - are used, if at all, by a very small percentage of the membership. The BSFA has VECTOR and the lesser bulletins (which vary in title from time to time) and virtually nothing else. In view of this, it seems obvious enough that the greater part of

of the BSFA's expenditure should be devoted to its publications. It also seems obvious enough that the committee should take some interest in how the money is spent. Responsibility for budgeting rests with the committee as a whole, not with the editor of VECTOR alone. With what mysterious projects have the 'treasurer' and 'business manager' and VECTOR business manager been filling in their time?

Perhaps they were trying to solve the Mystery of the Missing Advertising Income. Not having my own copies of BSFA publications for last year I am not able to check exactly, but I do have the impression that one or two adverts appeared, not to mention a few fliers. But maybe that's just my imagination. Or maybe they were all inserted free of charge, since the Accounts make no mention of any income at all from advertising. It seems a little odd that 6 issues of VECTOR couldn't manage to drum up a single piece of advertising, when any convention programme book - with about the same print-run per issue, more or less, - can muster anything from 10 to 20 pages worth several hundred pounds. Maybe the revenue was so insignificant that they forgot about it.

The accounts presented for the year of 1977 are not satisfactory. Some of the figures look suspect, and most of the vague explanations of these figures look even more suspect. The Balance Sheet may show the correct figures for cash in the bank and so on, but the route which leads to these final totals has a decidedly contrived appearance. I don't suspect wholesale embezzlement - I'd be happy to believe that these people were smart enough to handle anything so intellectual - but I do feel sure of a great deal of neglect and carelessness followed by an ill-conceived attempt to gloss over the whole mess of incompetence and inefficiency.

Chris Fowler's editorship has ended in the bizarre and ludicrous situation of an organisation with nearly 500 members and nearly £3,000 income running into the red through sheer inability to manage the production of six bundles of mediocre fanzines within the limits of a ridiculously high level of expenditure. There are University societies which produce better lithoed fanzines on less than a tenth of the BSFA's income. There are individuals who produce better fanzines at a cost which enables them to give the things away and still not feel much financial strain. The BSFA can't manage this. As Dave Cribbledick announces in a plug in his own fanzine: "Every active member who keeps the BSFA running does so voluntarily and seeks no financial reward. The BSFA is a non-profitmaking organisation." Apparently he thinks he's boasting. He should be getting ready to break down and cry.

And now Fowler has gone, having enjoyed his period of editorial power and glory at the expense of the BSFA's bank balance. Let those who let him frolic unchecked for so long depart also. All of those persons who were members of the BSFA committee during Chris Fowler's period of editor should resign. They aren't fit to manage the sale of bootlaces on

a street corner, let alone a turnover of £3,000. Perhaps they mean well, but they show up as so irredeemably incompetent that the BSFA would be safer if they took their good intentions somewhere else.

It's not as if this committee's totally ineffectual handling of the Association's finances is an isolated and unique example of their general witlessness. They show very little good sense in any area.

Despite the sudden and amazing revelation that there is a tomorrow and bills have to be paid some time, they continue to sanction the publication of TANGENT, a fan-fiction magazine of such dismally low quality that - unless one takes the charitable view that it provides remedial therapy for the editor and contributors - its appearance can only serve to bring the name of the BSFA into further disrepute.

Yes, further, BSFA publications are not exactly a byword for excellence, either of production or content. Never before has so much been spent on behalf of so many for so little result. The answers to Keith Freeman's membership survey seem to indicate that the majority of BSFA members have little or no direct knowledge of the wide variety of fanzines and semi-professional SF publications available elsewhere. If they had, even the most determinedly non-fannish might begin to wonder why they are paying almost a pound each for half a dozen bundles of greyly-printed, badly laid-out, poorly-written pages which fall apart almost as soon as they leave the envelope. After all, for the same money one could buy half a dozen paperback novels, or subscribe to a couple of serious and well-produced magazines of SF criticism, like ALGOL, SF REVIEW, FOUNDATION or SF COMMENTARY. And the sheer quantity of fanzines one could obtain for nothing, just for the £5 spent on postage, scarcely bears thinking about.

Most of the people who are active in the British fanzine scene have been members of the BSFA. They've dropped out not because they've lost interest in SF but because the BSFA does not offer value for money. Why pay so much for what can be obtained elsewhere - and is frequently much better - at a much lower cost? The BSFA is an object of derision to the rest of fandom, simply because in relation to the amount of money it has available the standard of its publications is so poor.

