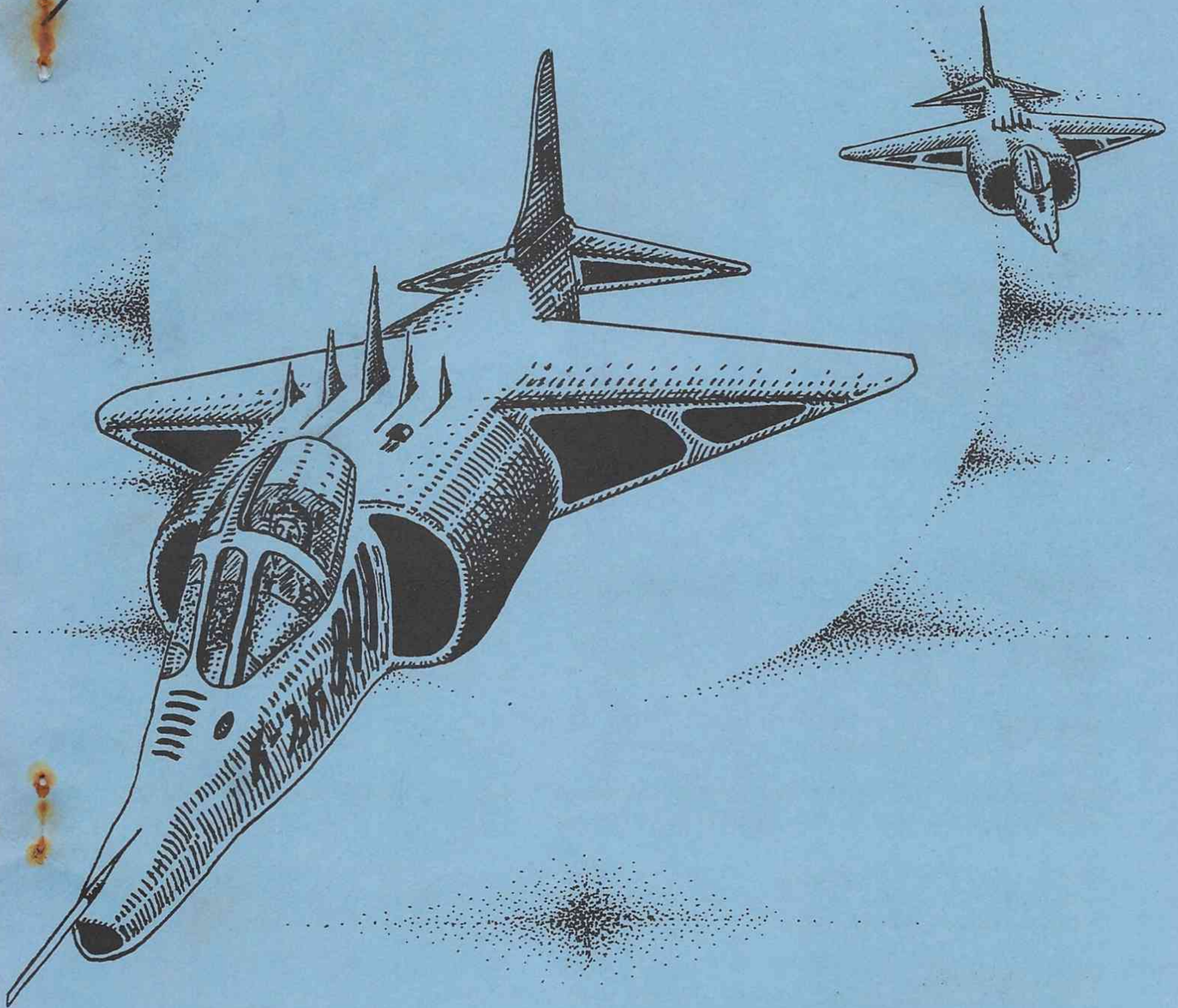


MATRIX



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MATRIX 24

NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

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Artwork We'd like to thank Iain Byers for providing us with the front cover, and, of course, Jim Barker for the Captive Strip.

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COPY DEADLINES

Articles - July 21st; News & Letters - 28th July

EDITORIAL

As you will see from the Chairman's news in this issue, my prediction of new faces has come true, but I'll leave Alan to introduce them. Perhaps, however, a few words about our new Chairman wouldn't go amiss at this point. The sharp-eyed amongst you will notice that, whereas Tom Jones was Vice-Chairman, Alan Dorey is Chairman. This is not a slip of the typewriter, or egotism on Alan's part, merely that the Committee thought the title of President was more fitting for our honorary "head of state" (Arthur C Clarke) and thus the role of Vice Chairman could be retitled Chairman. It's only semantics, I know, but I'm sure you'll all agree that it looks more logical.

Alan Dorey has followed Eve and I through the 'hallowed portals' of Leeds University and its SF Society. As I write this, he is sitting his finals in Geography. A propos his sf activities, he has managed to edit the infamous Black Hole of Leeds University SF Soc, produced the Nova award-winning fanzine, Gross Encounters, and taken a very active part in this year's Eastercon in Leeds. What do you do in your spare time Alan? I'm sure that under his Chairmanship we will see a very exciting and active BSFA.

I cannot let our retiring Vice-Chairman, Tom Jones, go without saying thank you for all the time and effort he has devoted to the BSFA. You'll still come to the mailing sessions won't you Tom?

With this mailing, you should find the first of Martin Hatfield's Media Notes (I think that's what he's calling it). Martin has been a media correspondent for Matrix for some time now, and at Yorcon he and I had a long discussion about the space limitations imposed on our news section. "Why don't you do your own zine?" I said. Sure enough, Martin has and he has agreed to distribute it through the BSFA. So that's where you'll find the news of films etc from now on.

The next BSFA mailing will be out just in time for Seacon, so Matrix will have a Worldcon flavour to it. We're hoping to star several of the best foreign zines in the fanzine review section, so you'll have some idea of what to look for at the fanzine sales. It definitely will be the largest gathering that Britain has ever seen of sf fans and authors. Those of you who are attending, do pop up to the fanroom, say hello to Eve and I and you will probably be able to collect your next mailing from the BSFA desk.

See you there.

John Harvey

UNLOCING THE JARGON

Most specialist interest hobbies (and professions) seem to develop a language of their own. Terms which are strange and meaningless to the newcomer. One of the dangers of becoming involved with these hobbies/disciplines is that you learn the language and start to use it yourself, forgetting the past. This is especially prevalent where the 'jargon' is, in fact, made up mostly of contractions of much longer and more cumbersome phrases. It is so easy to use the shorter form when the words are used frequently. I was reminded of this by Pat Wright, who wrote complaining

about the use of jargon in Matrix. All I can say is that I plead guilty, so let's write (!) the wrongs with a few definitions and explanations.

LOC or LoC

Quite simply, this means Letter Of Comment. Most letters to fanzines (see below) are termed Locs, irrespective of whether they comment on the fanzine. Someone who writes a LoC is a loccer, and the letter column becomes a loccol.

Fanzine

As I've already used this term, I'd better explain that it refers to a magazine produced by a fan. Usually they are done for the love of it and the editor has no visions of covering his costs, let alone make any money. Fanzines are produced in other areas as well, such as comics and rock music.

WAHF

We Also Heard From. This is the editor's way of acknowledging the people who have written to his fanzine but whose LoCs have not been printed.

Faned

It took me ages to be able to read this one correctly; to realise that it wasn't the past tense of the verb to fan. Really, it ought to be written 'Fan-Ed', which makes it much clearer. It is, in fact, a contraction of Fanzine Editor.

There are a number of categories of fanzine, each of which roughly describes their content, these being:

Sercon

Serious and Constructive. This used to be a term of condemnation, but now tends to be used to describe any fanzine which is principally about sf as literature. Vector is a typical example.

Genzine

A fanzine of general interest. Covering any topic that its contributors care to write about. It also implies that copies of the zine are generally available for subscription and 'the usual'.

Personalzine

A fanzine written by, and usually about, the editor. Humour tends to be the main aim here, but the danger is that since the circulation is limited, it can appear "cliquey" and full of "in-jokes". They are well worth persevering with, however.

Newszine

The fanzine equivalent of a newspaper. I suppose Matrix falls in here.

One Tun

The One Tun is a pub in London, on Saffron Hill (not far from Farringdon tube station). If you take a walk in this area on the first Thursday in any month, you might be excused for thinking you are the last person on Earth. But open the door of the One Tun and you'll see what looks like an attempt to get into the Guinness Book of Records for the most people in a pub at one time. In that crowd are most of London's SF fans, plus visitors from all over the UK and the world. Certainly, the country's premier disorganised fan gathering. You'll find reference to the Northern Tun, in the news pages, but you'll have to wait for that!

There is also a fair amount of jargon linked with conventions or likely to be seen in convention reports - once again they are mainly shorthand

versions of more complex phrases.

Con

An sf convention is frequently called the con and used as part of a title such as Seacon and Yorcon.

GoH

Most sf conventions choose to have a Guest of Honour, usually a professional (pro) author, who is there at the expense of the convention. This way the organisers can attract a celebrity who might not otherwise go and extract a few duties, such as giving a GoH speech and judging the fancy dress parade.

FGoH

A Fan Guest of Honour - usually a well-known fan or fans (fen).

BNF

Big Name Fan, a term applied to one whose fame has spread far and wide (not somebody with more than 30 letters in their name!)

Neo/Neofan

A newcomer to sf fandom (I'll leave you to infer what that last term means!)

The actual production of a fanzine has its own concomitant jargon.

Typo

Typographical error - i.e. either you can't spell or you can't type or proof read. Many faneds turn these to their advantage by 'allowing' humorous typos to creep into their zines, but mainly we try to avoid them, although a fanzine is not supposed to be fannish unless it has a few sprinkled sparsely through the pages.

Illo

Illustration in a fanzine.

Fillo

Illustration in a fanzine that bears no resemblance to anything in the accompanying articles but is merely used to fill up the embarrassing spaces left when an article doesn't quite reach the end of the page and you don't want to start a new one on the same page. This term is also applied to the meanderings faneds print to fill these spaces when they can't use artwork.

So there you have it, some of the jargon that sf fans use which tend to make them look more of a clique than they really are. Being a clique is a criticism often levelled at fans and it has a certain basis in truth. After all, everybody should have the right to choose their own friends. So if you find yourself feeling on the outside at first, take a good look at yourself - are you a nice person to know? If you try too hard you'll just become a bore - don't worry, it all takes a little time and then you'll find a niche for yourself.

My thanks to Rob Jackson's "Little Dictionary of Terms used by SF Fans", for helping me prepare the above list. This document was distributed by the BSFA in 1976 and is slightly out of date now. Perhaps we'll make a "special project" of updating it? Unfortunately that means more work, so maybe we won't.

John Harvey

NEWS

BSFA FILE

The Boys are Back in Town

When I was young there were many things I dreamed that, One Day, might possibly come true. I can't honestly say that I wanted to be a steam train driver, but I quite fancied playing soccer for Tottenham (until at about the age of 15 I realised that not even commanding a regular place in the school team would bring me to the notice of any sharp-eyed soccer scout). I also had large ambitions to play cricket for Surrey, and go on to play for England at the grand old age of 18, and although I have been a useful cricketer, there was just a little difference between my skills and those of Edrich, Stewart and Barrington. Then there were my big plans to write a book and make millions; there was the Major Film Project and sundry other pipedreams that were as about as near to reality as Halifax Town taking on Rochdale in next season's FA Cup final.

But in all those youthful ambitions, those Great Thoughts destined to become jaded and obscured as the years went by and my interests broadened, there was never any ambition to become Chairman of the BSFA. Now this is something sadly lacking in the pleasures and pains of growing up; having a burning desire to become Chairman of the BSFA has all the charismatic ring of being sentenced to a life in the Civil Service, and there isn't even the 'Steam Train Driver' romanticism behind it. But why do certain people feel as though that's what their ambition in life can be? Who in their right mind would declare that they want to be Chairman of the BSFA (What dat? Balham Sewage Works Fishing Association?), bearing in mind that SF stands for Science Fiction? I mean, don't people become just a little distainful and self-righteous when you announce that not only do you read SF, you are also offering your services (free of charge) to help in the co-ordination of an organisation dedicated to the promotion of that subject? Well, who are you calling stupid, folks? I mean, I might not read a lot of SF - but I'm jolly good at football, as Geoffrey Willans might have said. And I have volunteered to be BSFA Chairman, and nobody has complained yet. And we do have lots of plans, with many new Council faces, so perhaps you'll give us full support, eh?

The Plan

Do you want the good news or the bad news first? Or would you rather me just continue anyway, regardless of your inner emotions and feelings? Well, changes are going to be made to the BSFA magazines. Firstly, Vector's new editor will be Mike Dickinson, assisted by Joseph Nicholas as Reviews Editor. Mike was co-chairman of the recent Yorcon in Leeds, is a secondary school teacher by profession and has published fanzines (both serious and humorous), together with having perhaps one of the largest book collections in current fandom. Vector itself will be dropping to a quarterly schedule at the end of the year, will have twice as many pages, but will be returning to its old A5 size. Now don't worry, you're not going to lose out on magazines, because the revamped Tangent is going to be published twice a year as a litho magazine and sent out to all members in the two mailings that omit Vector. Oh yes, it's going to be retitled

Focus and edited by Rob Holdstock and Chris Evans, who, I am sure, need no introduction. It'll also be more of a writer's magazine, presenting guides, advice and articles as well as good fiction. Matrix, in the very capable hands of John & Eve Harvey has already undergone a tremendous metamorphosis, and will be following the pattern that they have now indelibly stamped upon its format. And finally, Paperback Parlour will be revived with the next mailing, and edited by Joseph Nicholas. There are also one or two special projects in the offing, about which more next issue.