The BSFA should be a force, not a farce. It has the potential to be an attractive, useful and even important organisation: a positive influence on the standard and development of British SF. 500 members may not seem to have much direct numerical significance in terms of the mass paperback market, but that same figure does represent a fifth or a quarter of the average print-run of a hardback novel. That's quite a hefty percentage, particularly when one considers that this is a hard core of readers who are likely not only to ask their local library to buy the books, but to buy them for themselves.

Unfortunately, the present committee appear to be incapable of exploiting the BSFA's possibilities. The complete botch that is still being made of the BSFA award is one more example of their inability to see beyond the ends of their eyelashes.

An award of this nature, it should be understood, is not a piece of philanthropy. It is created as much for the benefit of the giver as the receiver. In cynical terms, it's a publicity device. The BSFA seem unable to grasp this simple point. From the furtive and embarrassed manner in which they

announce the winner's name - Bob Shaw got about two column inches in MATRIX, Ian Watson has done slightly better - one might take it that the whole business was the reluctant administration of some tiresome and unwanted secret bequest. Do they ever even think about making rather more noise about the winner, the Award, and the general connection with the BSFA? Does anyone ever take such obvious steps as sending out publicity material to the national papers, the trade papers, the literary magazines, the Arts Council publications, the winning author's local papers and anywhere else that might give the whole deal a mention?

All for the price of the postage and maybe a few photocopies, it should be noted. Instead the committee proposes to throw in £50 or so as a cash supplement to the award. They probably feel very virtuous about this revolutionary idea - particularly since they will be fulfilling the Biblical injunction to Do Good By Stealth - but one rather doubts the cost-effectiveness of the plan. The Award's connection with SF and the VSFA is to be further masked and concealed by calling it 'The Carnell'.

Now E.J. Carnell was certainly an important influence in British SF and his memory is deserving of all honour, but it's really rather doubtful if his name will be instantly recognisable and meaningful to all those readers of SF who have come to the genre after his death. And those who do recognise his name may well wonder why it should be attached to what is in effect an award for novels, when Carnell was noted mainly for his connection with short stories. It may also be wondered what great advantage there is to this 'short title' when an explanation of the connection with the BSFA will have to be added on. The publishers will doubtless use the name - never mind whether anybody's ever heard of the thing, it looks good and costs nothing - but they won't necessarily feel obliged to print long explanations instead.

Handled correctly, the BSFA award (the most sensible title) could become a more modest version of the Hugo, and could generate a useful amount of prestige and publicity for the BSFA. Handled with the present committee's fuzzy-minded ineptitude, and all we'll get is something with confused rules, a name no one understands, and no value or credibility whatsoever.

It's no wonder the BSFA membership has such a high turnover. The poor newcomer gets suckered in, but there's not much to make him part with his money a second time, except a rather pathetic trust in future improvement. How do they expect to gain - and keep - new members (not to mention advertising and publicity) on the strength of such shabby products as VECTOR and MATRIX? Packaging is important in this area, and the tatty appearance of BSFA publications is less likely to inspire confidence than to bring a realisation of the extent to which the prices charged constitute a grotesque ripoff. And the altern-

ative to this masochistic wallowing in the cheapest of cheap reproduction is not necessarily Fowler's folly of the most expensive litho printing available. But Boom or Bust seems to be the BSFA way. It's a great pity, when there's so much the BSFA could achieve.

There's a final point, not directly concerned with the minutes and accounts. The mailing I received after the convention contained VECTOR 36, TANGENT4, MATRIX 17, the BSFA Information Booklet (which should be prosecuted under the Trades Descriptions Act) the VECTOR review index, several fliers and other bits of paper, and two fanzines produced not by the BSFA but by BSFA committee members, WAIF 1 from Tom Jones and PAPERBACK PARLOUR from Philip Stevenson-Payne. The postage on this bundle was 54p. This seemed rather high, so I weighed the whole parcel. At 400 grammes that should have been 36p second class. Well, all right, maybe my scales weren't dead accurate (though they tested as accurate with several items of known weight) or maybe whoever weighed this bundle had got it close enough to 500g. to justify the jump to the next bracket to hit second class maximum of 54p. As an experiment, I took out WAIF and PAPERBACK PARLOUR. Under 500g. this time, beyond all doubt. So in fact the inclusion of these two fanzines (produced not by the BSFA but by BSFA committee members) had cost the BSFA at least another 10p. (I made the weight without the twp as 420g., putting the mailing in the 400-450g. range - cost 32½p)

These sums don't look very large, but they begin to seem larger when applied across the whole membership, or substantial sections of it. An extra expense of 18p per mailing would represent an outlay of £90 for 500 members.