The People

Several new faces have appeared on the BSFA Council since the AGM at Yorcon in April, and I'll be letting you know about them next issue, but I will just mention one or two of them now. Dave Pringle, research fellow at the SF Foundation has been brought in as Liaison Officer with the Foundation, and we hope that this will promote new ideas and projects for the future. Simon Ounsley, a civil engineer from Leeds has been elected as the new Club Liaison Officer, and intends to expend much energy in his tireless search for news and information to fill out his column, the first of which appears this issue. And Dave Langford, editor of Twil Ddu, writer, wit, raconteur, ex-Hugo administrator and slightly hard of hearing, has been brought in to annoy Kev Smith, our Company Secretary.

Who Am I?

Like I said, I had no idea that I was born to be BSFA Chairman. If steam trains had kept going after 1968, I could have got to be quite interested in them. If I'd been any good at soccer or cricket, I could have been playing for England in the World Cup Final at Lord's. And if I'd never been given a copy of H G Wells' War of the Worlds when I was at the tender age of 7, I might not have started reading SF until it was too late. Which would mean, of course, that I'd still rate Perry Rhodan as being the World's Greatest contribution to literature since some primeval caveman had to scratch out his Football Pools on a slab of rock when the phones were out of order, and invented writing in the process. Of course, it took years to progress from the simple 'X' shape, but if you happened to be a Latin Master filling pools in with one hand, and doing Latin corrections with the other, that's the only mark you ever needed to know. So why do I read SF? Well, again to be honest, I don't know. My knowledge is pretty shallow, I read more mainstream and reference books these days, but there is something magical about picking up a fine piece of writing that happens to be science fiction. And if anyone dared to ask me why I do read the stuff, I might be lost for words. It's a strange reaction; it shouldn't be a closet literature even though the public image of it is so retarded and constrained as to be unbelievable. And this is where the BSFA can help, by promoting SF through schools, groups, societies, clubs and just about anywhere that might prove to be beneficial to both parties.

And that is what I trust the BSFA will continue to do. The barriers have got to be broken down, progress must be made. It's a tall order, but with co-operation all round, it can be made to work.

The Job

I know there must be a wealth of ideas out there in readerland as to what the members want the BSFA to be doing. Minor comments like "You're not publishing enough Isaac Asimov critiques" should be directed at the magazine editors, but if you have any potentially useful ideas that can help to increase the BSFA's services, please let me have them. We have ideas of creating a tape library together with slides to be hired out to local groups, but this is just the start. Whilst we cannot bow to the individual whim of every member, our future policy will take into account the ideas generated by the members. If all you want to do is collect your mailing every two

months, read it and send off your renewal each year, fair enough. But if you want to get involved, it's no use sitting back and moaning if things aren't developing in the way that you thought they would. We have to know what the members think, and that's what Matrix is all about. So I don't suppose John and Eve will object if they get floods of letters on the subject; I'm sure I certainly won't, so please feel free to comment.

The Payoff

Before I leave the keys of my typer, which insists on spelling words wrongly even when I tap the right keys (mind you, I don't always necessarily tap them in the right order), I'd just like to extend my thanks again on behalf of the new Council and the members for the work and effort put in by your outgoing VC, Tom Jones. Of course, you'll now be able to see him tearing us apart, but it should be quite fun. Thanks Tom.

Alan Dorey

BSFA SERVICES

Index to BSFA Trade Material

BSFA trades with most of the major fanzines throughout the world. I'm the lucky one who receives them, which, you may be justified in thinking, is hardly the toughest job in the world. Therefore, to justify my upkeep, I suggested to Tom Jones a good while ago that, where possible and appropriate, I start an index of the material we receive in trade that would be of interest to faneds in the UK. Tom in turn suggested that anyone wanting copies of specific articles would write to me. I would then approach the appropriate journal and ask for permission to reprint, using suitable acknowledgments. The applicant need then only pay a slight fee to cover costs etc, to receive a photostat of the article. All monies to go to the BSFA of course.

Having got the philosophy of the whole thing out of the way, let me mention the practicalities. I cannot index every article from every zine we receive in trade; the index would end up being 50 or more pages long. Further, since some of the material we receive is wholly of a review or critical nature (eg Delap's F & SF Review) this would make indexing tedious to say the least. What I have done is select by a rough rule of thumb, the articles and items most likely to be of interest to us in the UK and grouped them under headings.

One final word... this index is hardly likely to be more than annual. Even some of the well-established American zines are late now and then, produce irregularly, or just don't even arrive. Here, then, is the index.

Autobiographical Articles & Transcribed Speeches...

CHANDLER, A Bertram - "Around the World in 23,741 Days" - Algol, Spr 78
KNIGHT, Damon - "Beyond Genocide" - Science Fiction Review (SFR) Nov/Dec 78
WILLIAMSON, Jack - "SF and I" - Starship/Algol, Spring 1979

Criticisms...

"Asimov's Mystery Story Structure" - by Wilson, R J - Extrapolation, May 78
"John Campbell's Vision" - by Panshin, A & C - Starship/Algol Spring 1979
"Water into Wine: The novels of C J Cherryh" - by Maguire, P - Starship/Algol Spring 1979
"Cordwainer Smith" - by Zelazny, R - Riverside Quarterly Vol3 No3 Aug 1968
"Delany's BABEL 17: The Power of Language" - by Weedman, J - Extrapl May 78
"Some religious aspects of LoTR" - by Miesel, S - Rversd Qtly Vol3 No 3 Aug 68
Charles L Harness: The Flowering of Melodrama" - by Hills N L - Extrpln May 78

"Science Fiction and the Future" - by Gunn, J - Algol/Starship Wntr 78/79
"Women & Science Fiction" - by Wood, S - Algol/Starship Wntr 78/79
"The time-worn Path: Building SF" - By Benford, G - Algol Summer/fall 1978

Ellison, Harlan...

SFWA Resignation Speech - Algol - Spring 1978
Harlan's World (Ellison and ERA) - by Frederic Pohl - Algol Summer/Fall 78

Films...

CE3K

"Thanks... I Needed That" - by Ray Bradbury - Delap's F&SF Review - Mar/Ap 78
"The extraterrestrials - interviews with the creators" - by Don Shay -
Cinefantastique Vol 7 Nos 3&4

Interviews...

Piers Anthony - by Cliff Biggers - SFR 23
Ben Bova - by Elton T Elliot - SFR 27
Ray Bradbury - by Jeffrey Elliot - SFR 23
Suzy McKee Charnas - by Neal Wilgus - Algol Winter 1978-1979
C J Cherryh - by Gale Burnick - SFR 28
Gordon Dickson - Cliff McMurray - SFR 26
Stephen Fabian - by Richard E Geis - SFR 27
Stephen King - by Peter Perakos - Cinefantastique Vol 8 No 1
Larry Niven - by Jeffrey Elliot - SFR 26
Fritz Leiber - by Jim Purviance - Algol Summer/Fall 1978
John Schoenherr - by Vincent DiFate - Algol Summer/Fall 1978
Steven Spielberg - by Don Shay - Cinefantastique Vol 7 Nos 3 & 4
Doug Trumbull - " " " "
Poul Anderson - by Elton T Elliot - SFR 25
Gordon Dickson - by Sandra Miesel - Algol Spring 1978
Ursula Le Guin - by Mark Haselkorn - SFR 25
Vonda N McIntyre - by Paul Novitski - Starship/Algol Spring 1979
George Scithers - by Darrell Schweitzer - SFR 25
Jack Vance - by Peter Close - SFR 23
A E van Vogt - by Jeffrey Elliot - SFR 23

Bill Little

Fantasy Trader

Included in this mailing should be one, or passibly two issues of Fantasy Trader. The first issue should have been with the last mailing but our wonderful postal system put paid to that, and the second will be included unless the same happens again. This magazine is being distributed free to all members in every mailing from now on. It is a monthly zine, so you will be getting alternate issues; if you would like the other issues, the subscription rates are inside. BSFA members are entitled to a 5% discount on advertising, quoting your membership number will be helpful.

Seacon '79

TIRED OF YOUR HUMDRUM ORDINARY JOB? WHY NOT MAKE A CAREER IN SELLING?
AN OUTDOOR LIFE, MEETING PEOPLE, WHERE YOUR SALARY IS ONLY LIMITED BY YOUR
DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED! TRY IT FOR A WHILE AT THE BSFA DESK AT SEACON.
We need volunteers to man the Desk to sell memberships and take renewals.
Don't worry, you won't be left there for the duration of the Con. Eve is
organising a roster of duty, an hour at a time per person, at the most
suitable times.
Meet fans; enthuse about the benefits of membership; step back in amazement
when you find what the BSFA Committee really look like. Write today to Eve,
stating what days you will be available for desk duty.

SNIPPETS

Did you know, not only can you patent toe-shields for sunbathers, but also man-made life forms. The Supreme Court in America agreed that the General Electric Company could take out a patent on micro-organisms. OK, they were only for cleaning up oil spills, but because decisions in one case bind subsequent similar cases, where does that leave us for the future?

Turn out your loft, search through the garage, spring clean the basement, you might be sitting on a goldmine! Well, not really, but if granny was fond of keeping unusual stones, you might have something more valuable than just any lump of rock. The Field Museum, Chicago, will pay a minimum of \$100 if these stones turn out to be meteorites. Unfortunately, it is estimated that of the 70m that fall into the earth's atmosphere each day, only 500 a year make it to the surface and 2/3 of those fall into the water, so the odds seem pretty slim.

What will those BEM's think of us? First we send them pornographic pictures, now we've sent them phonograph records - and gold ones at that. Or at least we sent one, aboard the Voyager spacecraft in 1977. But who says they'll have stereo compatible record players out there? Mind you, I doubt if that would matter since, in the truly American style of 'see 66 cities in 4 days', they've condensed the history of music down to 27 minutes, so it's unlikely to make much sense.

What will they think of next? The Tenovus Research Institute in Cardiff have developed an electronic bra that lights up to tell the wearer the safest time to avoid pregnancy. It works by sensing changes in body temperature through heat sensors which is passed on to a mini-computer and this flashes on the appropriate stop or go lights. We don't have to tell you the colours it flashes!

Alternative energy programmes are getting a real boost during our present fuel crisis and some interesting inventions have been developed. Californian, Jeff Dunan, has invented a solar-powered motorcycle. He says the cycle will be capable of travelling on any road at up to 55 mph and, if the sun goes in or you're travelling at night, the batteries store enough energy to ensure a range of up to 60 miles. Sounds like a good idea with the present petrol shortages and the fuel increases following the budget. Trouble is, can we rely on Britain's weather - looking out of the window today, at the pouring rain, I don't think so.

At last we can all sleep at night, no more burning the midnight oil trying to find the answer; at last 'The Thinker' can relax his pose and go get dressed. The scientists have found the answer! Yes, they've solved the mystery of the firefly's delightful light! Actually, stupid as this research may seem at first, it has had some useful spin-offs. The light must obviously be a "cold light" or the firefly would burn to death, and the research into the chemicals that cause this has led to the Cyalume light stick or "cold flare", which produces a heatless, instant light. It's used by fishermen and lifeboatmen etc. But this is not the only useful by-product, because these chemicals are sensitive to certain substances, the Environmental Protection Agency in the States is using them to measure air pollutants; in industry they're being used in processes that measure impurities in gasoline, oil, plastic film and vaccines; in hospitals they're used to do bacterial counts; and since January 1977, again in the States, auto manufacturers have used them to measure pollutants in tail pipe emission. Gosh - and all that from the 'umble little firefly. I'll definitely think twice before I condemn a seemingly useless piece of research.

AWARDS

Nebula - these are the annual peer awards, presented by the SFWA.

Novel: Dreamsnake (Vonda McIntyre)

Novella: The Persistence of Vision (John Varley)

Novelette: A Glow of Candles, A Unicorn's Eye (Charles Grant)

Short Story: "Stone" (Ed Bryant)

Special Award: Joe Siegel and Joe Shuster (creators of Superman)

Taff was won by a large margin by Terry Hughes, and we look forward to welcoming him to Seacon.

Nominations

HUGO - Seacon members should have already received their ballot forms for the Hugo, if not, get in touch with Pat Charnock, 4 Fletcher Road, Chiswick, London as soon as possible.

Novel: Blind Voices (Tom Reamy); Dreamsnake (Vonda McIntyre); The Faded Sun: Kesrith (C J Cherryh); Up The Walls Of The World (James Tiptree Jnr); The White Dragon (Anne McCaffrey)

Novella: Enemies of the System (Brian Aldiss); Fireship (Joan Vinge); The Persistence of Vision (John Varley); Seven American Nights (Gene Wolfe); The Watched (Chris Priest)

Novelette: The Barbie Murders (John Varley); The Devil you Don't Know (Dean Ing); Hunter's Moon (Poul Anderson); The Man Who Had No Idea (Tom Disch); Mikal's Songbird (Orson Card)

Short Story: "Cassandra" (C J Cherryh)

"Count the Clock that Tells the Time" (Harlan Ellison)

"Stone" (Edward Bryant)

"The Very Slow Time Machine" (Ian Watson)

"View from a Height" (Joan Vinge)

Dramatic Presentation: Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Invasion of the Body Snatchers; Lord of the Rings; Superman; Watership Down

Professional Artist: Vincent Di Fate; Stephen Fabian; David Hardy; Boris Vallejo; Michael Whelan

Professional Editor: Barnes Baen; Ben Bova; Terry Carr; Edward Ferman; George Scithers

Fanzine: Janus (Jan Bogstad & Jeanne Gomoll); Maya (Rob Jackson); Mota (Terry Hughes); SF Review (Dick Geis) Twll-Ddu (Dave Langford)

Fan Writer: Richard Geis; Leroy Kettle, Dave Langford; Bob Shaw; Don West

Fan Artist: Jim Barker; Harry Bell; Alexis Gilliland; Bill Rotsler; Stu Shiffman

FAAN Award Nominations Deadline for voting is July 13th to Ian Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey on official ballot forms.

Faneditor: Don D'Amassa; Mike Glycer; Terry Hughes; Rob Jackson; Victoria Vayne

Fan Writer: Arthur Hlavaty; Terry Hughes; Dave Langford; Tom Perry; Peter Roberts; Bob Shaw

Humorous Artist: Jim Barker; Harry Bell, Derek Carter; Alexis Gilliland; Stu Shiffman; Dan Steffan

Serious Artist: Jeanne Gomoll; Joan Hanke-Woods; Jim McLeod; James Odbert; Taral

Single Issue: Janus 12/13; Janus 14; Khatru 7; Maya 15; Mythologies 14; Scientifiction 10; Simulacrum 8

LoC writer: Avedon Carol; Adrienne Fein; Arthur Hlavaty; Jessica Salmonson; Harry Warner Jnr

BOOKS

The Road to Corlay by Richard Cowper, was released in paperback by Pan in May.

Gregory Benford has just sold a large new novel, Timescape, to Pocket Books (US) and Gollancz (UK). It has been written with the assistance of his sister-in-law (!), Hilary Benford.

Terry Carr's 1979 Best SF of the Year will be published in two volumes, one for short stories and one for novelettes and novellas. Gollancz have contracted to publish only the first of these volumes in Britain.

D G Compton has sold a new SF novel - title as yet unknown - to Gollancz. Philip K Dick's new novel Valis will be published as a paperback original by Bantam Books. His collection of short stories, The Golden Man, will appear from Berkley/Putnam in 1980 (it contains no previously-collected items).

Harlan Ellison's long-awaited anthology The Final Dangerous Visions has now been resold to Berkley Books, who hope to publish it in three volumes in the spring of 1980. It contains 700,000 words of fiction by 102 different authors!

Philip Jose Farmer's fourth Riverworld novel, The Magic Labyrinth, is now definitely scheduled for October publication in the US. His older novel, The Gate of Time has just been reissued by Ace Books in an unabridged edition entitled The Hawks from Earth.

Robert A Heinlein has just completed a new novel, his first in seven years, title as yet unannounced. It is 175,000 words long, but he hopes to cut it to 150,000 words before publication. The novel is to be auctioned to the highest bidder, and will no doubt go for the largest sum ever netted on an SF book.

Frank Herbert and Bill Ransom's The Jesus Incident has just come out from Berkley/Putnam in the US. Gollancz will publish it in the UK this autumn. Ursula Le Guin's new novel about the imaginary country Orsinia, Malafrena, has been accepted for US publication by Berkley/Putnam, although it is still uncertain who will publish it in the UK.

Larry Niven has completed The Ringworld Engineers, his sequel to guess which Hugo- and Nebula-winning novel of 1970?

Frederik Pohl has just completed his sequel to Gateway, and it will be published in the UK by Gollancz (probably not before 1980).

Bob Shaw's new SF thriller Dagger of the Mind is due from Gollancz in July or August of this year.

Robert Silverberg has completed Lord Valentine's Castle, his first new novel in five years.

Clifford Simak has sold a new novel, The Visitors, to Del Rey Books. It will be serialized in Analog before book publication.

Norman Spinrad's big new novel A World Between, which was to have been published in April, has now been resold to Pocket Books in the US and is expected to be out in October.

Theodore Sturgeon's 1978 Dell Books collection, Visions and Venturers, will be published in the UK by Gollancz shortly. Dell Books are to release another collection of previously-uncollected stories, The Stars Are The Styx, this October.

Jack Vance's novel The Face, the fourth in his "Demon Prince" series, is to be published by DAW Books.

Ian Watson's major new novel, God's World, is definitely scheduled for publication in October by Gollancz.

MAGAZINES

A new monthly SF review journal is now being published regularly in the US by Borgo Press, PO Box 2845, San Bernardino, CA 92406. It is called Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review and is edited by Neil Barron. It

costs \$1.25 or 80p a copy, and the British agent is R L Fanthorpe, 48 Fairways, Hellesdon, Norwich, NR6 5PN. Perhaps this publication, which has produced at least three issues now, will replace Delap's F&SF Review which folded in 1978.

Foundation 17, which will be published in August by The Science Fiction Foundation, NE London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, RM8 2AS, is to be a special Season '79 all-star issue. It will contain a major autobiographical article by Philip K Dick, as well as important contributions by Aldiss, Fritz Leiber, D G Compton, Charles Platt, B J Bayley and others. Subscriptions are still only £3 for three issues, to the Editor at the above address.

EVENTS

Northern Tun - Leeds group have established a North Country equivalent of the London One Tun meetings. The pub is the West Riding in Wellington St (just off City Square, by the railway station), Leeds and is held on the last Friday of every month. Anyone welcome who wants an informal chat. For BSFA members there's an added incentive - the advertising card for their pub grub states, "And if you want to behave like Tom Jones, that's all right with us." What more do you want?

Faircon 79 - July 20-22nd. GOH Bob Shaw. Venue Ingram Hotel, Glasgow. This is the second Scottish convention. Chairman Rob Shaw (confusing eh?). Membership: Attending £4.50, supporting £1-50 to Gerry Gillin, 9 Dunnottar Street, Ruchazie, Glasgow.

Season '79 - 23-27 August. GOH Brian Aldiss & Fritz Leiber. Venue the Hotel Metropole, Glasgow. Not long now - I can tell, Eve's already started her nervous breakdown over the fanroom. Do come and see us if you're at the convention. Details from Pat Charnock, 4 Fletcher Rd, Chiswick, London.

Novacon 9 - 2-4 November. GOH Chris Priest. Venue Royal Angus, Birmingham. Membership details from Stan Eling, 124 Galton Rd, Smethwick, Warley, B67 8QL

Albacon 80 - Easter 1980. GOH Colin Kapp, FanGOH Jim Barker. Venue Albany Hotel, Glasgow. Membership: attending £5, supporting £2 from Helen Brown, 28 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Glasgow G72 9NA

Our thanks go to: Mary Long, Peter Roberts, Tom Jones and Dave Pringle for the above news items - if anything's wrong, it's their fault not ours!

BOOKSHOP DIRECTORY

In M23 we started a brief, and incomplete, listing of bookshops where you will find a good selection of new sf or the odd secondhand gem. Here are some more:

FOREVER PEOPLE - 59 Park Street, Bristol 1 - Tel 0272 25454 - Books & comics
FORBIDDEN PLANET - 23 Denmark Street, London WC2 - Tel 01-836 4179 - Books and comics

RAINBOW'S END - Cowley Road, Oxford - Some second-hand and a good selection of new British SF, together with some American and several comics.

SIMONE WALSH - 7A Lawrence Road, Ealing, London W5 - we mentioned this second-hand, mail-order business last issue but forgot to say that all requests for catalogues should be accompanied by s.a.e. please.

Thanks to John Steward & P Stephenson-Payne for the info. If you know of any entries we've missed, please let us know.

FAN WORLD

* The fanzine review column in Matrix has created a certain amount of contro-
* versy in past issues with hard-hitting reviews of various zines. This issue *
* we've handed it over to Paul Kincaid (Tripe Pickers Journal), who has taken *
* a slightly different approach.

GETTING IT RIGHT

As Kevin Smith pointed out, in the last issue of Matrix, many of you reading this are probably unfamiliar with the majority of fanzines, and so you're wondering what all the fuss is about. I don't suppose I'm going to be able to clarify the wherefore and the why of fanzine publishing - an impossible task anyway, there are at least as many reasons as there are fanzines - but I'll have a stab at saying what makes a good fanzine, or at least point you in the right direction. Then maybe, you'll be able to work it out for yourself. Let's begin with a seemingly simple question. . .

What is the point of a fanzine review column?

To anyone unfamiliar with the world of fanzine fandom they must seem needlessly vicious things, an exercise in vindictiveness. Well, the best of them do tend to be sharp, cutting, with no time for fools and little more than grudging admiration even for the best. But this is not cruelty for the sake of it. The fanzine review column is the heart of fanzine fandom, the goad to encourage our best efforts, and the knife to hack away at the dead wood. Oh there are other purposes, a review column must inform and entertain, but the biting comments should never be there to show how clever the reviewer is or to win a cheap laugh. The column is always directed towards fanzine editors who might learn by the example. Sometimes an editor does learn. Many never do, which is why review columns can so often end up sounding like cracked records, an unending, unchanging chorus of vituperation. When things reach that stage, though, when the crud is unending and unchanging, then that is precisely the treatment we need and deserve.

The fanzine review column that stands as an archetype for the breed is the huge 25 page article by D West that appeared in Wrinkled Shrew 7. That was two years ago, when the fanzine world seemed in rude good health. But the bright lights were going out. Wrinkled Shrew was going out in a blaze of glory, but it was going out. The other high points of the fanzine world, Stop Breaking Down and True Rat, persevered into 1978, then fell silent in their turn. Fanzine publishing entered a depression from which new fanzines had to emerge simply because there was nothing else.

Emerge they did, most notably Seamonsters which came from the same stable as SBD, looked like its predecessor, and was expected to carry on as the new SBD. Hopes die hard, but some of the praise that Seamonsters continues to receive has the flavour of a reflex action, disappointment is due to set in. Of course Seamonsters is not SBD Mark 2, and anyone who was looking for no more than that was in for an inevitable disappointment. Simone Walsh's approach to her fanzine is far less acerbic than Greg Pickersgill's approach to his, and naturally the editor's personality informs the whole fanzine; not just in the editor's own contributions, but in the choice of people approached for articles, the selection of articles that are published, the editing of the letter column, and so on. In this case the result is a very fine fanzine, with many of the essential ingredients for a first rate zine. The articles are very well written, interesting and entertaining.

These features, of course, are vital; like any publication, a fanzine ultimately fails or succeeds on the strength of its contents. Not that this strength should come as any surprise, after all, fandom does include a hell of a lot of writers, would-be writers and failed writers; the wonder is that there are so many fanzines about that don't even try to make any use of the talent available. There is, however, one thing missing from Seamonsters, and that is what prevents a good fanzine from becoming an excellent fanzine, the key-note fanzine that everybody was looking for: provocation, or stimulation.

Despite appearances, a fanzine differs from its professional counterparts in that it is not designed simply for the amusement and edification of its readers. In essence, a fanzine is an extended letter, a means of keeping in touch with friends and acquaintances, and of keeping them informed of what has been happening and what concerns have arisen. As such it is half of a two-way process, the other half being the Letters of Comment that the fanzine receives. That is why the letter column is about the most important feature of a fanzine, and why it can be so mystifying to the newcomer who hasn't had time yet to sort out who and what are being referred to. It is part of the job of the fanzine, therefore, to stimulate the readership, to provoke the response that completes the process. Somehow Seamonsters just fails to do this; perhaps because the standard of the contribution is too high, they leave no room for any response other than a simple admiration of their quality.

Of course Seamonsters 3 was reviewed in Matrix 23, but I have devoted so much space to it precisely because this allows me to make some general points about fanzines as a whole. Coming back to specific fanzines, perhaps the hopes that Seamonsters dashed for a return to those 'golden days' of a couple of years back may be revived by the reappearance of Wrinkled Shrew. I don't much want to hang on to past glories, I prefer to build up new ones. Still, a good fanzine is a good fanzine. Not surprisingly, Wrinkled Shrew 8 is not so good as the monumental WS 7; it is headed 'Special Yorcon Bridging Issue', and it does have that air of having been pushed out to remind fandom that Yorcon's Fan GoH's are still active.

Having said that, WS 8 shares many of the virtues, and the vices, of Seamonsters. It is generally well written, though Terry Hughes' piece on his appearance in an amateur film is somewhat lacklustre. Two years, though, is too big a break to maintain any real correspondence, which is demonstrated by the abbreviated letter column. To that extent, WS 8 is closer to being a first issue and we'll have to wait until the next issue to see how successful it has been at re-establishing itself. It doesn't strike me as being particularly stimulating, however, despite the quality of its contents. There is, for instance, an excellent and very funny article on the trials and tribulations of becoming a bookshop manager by Graham Charnock. The best piece, though, is Rob Holdstock making excuses for what went wrong with the Octopus Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. Both articles are well written and very entertaining, but again they are closed, they stimulate no response beyond admiration.