I look on the bright side, of course, mailing with the BSFA saves the editors - those two BSFA committee members - at least £7 per hundred (£35 per five hundred) not to mention several pounds for envelopes. It seems that being a BSFA committee member is not so unrewarding as it's made out to be. Not only can you use the members' money to subsidise self-glorifying activities supposedly run on behalf of the members (TANGENT, MATRIX, VECTOR - all of them run in the past more for the gratification of their editors than anyone else) but you can use some more of that money (and save a lot of your own) in issuing purely personal publications. Truly, nice work if you can get it.

It seems to have escaped the attention of the committee that more can be spent on postage than on printing if the weight of a mailing is not kept down. The new super-cheap VECTOR weighs twice as much as the same amount of material lithprinted. Given the defects of duplicating already mentioned, the inevitable increase in mailing costs puts a further question mark against the value of this supposed economy. A more sensible course would be to cut out the pure rubbish which is nothing but dead weight (TANGENT) and to look more closely at the value of some of the other wads of paper. The VECTOR review index, for instance, is a reasonable idea, but this scarcely seems the moment for its publication, particularly in such a space-wasting format.

However, if the BSFA committee really wish to effect economies they can do this very easily: they can all resign. Let them carry out their foolish designs on their own money; they've had long enough mis-spending what belongs to the BSFA. The time has passed for letting the affairs of the BSFA slip by without comment.

On being a limited company

Some years ago the BSFA, following a vote by the membership, was turned into a limited company. This imposes certain things upon the membership and Council, some good, some a nuisance, for example;

- a) A fee of £20 must be paid annually to the Registrar of Companies.
- b) We must have a company secretary with appropriate qualifications.
- c) We need the Company Registrar's approval to change any of our "rules" (ie Articles of Association).
- d- We have to prepare a set of returns for the Registrar and get them to him by a certain date.

There are other regulations and failure to follow these can lead to fines - as it is unlikely that many of the Council will have the necessary knowledge of the Companies Acts they either have to become "experts" or rely heavily on the Comp Sec. Now perhaps I've biased the facts to show the problems so I'd like to hear the advantages from those of you who feel there are advantages.

Our new Comp Sec believes it is possible to remove our limited company status but before doing this we would poll the members and before reaching that stage we'd like your views on the matter.

US Agent

The BSFA now has an American agent who will deal with the US side of the business, this is Cy Chauvin (320 Harper, Detroit, Michigan 48202, USA) and we'd like to thank Cy for taking this job on and to thank Mary Long for arranging this with Cy.

The reason for needing a US agent is that each dollar cheque costs about 70p to encash, this reaches a ridiculous state with orders for back issues were sometimes it would be cheaper to throw the dollar cheque away. And though we ask for money to be in pounds or as dollars in cash people still send cheques. Now Cy will look after the money sending it over in lump sums of \$100, or so.

BSFA Award

As you know Ian Watson's THE JONAH KIT won the Award and with the kind cooperation of the Novacon Committee the presentation will take place at the Novacon Banquet - which is another good reason to attend Novacon 8 during 3, 4 & 5 November at the Holiday Inn, Birmingham (write to Dave Holmes at 1222 Warwick Rd, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 6PL).

Last issue I announced the award was to be "nicknamed" The Carnell, this was slightly premature as I hadn't received permission from John Carnell's widow, Irene, or his friend and successor at the E.J. Carnell Literary Agency, Les Flood, that permission has now been given, to quote from Les Flood's letter,
"Irene is delighted and naturally gives her permission, and you have my blessing for what it's worth..."

A press release concerning the Award was prepared but delayed until permission was granted to use the name, The Carnell, these press releases are now on their way to all major newspapers and the appropriate journals.