Rob Holdstock is both more amusing and more stimulating in his article in Wallbanger. This was originally intended for Matrix, but was kept out for Wallbanger because it was considered too fannish, so perhaps it might provide some clues as to what 'fannish' means. Either way, it is a stream of straight-faced gobbledegook that contains more than enough indirect comments on fandom to provoke a considerable response, or so I would assume. This is the sort of contribution that all fanzine editors are after since it managed to be interesting and amusing, while at the same time raising

questions (in this case about fandom, though that is not a vital part of the scenario) that should give rise to thought, fresh ideas, and continued communication. As such it is far and away the best item in Wallbanger 2, despite another article that false modesty prevents me mentioning.

Indeed, this article by Rob Holdstock seems just a little out of place in Wallbanger, it is more the sort of thing one would expect to find in a fanzine that is supposed to be a leader, like Wrinkled Shrew for instance, or Seamonsters. Wallbanger, like its predecessor Ghas, is an altogether quieter sort of publication, readable and entertaining of course, but in a low-key, undemonstrative sort of way. Again it's probably a case of the personalities of the editors informing their fanzine, but Wallbanger is not the sort of fanzine to approach with any expectations that the world, or fandom, will be set on its ear.

Pretty much the same could be said of Nabu. The editor, Ian Maule, seems to take delight in the epithet 'wishy-washy', and this quality pervades his fanzine which one would say was guaranteed not to set the world afire. Or is this really a fair assessment? No, Nabu is deceptive; although Ian Maule himself strikes no sparks, he has somehow managed to attract some excellent articles in the last few issues. Moreover, a regular feature of Nabu is 'K for Knife' by Joseph Nicholas, the best of the current crop of fanzine review columns.

Joe prides himself on belonging to the 'Greg Pickersgill Kill-the-Fuckers School of Fanzine Reviewing', but it seems to me that the occasional cries of 'cretin' or worse are thrown in more for appearances than as a reflection of genuine passion. Which is not to say that Joe does not care very strongly about the fanzines he reviews, but that he has an altogether cooler eye, though every bit as perceptive as our more impassioned reviewers, and a fine talent for cutting straight through to the defects in any fanzine and isolating them in an uncompromising spotlight. Though he is equally willing to hand out praise where it is due, so that any faned savaged in the column should be able to learn enough to do better next time.

Unfortunately Ian Maule hasn't been able to get his article-getting act together this time, because all he has to offer is a confused and confusing article by Taral Wayne MacDonald on that perennial favourite, the difference between British and American fanzines. There is a difference, but this article does nothing to explain it, or even say just where it lies. Far better, then, just to get hold of a few American fanzines and discover the difference for oneself. Unfortunately I've only received two American fanzines that I haven't reviewed elsewhere, and they are atypical. Mota is excellent, but in contents and appearance it is very like a British fanzine. The Alpha Centura Communicator is terrible, a clubzine that just looks as if R I Barycz (of YCZ) had added cartoonist to his considerable lack of talents.

So far I've only dealt with genzines. On the whole a good contribution can rescue an otherwise poor genzine, so it is a less risky operation than producing a personalzine which is written entirely by the editor. Nevertheless, an awful lot of people succumb to the temptation to produce a personalzine, and an awful lot of them fail dismally, usually because they have nothing to say. There are exceptions, though, and a good personalzine can be a joy; indeed, there are occasions when one gets the impression that Dave Langford and Kevin Smith, who produce the best of the crop, could say nothing entertainingly.

There is little to choose between Dave Langford's Twll Ddu and Kevin Smith's

Dot, both are frequent, slight and funny. Kevin's talents lie more in the realm of pastiche and parody; after considering fandom as if he were reporting on exhibits at the Motor Show in Dot 5, Dot 6 takes off with a review of Rob and Coral Jackson's wedding as if it were a hack novel. Dave Langford, on the other hand, simply tells a funny story; or rather a straight forward story from a viewpoint that makes it funny. In TD15 these talents shine in a delightfully comic piece on his attempts to repair the Langford automobile with some vile substance dreamed up by his local garage; reality is exaggerated until, almost without the transition being noticed, it becomes farce. This is Dave at his most typical. Another even funnier piece - a splendidly illogical detective story - highlights the fact that much of the humour of both Dave Langford and Kevin Smith depends for its impact upon a knowledge of fannish personalities, who are guyed mercilessly. Because of this, the comedy may escape a new reader, but it is well worth persevering, because Twll Ddu and Dot both meet all the requirements for a top class fanzine; they are exceptionally well written, very entertaining, and very stimulating, as can be seen from the size of their respective letter columns.

Fanzines reviewed

SEAMONSTERS - Simone Walsh, 7A Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London W5
 WRINKLED SHREW 8 - Pat & Graham Charnock, 4 Fletcher Rd, London W4 5AY
 WALLBANGER 2 - Eve Harvey, 55 Blanchland Rd, Morden, Surrey SM4 5NE
 NABU 7 - Ian Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY
 MOTA 27 - Terry Hughes, 4739 Washington Blvd, Arlington, Virginia 22205, USA
 THE ALPHA CENTURA COMMUNICATOR - Alpha Centura Inc, PO Box 648, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103, USA
 TWLL DDU 15 - Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks RG2 7PW
 DOT 6 - Kevin Smith, 7 Fassett Rd, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 2TD

Paul Kincaid

FANZINES RECEIVED

QUIBBLE 3 - Jean & David Kirkbride, 42 Green Lane, Belle Vue, Carlisle Fiction, fanzine reviews, article on horror films, review of Inferno. Free, but contributions or trade gratefully accepted.

FOKT 4 - Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre. 30p or letter, trade etc. Article on crime & sf, interview with Ian Robertson, letters, fanzine reviews.

LA CLEF BAROQUE - 9 Rue Raymond Ducourneau, 33110 Le Bouscat, France. Haven't got around to translating this yet, but the pictures sure don't leave anything to the imagination!

CHEEP 2 - Judy Mortimore, "The Depths", 1 Oxford Road, Harrow. Genzine containing Faancon 4 report, March One Tun rep and an exposee of the Yorcon committee's visit to a Trekcon.

FUTURE STUDIES CENTRE NEWSLETTER 23 - 15 Kelso Road, Leeds LS6 9PR. £3.00 pa. Bimonthly - news and comprehensive listing of events of interest.

CHECKPOINT 95 & 96 - Peter Roberts, c/o 38 Oakland Dr, Dawlish. 50p for 5 issues. Fannish newszine.

 * Round the Clubs, this issue, features both the retiring Club Liaison Offi- *
 * cer and the incoming one. We'd like tottake this opportunity of thanking *
 * Bill for all his hard work. I'm sure those of you who are running clubs *
 * have found him an invaluable help. So it's goodbye and thanks for all *
 * your hard work Bill, and welcome Simon. *

ROUND THE CLUBS

A brief column this time around, as I fade out and the new clubs-man, Simon Ounsley, who lives at 13a Cardigan Road, Leeds 6, settles in. Will all those people involved in local groups please now write to that address. I'm sure Simon will want to hear from you and keep the ball rolling.

One main news item that Stock-on-Trent SF Society have asked me to announce: their guest-author on August 7th is Colin Kapp. Any BSFA members in the Stcke -on-Trent area and any other groups like Stafford and Keele are welcome to attend.

The featured group this time out is the UMIST SF Society, and my thanks are due to Ian McKeer for the information he has provided me. The society caters for all tastes, fantasy as well and has accumulated a massive 1,000 book library which is the biggest I've ever heard of for a sf group (unless, of course, you know etc etc). The library opens twice weekly for borrowing by the equally staggering membership total of 83 members. Maybe an atmosphere of science and technology breeds an interest in science fiction? Or, to be profound, maybe science fiction breeds an interest in science and technology? There must be an interesting thesis there for someone.

UMIST is now a healthy body and about £100 of the SU grant went on books to update the library. That's more than some clubs raise in two years! The group produce a zine called GROK (obviously originated by a RAH fan, I think) which concentrates a lot on fiction, much to the satisfaction of the members.

Regarding the type of people Ian gets to the society, he cites a lot of similarity to the experiences related by the Keele group: attendees are those with a general, not all-consuming interest in science fiction. Ian tells me his aims are to expand the services to the members and try and build up contacts in the fan and fanzine world. He would very much like other groups to get in touch with him - and while I'm at it, I'm sure Stoke on Trent wouldn't mind me extending an invitation to them to visit us while Colin Kapp is with us. One other thing that Ian wants to do is to get some of his people to cons. You may even have met one or two of them at the last Eastercon or Novacon.

Once again, my thanks to Ian, and let me close by saying that GROK is available for trade or Loc from UMIST SF Society, Students Union, UMIST, PO Box 88, Sackville Street, Manchester M60 1QD.

Just as a postscript... my thanks are due to Tom Jones, who let me be the CLO in the first place, and those unsung, patient people who've edited Matrix in the past all the while wondering whether that sodding bloke from Stoke was going to meet the deadline with the clubs column... and of course, all those nice folk who've written to me about their clubs in the past and then gone on to write on a regular, personal basis. Ain't sf a nice way to make friends? Adios.

Bill Little

LIFE ON MARS

Having completely exhausted the meagre resources of both my brain and my record collection while searching for the new title you see displayed in bright lights above, I'm going to sink into predictability for the actual contents of my first Round the Clubs (in disguise) article. To be more specific, I'm going to write about the two clubs in my home base of Leeds.

(1) The Leeds University Union Science Fiction Society

This bunch meets every Wednesday, during term-time, in a pub opposite the university: the Pack Horse Inn on Woodhouse Lane. Meetings usually consist of an informal discussion over pints of Tetleys ale. They start at 8 pm and drone on until after closing-time, at which point the members retire for supper to the nearby chippie: the hallowed and infamous SWEATS.

This being a respectable university society (whose founder members include John and Eve Harvey!!), it is blessed with a union grant, which enables the arrangement of an annual weekend film festival plus occasional talks by celebrities so diverse as Brian Stableford, D West and Philip Jenkinson.

The Society publishes two fanzines: a news sheet called White Noise and a litho-printed genzine, Black Hole, which includes articles on sf and fandom plus fiction and reviews. Under its present editors, Tony Berry and John Nixon, Black Hole is undergoing something of a renaissance but contributors are still needed, so here's your chance to get into print!

Membership of the society is open to students and non-students alike. The subscription of 50p per annum includes the use of a lending library containing about 800 books and magazines.

When you go along, I suggest the following strategy: go in the front door of the Pack Horse, pick your way past the hordes of drunken undergraduates who will be propped against the bar and enter the first room on the right. Here you will find the meeting. Don't be put off by the blank expressions on the faces of most of the members: just shout out for Tony Berry, Kevin Pender or Sue Greenwood. If you offer to buy them drinks or wave aloft a legible contribution for Black Hole, they will soon emerge out of the masses with welcoming arms.

(2) The Leeds SF Group

Not so much a science fiction group, as a campaign for world domination, this group meets every Friday night (about 8 pm) at the West Riding pub on Wellington Street, near Leeds City station. There is no subscription charge, no formal membership and no programme of events. Basically, we just get together for a drink (draught Tetleys) and a chat about whatever we feel like. The conversation runs often to football, beer and philosophy and even occasionally, helped by the regular attendance of such knowledgeable people such as Dave Pringle, Mike Dickinson and D West, it touches on science fiction. The predominant topics, however, are probably fandom and fanzines. We're undoubtedly a very fannish group; that is, most of us produce fanzines and attend conventions with fanatical enthusiasm. If you aren't familiar with fandom, don't be put off by such activities; gee whiz, they seemed just as strange to me twelve months ago, boss!!!

When you come along, you'll find us clustered in a room at the back of the pub. The first voice you hear will probably be that of Alan Dorey, the famous BSFA Chairman. With all his gangling limbs a-quiver and enthusiasm cozing out of every crifice, he will be expounding on his latest ploy for galactic conquest. Do not be alarmed. Instant acceptance and friendship can be yours. Just follow your choice of stratagems one to three:

- (1) Ask for Dave Pringle and claim to be a J G Ballard fan.
- (2) Ask for John Collick and enquire about his latest idea for a novel/trilogy/

open-ended series.

(3) Ask for me and say you enjoyed this article.

Simple, isn't it?

That would be all about the Leeds group, were it not for the complicated bit. This was mentioned in Matrix 23 but an extra plug here won't go amiss. On the last Friday of every month, we have an extra-special meeting in Leeds called, theoretically, THE WEST RIDING, but in practice, THE NORTHERN TUN. This is the same as the usual Leeds Group meeting but with more people; sf groups and enthusiasts from all over the cosmos are cordially invited. It's held from 7 - 10.30 pm in the room at the back of the West Riding.

Other Business

That's it for the Leeds scene but before I go, I'd like to pick up on something which Bill Little raised in Matrix 23.

Bill provided some useful advice on starting an sf group: matters such as financing the thing and planning a programme of events etc. This is fine but I'd like to stress that clubs like the Leeds group also exist and manage to be active and successful without subscriptions, formal membership or any organisation whatever! Members of the Leeds group have just organised the Easter convention, produce half a dozen fanzines on a fairly regular basis and recently masterminded the take-over of a well-known national organisation. You don't need to be formally organised to be active.

If anyone is starting or thinking of starting a club along the lines which Bill suggested, I don't want to put you off the idea. Obviously, that kind of club can be very successful and there's something in the point that people who have paid a subscription are more likely to come along to the meetings. However, if anyone wants to organise a local club but is discouraged by talk of subscriptions, planning a programme etc, then why not just concentrate on getting a group of people together first and then see what happens? If it turns out that everyone wants to introduce formal membership and subscriptions, you then have firm justification for proceeding on that basis. Alternatively, you may decide to adopt a more flexible approach like the Leeds group.

One of the basic principles of fandom seems to be that people who are interested in sf tend to have some general interests in common as well. Communication at a meeting should therefore be possible without a prescribed subject of the day. Or do you all disagree?

I rather suspect (and certainly hope) that my above remarks will draw some response. If you've got your own ideas or experience in starting a club, then please let me know. Speaking of response, this is obviously a necessity for the survival of this column. If you're running a club, starting one, wish to start one or just want to know if there's one in your area, then please write and tell me. Just the time and place of the meetings would be useful, though even more information would be even better.

My address is 13a Cardigan Road, Leeds 6.

I hope to hear from you.

Simon Ounsley

RETURN TO LEEDS

Everybody can agree with a few things about a convention. Firstly, this was the annual Easter convention, held at the Dragonara Hotel, Leeds; it was the first time since the very first ever Eastercon, that had been in Leeds. Guest of Honour was author Richard Cowper and fan guests of honour Pat & Graham Charnock. That much is indisputable, the rest is open to debate.

Looking back on any convention, the whole weekend appears as a series of snapshots; time becomes non-sequential and the pictures are blurred by smoke, alcohol and overtired fans still enjoying themselves at 6 am.

We arrived on Thursday afternoon to a cheering sight - there were most of the committee frantically putting together registration envelopes. "The programme book was late from the printers", screamed a paranoid and shorn Alan Dorey. Good to see that some things never change. The remainder of the committee seemed equally preoccupied. Mike Dickinson looked amazingly fit after his hospital trauma; Carol Gregory spent the weekend looking for lost films and chewing gum to help patch bent projectors; Dave Pringle was simply high on adrenalin.

Richard Cowper made a name for himself as the friendliest and most sociable guest of honour for years. Amazing, since it was the first convention he'd ever been to. Pat and Graham Charnock fulfilled their fan guest of honour duties by providing an "extravaganza" in the fanroom, culminating in songs from the 'Astral Deauge's Greatest Hits', complete with community singing.

All conventions have their serious side and Yorcon was no exception. This took the form of David Langford's talk, 'Genocide for Fun & Profit'. Those who were quick could write down whole chapters from Dave's new book, War in 2080; thus saving vast sums of money by not buying a copy from Hazel Langford in the book room. A rare treat, Dave's talk, and he looked very much to be rivalling Bob Shaw's serious and scientific talk; a feature of recent Eastercons. Bob was given a respite this year, but fear not, he will be back at Seacon - after all, it takes years of research to gather all the basic data for this type of dissertation.

Room parties - always plenty of room parties. Spilling beer, food and bodies out of rooms into corridors, down stairwells and up and down lifts. Sunday night was the ultimate; every available space was filled with groups of fans drinking and talking. I left Eve in the tender hands of two young fans, Alan Morris and Andy Hobbs, who were querying something about Seacon and hardly saw her again! That was the good thing about this convention, you had the chance to meet and talk to new people. OK, some of them might be cretins, but you're bound to get that by the law of averages. The parties continued until the small hours of the morning. Eve & I staggered to bed at about 6.30 a.m., quite early compared to some people. One stalwart group which included Rob Holdstock and Leroy Kettle, didn't even bother going to bed. They wandered down to breakfast and continued the party there. Getting through a good convention is worse than a week of circuit training.

The fan room was the scene of parties on the Friday and Sunday nights. Boasting loud music and free punch (well, nobody would dare sell that stuff), it packed in more people than could be believed. Many went in search of a sauna to cool off. That was one major disadvantage with the hotel - although beautifully air conditioned in the bedrooms, the conference facilities just couldn't cope with the mass of sweaty bodies. Other programme items starred in the fan room including so-called impromptu talks by various people. Eve was one of these, and although she had received her topic a few weeks before, had completely forgotten about it until she saw Kev Smith's copious notes. Needless to say, she didn't do very well. What can you do when the 'real' impromptu is: "My most embarrassing moment in fandom", when you haven't really had any?

Saturday night saw the traditional fancy dress parade, a little undersubscribed (probably due to Seacon) but nevertheless fun. The highlight(?) was two star-maidens from the stage play of Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy. Racking my brains as hard as I could, I couldn't remember any star maidens, but I suppose that's poetic licence. One entry in particular was worthy of a prize - the late Mike Rosenblum's two small granddaughters who went as cavewomen. Unfortunately I don't think many people realised who they were. Following the parade there was a disco and band providing an excursion for John Travolta impersonations.

Christ, already the chronology is breaking down, but let's face it there will be as many views of the con as there were people attending. All would agree, however, that this was the best con since the first Coventry con in 1975. That, too, was the last con with only about 400 people attending, so I wonder if there is something important about that size. It certainly looks like it. If that is the case, then it looks like a sad time ahead with the growth in membership that is bound to follow the Worldcon. Still, only time will tell.

On the Monday morning, Eve was beginning to get paranoid about Seacon - everytime a group of people parted with the words, "See you at Seacon", her nervous twitch got worse. It's only 9 weeks away now Eve.

See you at Seacon!

John Harvey

Fanzines Received, continued

MAGNUS 3 - Philip Greenaway, 38t9th Avenue, Galon Uchaf, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan. 10p + 7p postage. Contains the conclusion of an interview with huckster Mike Conroy.

NOUMERON - Brian Thurogood. European Agent: Keith Walker, 2 Daisy Bank, Quennmore Road, Lancaster. A New Zealand fanzine containing mainly critical pieces, many of which are reprints from zines like Vector.

ASTRON - Steven Green, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull B92 7LQ. 20p + 10p postage.

TANJENT - a correction to last issue's entry for Greg Hills' zine. We quoted the price as 60¢ (NZ), but unfortunately this is only the airmail postage to the UK. The mag itself is 40¢ more, eg total for one copy to UK is \$1 or equivalent. By sea the UK price will total 56¢ for a single copy. The address to write to is Greg Hills, 22a Polson Street, Wanganui, New Zealand.

MAILBAG

In M23, we gave a large part of the mailbag over to some fairly heavy definitions of sf. Naturally, these provoked a reaction from you...

JAMES PARKER, 18 King William St, Old Town, Swindon

Looking through the letters' section, I'm amazed to see that some folk are still trying to extract SF from the main body of Literature. Fools! I continue to maintain that SF is a commercially inspired definition/categorisation. Like the crime novel, the historical novel, the western novel etc it has it's own built in symbolism: the gleaming spaceship, the BEM, the futuristic city - all of them a kind of shorthand for ready identification by the 'addict'. It's a marketing device, nothing more, nothing less. I use the term 'science fiction' myself, but inwardly groan when doing so. I've got little respect for 'science fiction' as a label. What interests me is the individual writer's viewpoint; his 'vision' (if that isn't too much of a mystical word) of the world, of where it is going etc. I expect every writer to create his own, hopefully unique, symbolism. If a writer wants to use 'space' as a metaphor for freedom (or death) then that's just fine by me. On the other hand, if the writer uses 'space' as just another locale for putting over long redundant themes and moralisations, just to give 'em a contemporary veneer, I just don't want to know. Fiction is fiction is fiction. It is basically selecting elements of reality (are you there, reality? Come out where-ever you are) and putting them back together again in a form that is emotionally and intellectually stimulating. By fragmenting reality and highlighting scraps of it, we may learn more about ourselves - our realities. The writer who consciously moulds his view of things in a way that makes his 'view' readily identifiable as 'science fiction' is not worth bothering with. Such a writer has scrambled his individual vision/sensitivity in a bid to be purely, crassly, 'categorisable', and thus, 'marketable'.

The great writers in SF (groan) are those who have transcended the genre; who have left the shallow effects behind and are writing as individuals enslaved by no dogma, literary or otherwise. The most precious thing we all possess is our individuality. Beware of the forces that exist to put us all into little boxes, neatly labelled. It doesn't really matter if J G Ballard or Ursula Le Guin or Arthur C Clarke is your favourite scribe. They're all vision-givers. Just like Tolkein or Hesse or even Ian Fleming for that matter. It's that basic communication between the writer and the reader that matters. Everything else is irrelevant.

Our real job is to defend the individual imagination itself; because it is under massive attack. Nothing should get in the way of this fundamental objective. There is a wonderful alchemy between a reader and a writer; the mutual creation of an imaginative universe. There is probably no duplicate of this experience.

We must make sure it never dies.

JOHN GLANDER, 18 Wills Hill, Stanford-Le-Hope, Essex

Though we can make general statements about SF we can never define what it is; only what it is not. Fiction is a general term, to break it down into sets is a subjective thing. In this sense, again dealing with words, things are what we say they are; no more, no less. Do we really want to imprison ourselves in a neat little literary cell from which there is no escape? If

SF is to be anything different from other fiction then it needs to acquire a philosophy of its own, and that is very different from a stylistic school or limitations of content.

The main trouble with style as a criterion is that it is so easy to become lost in it. Out of the movement to make SF different some years back we had a whole host of books that were worthless in any literary sense. I suppose the supreme example of this must be Aldiss' 'Barefoot in the Head'. If anything approaching this had been given me by the children I teach, it would have been returned with a total mark of zero. I suppose the mistake lay in his not having an infinite number of monkeys typing it. I have no objection to his writing or publishing it (good luck to him) but in the attitude of reverence this and other similar works produce in the members of the BSFA. As for content; there is no basic difference between SF and any other kind of fiction. They might be dressed differently, but underneath they are the same animal.

The problem of definition still remains, as BSFA is trying to present something to the 'outside' public; the people who think SF is all outer-space monsters and zap guns. Since it is impossible to state objectively what SF is; and subjective or abstract definitions will not do we are left with, if not an impossible, then a very difficult task. It is a matter of evolving a philosophy of SF and then putting that across. We may be faced with a sweeping generalisation but this is far better than tying ourselves to an inadequate set of rules; or, if you like an empirical definition.

PAT WRIGHT, 45 Waterside Orchard, Hopwood, Alvechurch, Worcs
What is and what isn't Science Fiction. Firstly, who cares? Judging by the letters, some of you do. The best definition of sf I ever heard was from Norman Spinrad who said, "Science Fiction is anything published as science fiction."

But there is a very serious side to this argument, and I was alarmed by the rather sinister letter from Greg Hills. He draws up a narrow set of rules for each of three groups of SF, and anything which doesn't precisely fit must be 'thrown out'. If sf is to make advances, we must grant sf writers total freedom of exploration and discovery, so that they can go wherever their imaginations, emotions and intellects may lead them. Not hemmed in by rules and definitions. But if you MUST have a definition, mine is "Science Fiction is about any society recognisably different from our own." Border disputes between 'straight' science fiction and fantasy are ludicrous, and a waste of time (likewise border disputes between sf and mainstream). Many books are published on both the sf and mainstream markets eg Slaughterhouse 5. What's wrong with that? Are we to expel writers from the sf clique for trying to reach a larger market?

Greg, I suspect you are trying to throw out all the areas of modern sf that you personally dislike. I think you should concentrate your attacks on the book publishers, so that book jackets give a reasonable guide to the contents. This will save you wasting your money on the types of sf that are not to your taste. Then you can buy your sf and I'll buy mine, and we'll both get what we paid for. The important thing is not whether a book is or isn't SF. Its whether it is or isn't worth reading. And that's a subject worth discussing.

***** As the above three letters have questioned the whole validity of a strict definition of sf, and we've had plenty of such definitions, the idea of an "ultimate" definition struck me as useful. So here to put the lid on the whole thing (I hope)...

DAVE LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks
You asked for something new about the definition of sf - which after all

those Matrix letters is like seeking spoils from territory thrice ravaged by the Golden Horde. The whole field is now crosshatched with these lines which people insist on drawing, so there's virtually no book which doesn't straddle somebody's imaginary mainstream/sf borderline; definition by consensus seems our last remaining hope. I propose that a basic file of several hundred sf definitions be set up - say, one from each BSFA member. Our vast armies of definers can then be set to the more useful work of testing disputed books against every sf definition in the file... from those excluding The Left Hand of Darkness (because Gothenians, though biologically odd, don't represent a true technological advance) to those admitting the telephone directory (for its science-fictional prediction that dialling 100 could actually summon operators to one's aid). Any book which is passed as sf by a clear majority of our definitions can then receive the official BSFA seal of approval; perhaps a signed certificate, suitable for framing, could be sent to the author. The single remaining problem is to determine the criteria by which sf definitions are accepted as valid for my proposed file: I have every hope that before Matrix reaches its centenary issue, correspondents will evolve a universally acceptable definition of sf definitions.

***** Right, change of subject and onto another large response-generator - David Lewis: His suggestion box entry, that BSFA Council members should not be allowed to LoC BSFA publications, inspired this from...

STEVE INCE, 5 Otterburn Street, Hessle Road, Hull

Although I think much of what David Lewis said in Suggestion Box makes sense, I would hate to be the Membership Secretary with all of the extra work that he implies. His first suggestion, however, I cannot agree with at all. Just because certain members of the BSFA are on the Council, does it mean that they lose their rights to express their views in a LoC or be unable to disagree with another LoC? This is absolutely absurd, surely these Council members - because they are particularly active - are the ones more likely to create controversial LoC's and so inspire more people to write a Loc. However, because of this and despite my favour for the new style of Matrix, perhaps it would be better to have the micro-elite for the lettercol only - as suggested by Bill Little.