Company Secretary

We'd like to welcome Kevin Smith to the fold as Comp Sec. Kevin is a well known fan and was Chairman of the recent Eastercon, Skycon. But of more importance from our point of view he is a Chartered Accountant and has all the necessary knowledge to undertake this job. Welcome Kevin.

Library Additions

Due to the death of their son a couple have offered to the BSFA his SF collection. At present arrangements are still being made and

until these are finalised I can't give you full details, but to give you an idea as to what the collection contains I'll list a few examples;

- a) NEW WORLDS from No. 4 to 143
- b) ASTOUNDING/ ANALOG from Nov 1953 to Aug 1963 plus most other ASTOUNDINGS from Aug 1939
- c) The original hardbacks of GE Smith's novels
- d) An autographed copy of George O Smith's VENUS EQUILATERAL
- e) Over 200 other hardbacks.

I hope I can give you full details next time and a complete listing shortly.

Views

Following my pleas for some feedback in the last issue I had two replies, perhaps more went straight to Andy, I suppose it's better than none.

First PHIL ROSENBLUM who comments on the various points raised in the minutes of the AGM:-

"I find PAPERBACK PARLOUR invaluable. As for duplication of material the more reviews one has on a book the better one can judge whether it is worth purchasing. Furthermore it is a very rare occasion when two reviewers have the same opinion of a given book."

"There is no reason why VICTOR & MATRIX should not be posted together. If Mr. Croghan can't tell the difference between the two, that's his hang-up."

"My ideal format (for VICTOR) would run something like this;
Reviews of books
Interviews
Reviews of particular aspects or themes
Letters

I feel Dave Wingrove has struck a good balance. I believe the relative proportions of each should be flexible."

"An excellent idea - checklists, bibliographies with notes on contents of books by particular authors, it's probably best to stick to 'Biggish Names' ".

"BSFA AWARD. I reckon it's in the Association's interests to call it the BSFA Award; it's good PR. Let's scrap 'The Carnell' (Sorry, Ted). I'm not over zealous on gilding the Award, in the light of current finances, although a reasonable increase would be okay. Both hardbacks and paperbacks should be eligible though award winners cannot be nominated again."

"Only 62 out of 500 people voted, I think we should make more fuss about the award in MATRIX & VICTOR. For example how about a series of reviews on the award winning novels? Interest needs to be stimulated in this area. Before we improve the award let's improve the voters. It would also be inspiring to have a list of award winners published and perhaps a series of essays from the Award winners, or just introductions? I'm sure a lot can be done in this area and I'm only too happy to help out."

****(The VC replies) There's no intention to completely replace the name BSFA AWARD with The Carnell, we realise the advertising aspects of the award and thus will continue to use BSFA AWARD in public, The Carnell is purely an internal shorthand and also allows us to honour a man who did so much for British SF.

The article is a good idea and I've passed the suggestion onto Dave Wingrove who is going to see what can be done. But for rapid information the Award winners were;→

- 1972 - STAND ON ZANZIBAR - John Brunner
- 1973 - RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA - Arthur C. Clarke
BILLION YEAR SPRING - Brian Aldiss (Special Award)
- 1974 - INVERTED WORLD - Chris Priest
- 1975 - ROBITSVILLE - Bob Shaw
- 1976 - BRONTOMEX - Michael Coney
A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SF - David Kyle (Special Award)
- 1977 - THE JONAH KIT - Ian Watson

Several people have suggested that the Award be available for first publication in either hardback or paperback and the committee will discuss this shortly. ****

"Info service. Far too trivial and paltry for VECTOR, if past failures are anything to go by. Who else besides the nut writing cares what Elmer T. Hack wrote a story about 7-handed octopuses in the April edition of "Confounding" 1929. Shear suicide putting it in VECTOR, MATRIX is where it should be."

****Though I personally agree that this service should go in MATRIX we have to go along with the decision of the AGM and this idea should now be given a chance and can be discussed again next year if necessary.**

"Conventions. The BSFA should not be an underwriter for flop conventions. It would not be in the members' interests to risk so much for so little."

****There is no intention that we should underwrite flop conventions, but we do feel the BSFA should become more involved with conventions as they present a chance for members to meet other members and non-members and they are, or should be, good recruiting grounds.****

The second response came from Andy Grey followed by a second letter expanding his final point and giving both sides of the argument.