***** As Steve notes, Dave Lewis had suggestions for the membership secretary, so here's Sandy Brown to comment on them. We've included a brief resume of Dave's suggestions as a reminder in the double brackets (our words, not his).

SANDY BROWN, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre

((Publish membership details on a balance sheet basis))

Not all members renew promptly (see Keith Freeman's remarks on the latest update of the membership list), so it can only be done within very broad limits; anyway, I think that there's more point in having a list of "Members for one year+: members for two-: three: etc" but I'd be the last to foist this job on Keith, who's the only one who could do it, as the membership secretary's records are not set up in a suitable fashion.

((MS to monitor reasons for members leaving))

Out of the fifty-odd pieces of BSFA mail I've dealt with, only one was a letter from someone feeling like letting us know why he was not renewing. But the most common reason for leaving is quite easily worked out without having to ask the ex-members. Although I was an early starter at reading SF on a (fairly) regular basis (at the age of eight... oh ... six months ago), most people get into it about the age of sixteen to eighteen when everybody tends to be at their most enthusiastic about anything. The enthusiasm lasts for a couple of years, then wanes, and then within a year or so, they let their membership lapse, and go on to other things. I think

this applies to about 50% of the membership, so there are always substantial comings and goings. No doubt someone will prove me wrong on this.

((MS to analyse length of stay of members for future planning))
Can't do it, Dave. I presume you want me to stay on as Membership Secretary for more than two weeks - don't try to put me off it this early. Don't forget - this is a voluntary association - so I have great pleasure in telling you to get stuffed! Voluntarily.

***** Dave Lewis also had some harsh comments to make about the BSFA and the past editors of its publications.

KEITH FREEMAN, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading

Dave Lewis, sometimes, makes good points - more often than not, however, he spoils them by going too far and putting rubbish in his letters. Rubbish that swamps the good parts. He mentions, for example, four editors (Chris Fowler, Dave Wingrove, Tom Jones and Ian Garbutt) and then makes the fatuous statement "Must all publications editors be blasted out of office by a wrathful council because they don't toe the party line". Fact is that two of the above-named editors (Dave & Tom) gave up (well, in Dave's case are giving up) for their own reasons (Dave to go to University, Tom to become Vice Chairman). Chris was not jumped on for his ideas and policies (perhaps he should have been, but that's another story) but because of his peculiar economic theories (ignore bills and they'll go away). So the only one left is Ian Garbutt... far from being 'blasted out of office' the Committee appeared to be leaning over backwards to give him a further chance - he then decided to go his own way and resigned.

Although I agree with him about the difficulties of running the BSFA with a Committee (not Council) who are living apart (geographically), we must remember that the alternative has two disadvantages... (a) the appearance that the BSFA is run by a clique and (b) the distinct possibility that every-one in the 'close' group decides to resign at once... and those of us who've been in the BSFA for a few years know what that leads to.

GREG HILLS 22a Polson Street, Wanganui, New Zealand

Dave Lewis backhands both mag eds for producing highly individual and (to his mind) ungood mags; and Council for terminating said mag eds tenure every so often. He turned a few justified comments, and a few unjustified ones, into a diatribe against BSFA. Against the Council for firing mag editors who do not 'toe the party line'; and against the mag editors for producing magazines that do not agree with everyone. I wonder whether Dave shaves his groin (pubic hair being unsightly) and wears a beard (it being so aesthetic)? I can visualise anyone writing his diatribe doing just exactly that. Logical inconsistency be damned.

ALEX PILLAI, 32 Mingle Lane, Stapleford, Cambs

Dave Lewis's letter solidified many of the points I have been hoping to raise. One of them is my dissatisfaction with Vector. Why this letter isn't being sent to Vector is because I have never had one of the letters I've sent there printed. Anyway, the latest issue is clearly pathetic. It contains assorted (groan) book-reviews and an article and interview conducted by Dave Wingrove. What angers me is not just the narrowness of the things published, but also Wingrove's attitude. In previous issues he has stated that he's already planned future issues, and that he doesn't have time to read contributions and that he has drawers full of them. Surely the idea of Vector is to print some of the members' work too, and not just that of the regular lot. I see Tangent has suffered through the same tunnel-vision of its editor.

On a different note, I would like to see Matrix become the major BSFA mag, and an expansion in size will do it no harm. I personally would like an enlarged letters section. Anyway, the nice, clean typeface certainly helps.

DAVID LEWIS, 1 Hornbeam Road, Stowupland, Stowmarket, Suffolk

We are into the latter half of this century, and still the Council is using last century's methods to run the BSFA. Modern management techniques must be used. The BSFA must be marketed more successfully than at present. With the huge current interest in SF its membership ought to be counted in thousands not hundreds. There are firms who specialise in doing this for small organisations with minute budgets, get to them and use them now. It is the 21st year of the BSFA is anything serious being done to mark the occasion?

The Council ought to seriously examine the role of the BSFA in the community at large. Is it enough to produce 6 mailings a year or should the BSFA be making itself heard in the great debates of the day? I think it should. I think it ought to actively seek a similar position to that of any pressure group in any area of interest. That is it should be consulted by politicians and the media on issues in its area of interest. For example, authors' rights and the question of crediting artists on book covers. The publications of the BSFA should reflect this role and cease to be mere imitation fanzines or critical journals, but become organs for the dissemination of informed opinions on issues at hand. This can only be done by active and hard working Council members, to this end I suggest the current Chairman should be booted out because he has been as active on BSFA affairs as a dead fart. Instead a new Chairman should pursue a role similar to, say, Len Murray, or any other active official of a pressure group.

This was all at the back of my mind when I made those recent suggestions. I await with interest the advent of new faces on the Council. Also, may I say thanks to the out-going ones since I feel you did a good job as you saw it. Even if I did not wholly agree with what you did.

***** I agree with you Dave, especially if we were a commercial organisation whose officers were not only full-time, but paid as well. As Sandy Brown said in his letter earlier, we are voluntary workers; it is our hobby. Within these constraints I think those Committee Members with specific jobs do work extremely hard. We work to the best of our ability and, as I said, until we are full-time and paid, I don't think your grandiose ideas, as much as I might like them, are workable in any realistic sense. Surely it is better to set our sights lower and do the job properly, than aim higher and louse everything up.

WAHF

Our thanks go to the following people, we enjoyed receiving your letters. Alan Mattingly, Nic Howard, John Davies, Paul Dembina, P Blakey, Rich Philpot, Simon Ward, Roger Waddington, Graham Andrews, Phil Stephenson-Payne, Steve Holland, Clive Woodley, Peter Singleton and Mark Greener

SUGGESTIONS BOX

STEVE INCE

Perhaps someone could do an article on how they went about starting up a fanzine and how they obtained articles and so forth for their first issue, etc.

((We'll see what we can do for a future issue, say M26 eh?))

KEITH FREEMAN

The Committee should appoint a "Special Projects Officer" to oversee the production of such items as Magazine Checklists, Booklets on specific authors (including bibliographies) etc. Such booklets should (a) sell steadily after being produced and (b) if produced at the correct time

of its competitors foundered after a few issues. I voted for Vector because it gives me some food for thought; would you have me read Isaac Asimov's Magazine, God forbid! I haven't purchased paperback SF books for about a year since they are mostly crud and re-issues. Where did Zelazny's early promise go. Lord of Light to 'potboiler'. What a shame!

Perhaps SF is so self-centred that it has lost its power to surprise through overuse of basic themes. So that only craftsmen such as Cowper, Roberts and Hartley in Britain can win one over by the beauty of their writing and emotional content of their storytelling.

Hard science has had its day - good riddance!

***** It's perhaps a little late, as nominations for the Hugo awards are closed and counted now, but here's some reaction to Peter Nicholl's suggestion in M23.

ALAN MARSHALL, 51 Windsor Cres, Oakworth, Keighley, W Yorks

I casually remarked to a friend last year that if 'Star Wars' won a Hugo for dp, I would burn my 5 volumes of Hugo winners and send my collection of 1,000 sf books to be recycled into popular daily newspapers. OK, so I HAVEN'T dumped my books into a paper pulper, but I'm not happy. (There must have been a lot of children at Worldcon last year).

Mr Nicholls said in M23, "Let's vote Dr Who for a well deserved Hugo!" (or words to that effect). Wait! Maybe he said 'Hogu' but it was typed wrongly? My suggestion as to the best episode is this: The Dr and Layla (K9's on season and stunning bitches with his laser and impregnating them) are returning from the marriage guidance bureau on Skaro when a bunch of fans notice them and follow them back to the tardis. After 57 people have been crammed into it (children under 14 not allowed), one of them (the Dr) hits upon a great idea - how to win the dp Hugo at Seacon! He calls Roy Castle and record breakers by Tachyon mouse beam and the tardis materialises in the TV studio and therefore wins the new record for how many voting members of British fandom can be squeezed into a phone box 3ft x 3ft x 8ft. He then plays his ace card. He says he will break this record at Seacon 79 and asks volunteers to sign their names on ballot papers next to his. (Hope you can follow this.) The ballots are counted and lo! and behold!, 2,000 unanimous votes for Dr Who, who picks up his award by tardis and leaves in a hurry (nanosecond).

Come on for heavens sake. Dr Who deserves a Hugo as much as Luther King asked to be shot and (as Nicholls patriotically said at Eastercon, It's a British product, let's bring an award home) that's like saying you must vote for a woman in, say, best short story, because they don't win very often. (Please don't get me wrong. I think our female counterparts are leading the field at the moment and my favourite authoress is LeGuin). OK the films this year were downright exploitive and shoddy, but that's no reason to vote 'Dr Who'. Hells Bells, let's give some credit where it's due.

***** Let's finish on the question of what the hell the BSFA is doing/supposed to do/ought to do.

STEEV HIGGINS, 18 St Austell Avenue, Tyldesley, Greater Manchester

There seems to be some differences over what the BSFA is supposed to be doing. As a body to proselytize sf it seems to me it's preaching to the converted, until Vector has at least an equal circulation outside the Association. As an information clearing house, as Dave Cobbledick himself seems to be suggesting, it seems to be doing more than it ought, but I feel it is more than that anyway. Terry Jeeves, in M20, seemed to be saying that it was formed to recruit to fandom, and I still think that is the best role it could play at the moment, and one it ought to be doing more to pursue.

episodes.

And of course, many thanks for Media Notes, which have at last supplied me with something really useful, i.e. news of the stage production of THHetc, since I'll be up in London in May and can now see the stage version AND go to the One Tun for the first time in ages.

***** I'm sure Phil will be pleased to see Hitch Hikers in line for a Hugo.

GWYNFOR JONES, 34 Bryn Gwynt, Amlwch Port, Anglesey, Gwynedd, North Wales

I read Kevin Smith's Fan World article and in particular was drawn to the quote from the Tom Jones fanzine, Waif, on the subject of the films 2001 and Solaris. It's difficult to make a valid qualitative analysis of two films which are (content wise) poles apart. Both films are excellent in their own right; 2001 from a technical viewpoint is brilliant, but its 'epic' proportions do tend to dwindle the individual to the point of insignificance. It was heavily orientated towards the technical evolution of mankind whilst Solaris (even though a communist made film) was involved with the reactions of a single individual to extraordinary circumstances which occurred in a space laboratory. In a way, it's strangely paradoxical for an iron-curtain film; what with their political and philosophical emphasis so firm on the collective. I assumed (as a political outsider) that the Russians would be incapable of portraying the experiences of an individual with the amazing sensitivity which predominates Solaris. I thought that the interplay of words and confrontations and the question of whether the astronaut was viewing incidents in an objective manner, made Solaris a much more rewarding film for me to watch.

Pictorially, 2001 is an outstanding achievement, but Solaris is closer to the 'new wave' concept, it has a lot of inner as well as outer space!

***** It's interesting what a fanzine review can inspire. Now some more sf discussion.

PHIL ROSENBLUM, 92 Loudoun Rd, St John's Wood, London NW8

I'd like to get a discussion going in Matrix on John Varley. I thoroughly enjoyed Ophiuchi Hotline: it was inventive, fast-paced, very coherent and competently written. I was not altogether happy with Varley's ending: if the Ophiucans wanted Earth's 'culture', why would they wait hundreds of years while the Hotline's technology totally transformed it? Still, I'd like to hear from those who loathed Hotline as to why they did, and from anyone who thinks they can make the conclusion seem more convincing.

Then there's Dick & Zelazny's Deus Irae. A book I unashamedly enjoyed for its mixture of the mystical and the obscure. The amount of moral and religious speculation make this Dick's most thought-provoking work, and it's got that hallucinatory quality that marks his best novels. Admittedly, there's little of Zelazny visible

***** We published Richard Smith's commentary on the BSFA poll results in M23, here's some reaction to them.

J D BALDWIN, 13 Consiton Gdns, Crossgates, Scarborough, N Yorks

The results of the poll were most interesting. Well done Richard J Smith. Since Dick commented on my comments, I feel I should comment on his, did you get that?

I did criticise Robert Hale; but did find a couple of their books surprisingly good. I read also that they do provide a market for new authors for which they must be commended. Conscience now clear on that! I liked SF Monthly because it was my only source of SF ART and stories like Dark Icarus etc mean it wasn't as bad as people make out. It did last two and a half years, most

Pickersgill, in which you either scratch each others eyes out, in partake of a certain steely gentility which is still nevertheless fatal! A la Joseph Nicholas and Kev Smith, which by different routes ended at the same point. I strongly agree with Keith Freeman, as reviews of fanzines, they did not really help me one iota as to whether I would like them! Perhaps it would be better to have a resident fanzine reviewer? The argument being, of course, that at least you learn to know his prejudices!