"You will, I think, always get more comment on a goof than you will when you do something good. BSFA News is a good idea worth continuing but I'm not going to keep writing to say so. Consider me apathetic if you like but I don't like writing lots of letters even when I have the time. I hope you do get the feedback you wish but my feeling is that when things are going nicely everyone sits back and lets them. When they go badly then bricks start flying, so don't worry if the response to your plea is small."

****Obviously if people are happy I don't expect them to keep writing in saying so, but I feel there are things the committee aren't doing and should be or are doing and shouldn't be, and when someone feels this is the case I'd like to hear about it.****

"There seems to be some criticism of C. Fowler in the last mailing. Obviously he left some problems but we did have a regular VECTOR after the previous doldrums and things did liven up during his (and your) editorships. He must have put in a lot of work and ought to be thanked for it."

"Publications. 4 VECTORS a year is enough (too much even) but 6 MATRIX is about right (though I still think the letters require editing) That should save money. A Yearbook is still a good idea if we can afford it. The money saved could be used for printing equipment if we need it."

"I doubt if an ad in an Edmund Cooper book will do much. Most knowledgeable readers avoid his books - Sorry Mr. Cooper."

****Tastes in reading vary and Edmund Cooper is a very popular writer, as shown by the large response we've had to the advert and we're still getting queries.****

"We obviously need to maintain a certain membership level but do we need to grow. Growth brings more problems than it solves and perhaps SF readers should support zero growth philosophies."

****(And now follows Roy's follow up)****

"If you're going to start a debate I don't wish my jokey comment on zero growth to be misunderstood."

"We need new members because:-

- 1) To maintain a BSFA of reasonable size lapsed members must be replaced.
- 2) Active members become less active as their responsibilities to family, work etc leave them less time for BSFA and some new members will eventually take over their roles.

"We want a growth in membership because:-

- 1) It brings in more money with all the consequent advantages
- 2) We want to spread the word
- 3) We want more influence with the SF world, ed publishers & the media
- 4) Individual members will have more chance of local contacts (Eg there are 3 BSFA members in Macclesfield now - there was only me a while back.
- 5) We should get a greater variety of material submitted to VECTOR/MATRIX etc
- 6)....? there must be more

"We don't want more growth in membership because:-

- 1) There are already too many letters in VECTOR/MATRIX
- 2) Because we want to be a very exclusive organisation?
- 3) Because we will need to employ someone part-time, perhaps to cope with all the work involved
- 4) Because growth for its own sake is unfashionable
- 5) Bigness equates with systems, stagnation, inflexibility, politics, slowness etc (Sorry there seems to be some mistake here I've described the BSFA - only a joke, honest)
- 6) SF is booming there is no real need for the BSFA any more
- 7) We shouldn't make it too easy for new people to find us (They should want a BSFA for their own good reasons - we should not be an "impulsive buy" as you might say as a bar of chocolate by the M&S checkout is)
- 8) We should select new members rather than recruit.

****Wow! Well no one can accuse you of not seeing both sides of the argument. I've not had a chance to discuss this with the committee as it arrived just before I had to get this typed so I'll give you my views. I have always assumed that it is a GOOD THING for the BSFA to expand, that a large membership must bring economies of scale and give the BSFA more influence. I no longer believe the latter and in my term as MATRIX editor and VC I've realised the problems a large membership will bring. Just on the mailing side at present it takes several evenings of duplication a weekend for collating and a further evening for checking for checking - and have you ever tried putting 600 or so envelopes into a car (I didn't charge the BSFA for shock absorbers). If we had 1000 or 1500 members we'd be reaching the point where it would be unreasonable to expect a small number of people to do the work (our requests for assistance have produced little response from the members but thanks to those who have come along) thus we'd be forced to get professional assistance. Having said this I'm not advocating zero growth but we must look closely at Roy's ideas, even though some of them are tongue in cheek and your views would be much appreciated.

Don West

Andy Sawyer has just sent Don West's letter which appears in this issue to me. Andy feels, and I agree, that the committee should make a joint reply to this letter as it lays some serious allegations at our door. As duplication starts in a couple of days time, I'm late with this section as usual, I'm afraid there is no time to reply now but there is a committee meeting on Sunday 11th (today's the 9th) so we'll draft one then. Should anyone wish to pour more derision on us or make any comments on the letter please do so.

TOM A. JONES

BSFA4

Bye Bye