Actually, the idea of an sf bookshop directory is rather good. What would be useful, however, is a sort of consumer report on the various bookshops around. Take the two that John Connor mentions in Plymouth. A Universal book stores is a secondhand bookshop which has a selection of sf amongst its titles, but does not specialise in it. The selection is what they get in across the counter, with few hardbacks. Bonus Books takes in the selection of American books that LSP import, and has a pretty wide selection of sf that is published immediately. It does not, however, carry very much of stock that is in print, but may have been published for some time. It has a fair selection of second hand, but no magazines or hardbacks.

What does one describe as an sf specialist bookshop anyway?? One of my pet hates are the W H Smith's of this world. SF is dumped amongst the Horror/fantasy/UFO/nut religious corner, so that you have to sort through all sorts of extreme drek to find any decent books. Seriously though, any shop that stocks a selection of in print seem to think it is an sf specialist. To my mind an sf specialist should stock a full selection of sf magazines and back numbers. The leading semi-profanzines Algol, Whispers SFR. A full selection of hardback sf. A full selection of American titles - not just those conveniently imported by LSP, and under the Del Rey/Orbit banner. An sf specialist in fact should have knowledge and care for the subject. There are very few of those around!

***** Point taken about the predictable pattern - I think you'll find this issue slightly different though. One of my basic philosophies when doing something creative such as editing a zine, is that the editor has to find his freedom within strict boundaries. It's important to create an image for Matrix, which is what we've tried to do by using a regular layout and then work within that framework. This gives a stable foundation on which to build and prevents the whole thing falling into chaos.

If people would like to do short consumer reports on local bookshops - obviously with an SF viewpoint - we will use them to expand the bookshop roundup.

PHIL JAMES, 4 Gurnos Road, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan

I was mighty pleased to see that Hiten Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy won the BSFA Award. Hopefully, justice will be done at Seacon and it will get the Hugo. (If so, would it be the first radio programme to win the Hugo I wonder?) It is quite possible since it's fame has spread to the other side of the Pond. It's even been heard of by some of my friends down the local, independently of my publicity efforts (which mainly consists of my choosing it when playing charades - my other favourite is 'Disgusted, Tunbridge Wells' which, suprisingly, few of them will attempt!) Any chance of publishing a few inside facts or details about THHGTG or perhaps even an article from Douglas Adams?

Undoubtedly the place where the most support will be forthcoming will be at SEACON itself since there are sure to be quite a few recordings floating around (one of the advantages of a radio production!) with which those unhappy creatures ignorant of the True Faith can be converted. I only hope my recorder will have been fixed by July 1, since I haven't got tapes of the first two

So let me put it to Hills straight: does he want a letter column that has been edited down to its most stimulating essentials, with a WAHF column for those who couldn't come up with the goods; or does he want a letter column swollen out of all proportion to the rest of the magazine, bloated with tedious squibs that say nothing of consequence and provoke no response? And, yes, I want some answers to these questions as well. (Although I daresay he'd claim that an appearance in the WAHF column discourages those so mentioned from responding again, in which case I'd have to say: "Yes, but only sometimes" (see above, in my response to Peter Nocholls), because to make only occasional appearance in it can't be at all discouraging - unless the person in question is so incredibly thin-skinned that it almost beggars belief).

***** Joseph really does sum up well my feelings on letter columns. They can only be as good as the letters therein. What the editor must try to do is bring out the good points in the letters by cutting out the deadwood and padding. This does not mean I do not enjoy receiving letters which only make the WAHF column, far from it, just to know somebody has read Matrix is a reward in itself. The WAHF list is my way of saying thank you for writing. If I loc a zine, I don't expect to be included in the letter column, but I am insulted if it isn't WAHF'd. Onto other things, and Bill Little's guide to forming an SF club brought this response.

JOHN STEWART, 4 Waltham Road, Carshalton, Surrey

I found Bill Little's article on how to start up a Science Fiction Club interesting, although he could have mentioned that it is also possible to run a group on a zero expenditure basis. Croydon Science Fiction Group is run in such a manner. The group was started by one of the 'members' writing round to local SF fans (the list of local fans was obtained by going through the BSFA membership list), this met with a favourable response and an initial meeting was held in a local pub. At first new members were attracted by word of mouth, then some posters were drawn up and printed by a member (okay, so he is a commercial artist). These were placed around the town and attracted a moderate response.

The group has been running now since October 1977 and, meeting once a month, we have an average attendance of 12 people who 'take over' a corner of the pub and talk SF with a bit of Fantasy mixed in. A group amateur SF magazine also appears to successfully taken root (individuals type up their own contribution and whoever has the easiest access to a Xerox machine prints enough copies for the current membership figure). I must be truthful and admit that there are some serious disadvantages to running a group in this manner, the most serious being the rapid 'turn around' of members and another being the limited number of activities that the group can get up to.

***** Some very valid points about running an sf group, and for those of you in the Croydon area, details of the group are in this issue's members' noticeboard.

PHILIP MULDOWNEY, 28 Moorland View, Derriford, Plymouth

After three issues of your dual editorship, Matrix seems to be falling into a rather predictable pattern. Big pro article, news, fanzine reviews, Vice-Pres down from Sinai tablets, letters, odds & sods, and then the captive. I suppose it is somewhat of a straightjacket formula in certain senses, in that there are certain obligatory sections. On the others, however, specifically fanzine reviews... With the large majority of BSFA fans not having a lot of contact with the inner sanctums of fanzine fandom, the idea is obviously a good one. However, I would question the basis of in-depth interviews. Fanzine reviews in themselves seem to have rather become a cliché in a lot of British fanzines. You all go through the grist mill founded by old daddy-of-them-all

Please don't ever use a micro-elite again, especially on stencils where it is completely illegible.

***** In M23 Peter Nichols had a gentle dig at Joseph Nicholas, so it's only right that we let Joe reply.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS, 2 Wilmot Way, Camberley, Surrey
 Peter Nicholl's reaction to my review of Arena 8 calls for some response on my part, mainly because of my inadvertent use of the phrase "genuine fans" when I really meant to say "fanzine fans" (which actually appeared in my original longhand version of the review, but I dunno how I ever managed to alter it when I came to type it out - honest, boss). But even that doesn't completely clarify the situation, because what I was basically trying (very, I suppose) to get across was a feeling that a fanzine whose every letter column of every issue was filled with nothing but professional writers would eventually discourage amateur writers from responding to it. "Letterhacks write to get published" is the old adage, and I think it still holds good today; the fact that fanzines are little more than a glorified hobby has nothing to do with it, because there's absolutely no percentage whatever in knocking yourself out time after time for a fanzine whose editor consistently ignores you. (Which has nothing to do with being consistently ignored by an editor who finds you an unmitigated pain in the arse, but I won't go into that here.)

Here's a suggestion requiring some sort of response; Greg Hills wants you to print every letter you receive, and in micro-elite type to boot. To take his last point first: we have now, for the first time ever in its short history, a Matrix that, by virtue of its being printed in a large, clear typeface, is both legible and attractive. One of the reasons why it looked so illegible and unattractive in its previous incarnations was its previous editors' use of just such a micro-elite typeface, packing the words onto the page with a blithe disregard for its ultimate appearance. Is Hills serious about returning to the use of such a typeface? Does he genuinely believe that to cram everything together in such an indigestible fashion will in some way imbue the magazine with anything remotely resembling character or spirit?

He'd probably claim that use of such a typeface would enable you to print all the letters you receive; which leads me back to his first point. But why the hell should fanzine editors have to print every letter? To print the words of everyone who responded just because they responded is a ridiculous criterion to adopt (it is, moreover, not editing at all, but compiling instead - which, in my book, calls for nothing short of searing condemnation), because not every letter that an editor received will be worthy of inclusion in the letter column. To lay it on the line: a fanzine letter column exists as a forum for discussion and debate upon matters that interest the editor (and, in this case, the BSFA membership as well), and should print only those letters that either contribute to an existing discussion (either by extending it into new areas or pointing out areas previously overlooked) or raise a new topic around which discussion can form. (The Nicholas Rules For Fanzine Editing: Number 354 in A Seemingly Limitless Series.) To print letters that say no more than "Thanks for Matrix" or "I agree with X and disagree with Y" or "Liked A but hated B" is a blatant waste of the space that should have been devoted to something rather more erudite, interesting and provocative. And even when you do get those "erudite, interesting and provocative" letters, you should only print the best of them (particularly if a large number of them are all saying much the same things about the same subject, because otherwise you'd be filling the letter column with boring and response-deadening repetition).

should sell very well (eg when an author is GoH at a con, a booklet specifically on him MUST sell).

PHILIP MULDOWNNEY

Let the BSFA Committee sort out and define for its editors what, exactly, belongs where. Make clear what the area each magazine is to cover and make that clear to the membership. At the moment the BSFA has six separate magazines/newssheets: Vector, Vector Supplement, Tangent, Matrix, Paperback Parlour and Keith Freeman's membership listings. Perhaps some amalgamation is in order.

Let the BSFA print a full list of all its officers and services in each issue of Matrix and Vector. If you want to find anything now it entails a search through the innards of numerous magazines. The editors of Matrix and Vector and the Chairman must get an awful lot of mail that is not meant for them. Which entails a large waste of time. ((Speaking for Eve and I, we don't actually get much mail that isn't meant for us - in fact the only thing I can remember is one person sending us their BSFA Awards Voting Form, instead of Dave Wingrove. Since not a word was mentioned about that in Matrix (except in the Chairman's section), I think that was lack of thought rather than confusion).)

MARK GREENER

Why not lobby a publisher to produce a book of Brian Lewis' art? Something in the vein of Chris Achilleos' "Beauty and the Beast" using art (as Jim Barker said in M22) from House of Hammer, Starburst, 2000 AD as well as New Worlds, Science Fantasy and Science Fiction Adventures.

MISCELLANY CORNER

MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

Here's your chance to advertise to the BSFA members FREE!
Just send in your ad to the Matrix editorial address and we'll do the rest.

Exchange your books and magazines multilaterally. It's better than buying and better than barter! Trial membership £1, or send sae for details.
J Cains, 15 Brinkburn St, Sunderland SR4 7RG

Wanted - a copy of Barry McGhan's Science Fiction and Fantasy Pseudonyms (published in 1976 & 1978) to buy, borrow or hire. Contact Stephen Holland, 3 Broomhall Rd, Broomfield, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 5HB.

Fans wanted in the South Wales area! Tony Donovan would like to hear from anybody in this area interested in forming an SF club. Contact him at 73 Colum Rd, Cardiff CF1 3EF. Tel: Cardiff 394655

Copies of Synaptic Drift, a new fanzine, are now available for 10p and an sae from Simon Ward, 63 Scrub Rise, Billericay, Essex.

Wanted - out of print Arthur C Clarke books ie S.F. "Across The Sea Of Stars" (1959), "Time Probe" (1967) and non-fiction "The Coast Of Coral" (1956), "The Exploration of The Moon" (1954), "Man And Space" (1964). Send an sae for a full list to Peter J Kershaw, 24 Broomflat Close, Standish, Nr Wigan, Greater Manchester W6 6 ONF.

Would anyone in the North London area who is interested in forming a club for attractive single female sf fans please contact the Business Manager - Trev Briggs (address in the front of Vector)!

The Croydon SF Group meet on the last Friday in the month at The Tavern in the Town in the Oliver bar, anytime from 8-10.30 pm. For further details contact John Stewart, 4 Waltham Rd, Carshalton, Surrey. Tel 01-669 7963

For sale: 'Science Fiction Movies' by Philip Strick (Octopus Books). Mint copy. 'The Orbit Poster Book' by Achilleos, Foss, Jones & Roberts (Orbit) mint copy. Other similar works for sale too. Write to James Parker, 18 King William St, Old Town, Swindon, Wilts SN1 3LB

Steev Higgins is planning a new sercon fanzine, to be called Loophole. Copies will be 25p and the address to write is 18 St Austell Ave, Tyldesley, Greater Manchester.

And finally, don't forget, if you want artwork in your fanzine, then contact the Matrix editors for the cheapest electrostencils in town!

COMPETITION

Well, it looks like I've found a way of getting plenty of entries for these competitions, or so the response to the last one would indicate. The following people entered: Joyce Mains, Sandy Brown, Joseph Nicholas, Paul Dembina, Rich Philpott, Steev Higgins, Clive Woodley, Tim Pickard, Mike White and June Laverick. The answers were:-

1. Nova - Samuel R Delany
2. Bill The Galactic Hero - Harry Harrison
3. Inverted World - Christopher Priest

Ten entries and nine correct ones, but I'm not going to tell you who got it wrong, they know who they are!! That leaves more winners than prizes -

into the hat with the names and out comes Clive Woodley. A couple of paperbacks will be on their way to you.

Here's this issue's competition, quotes supplied by Sandy Brown and Mike White.

1. Like a glowing jewel, the city lay upon the breast of the desert.
2. Glen Dale, publisher of Stapman Magazine and last of the old-time eligible bachelors, was having another of his parties.
3. Mankind consisted of 128 people. The sheer population pressure of so vast a horde had long ago filled over a dozen burrows.

Let's have your entries by July 28, and, of course, like all BIG competitions, members of the company, employees and their relations are ineligible to enter!!

SEACON '79

Not only is Eve arranging a rosta for people to sit at the BSFA desk in the Fanroom, she will also have a few other tables for interest groups to use. These will be (she hopes) under heavy demand from foreign groups as well, and so she will put up an hourly rota for each. Come along on the first day of the convention and book yourself some space if your club would like to take the opportunity of enrolling more members.

Those of you who are members of the convention should already have received PR 4 and therefore have some idea of the things Eve has planned (what do you mean, you didn't read her bit?). The advert competition is a very good place to advertise your fanzine, but she will also be making wallspace available for you to advertise your club/group. If you would like to display a poster though, don't leave it to the first day of the con - there might be no space left! (Some hopes, you should see the size of the room!) Send Eve your poster beforehand to ensure a prime position.

COMING SOON

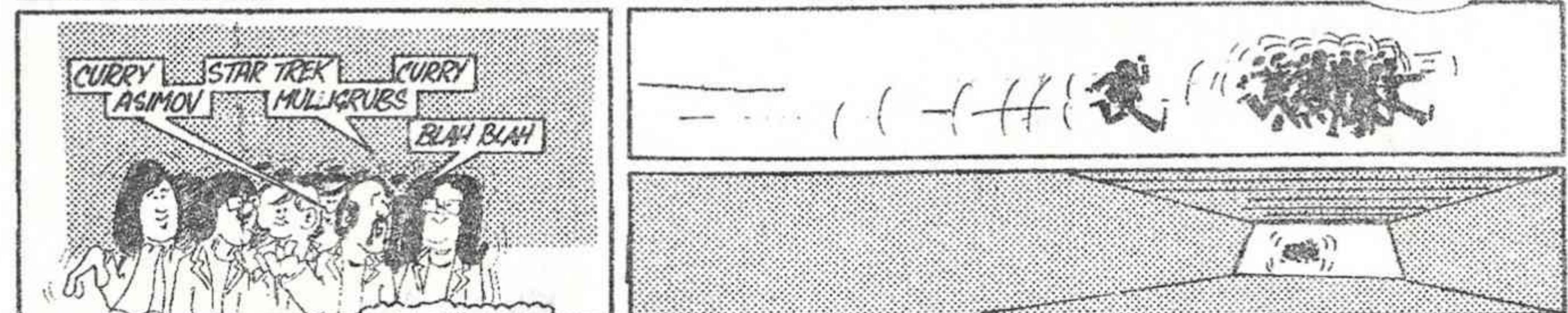
Obviously, next issue will be a Seacon special, as will be most of the fanzines in the world!

As we have mentioned earlier, we are hoping to feature foreign fanzines in the fanzine review section so that attendees will know what to look out for, what to avoid etc. We are also (we hope) featuring an article on American fanzines and fandom in general. Obviously we're vague at the moment - fandom is notoriously vague about offers for work until the very last minute and, if you're as unlucky as we were with this issue, the very, very, very last minute.

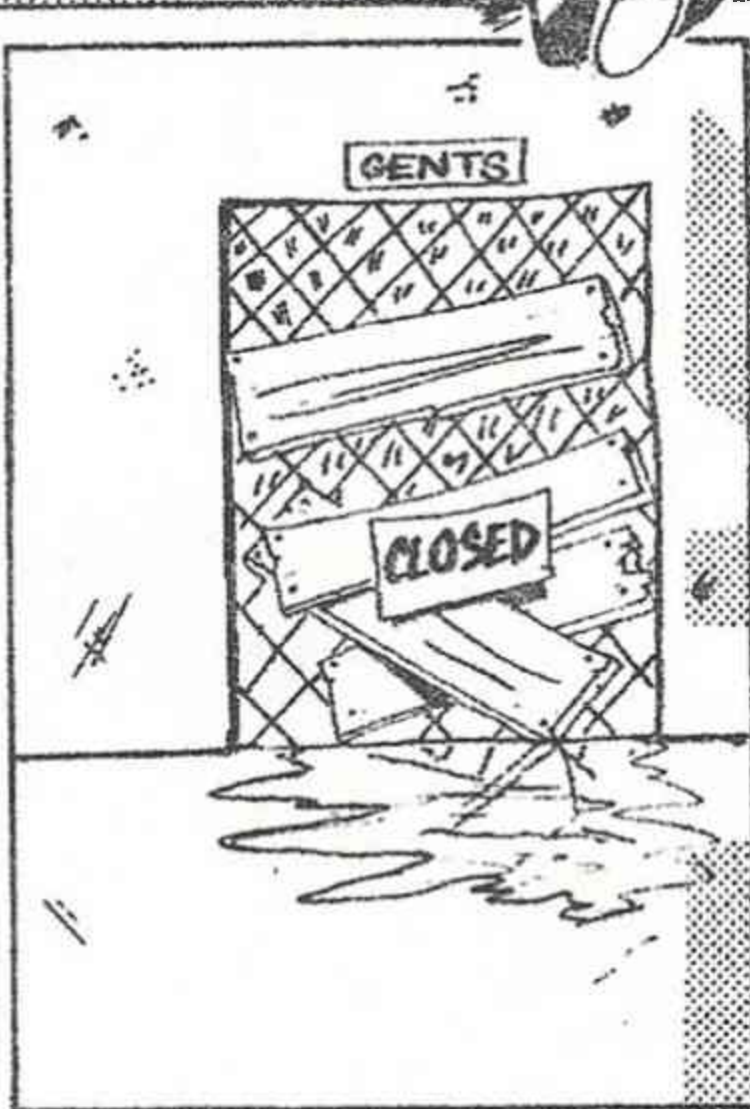
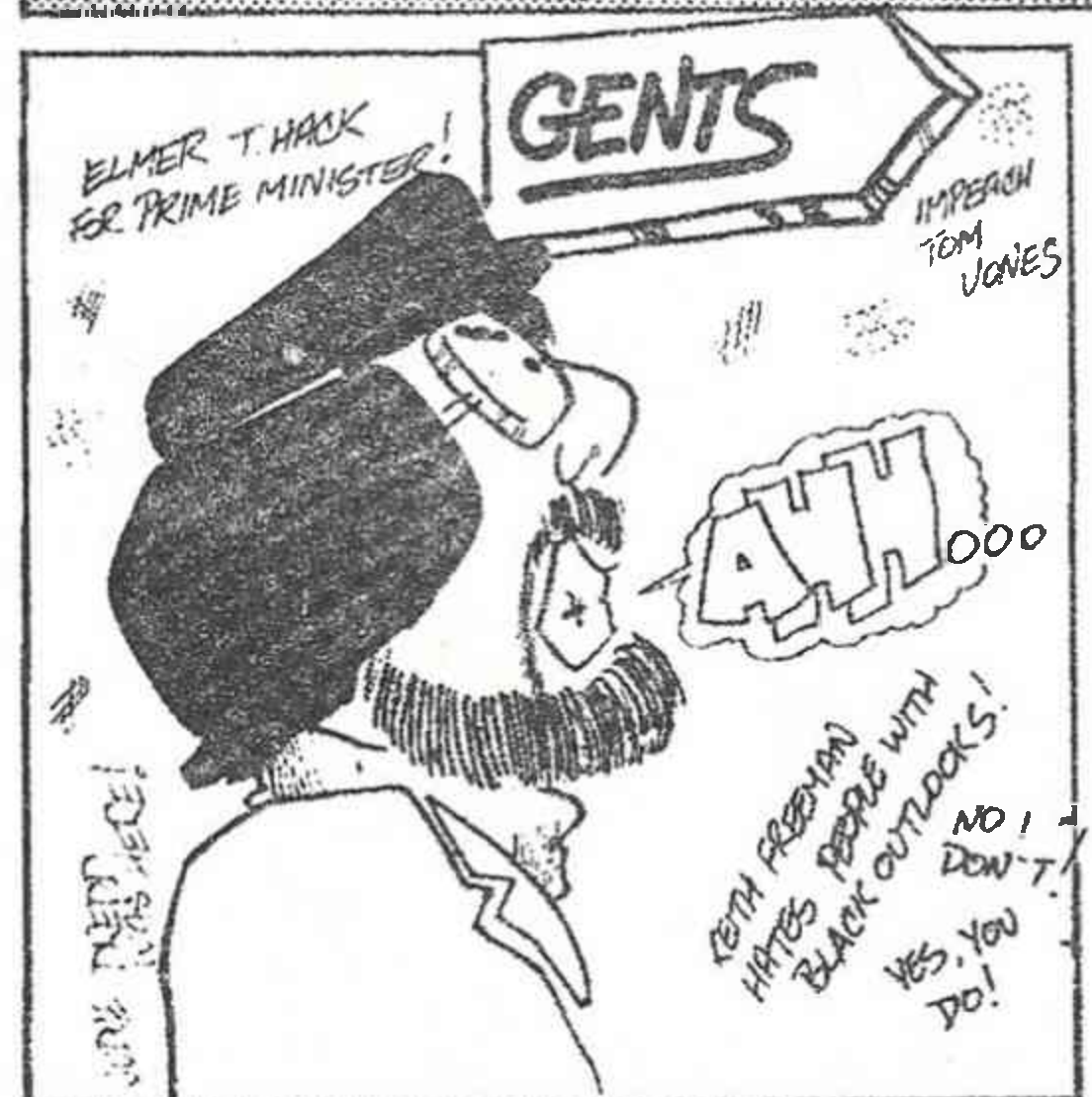
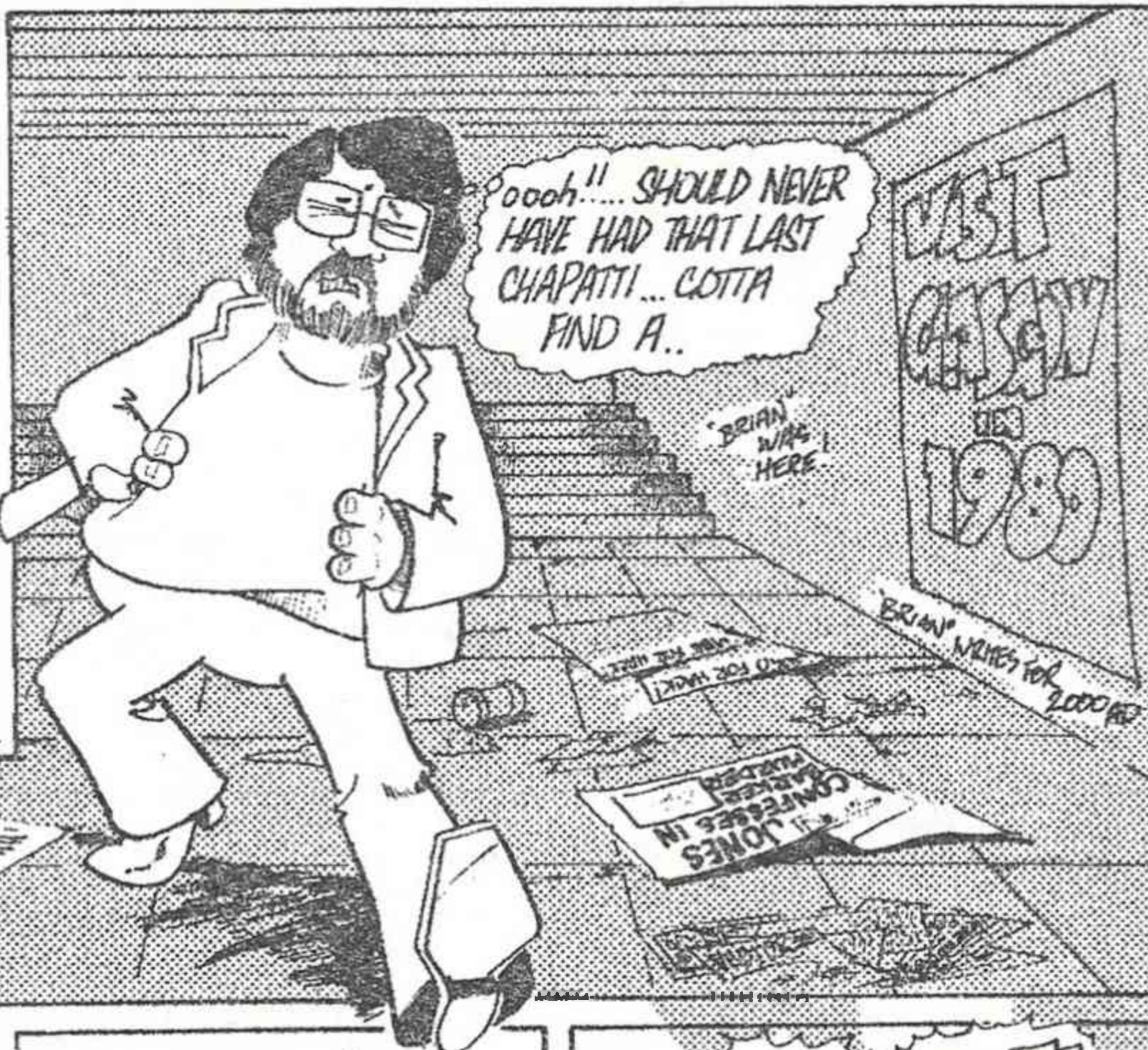
Hope you all enjoy Seacon if you're going, and if you're not, why not?

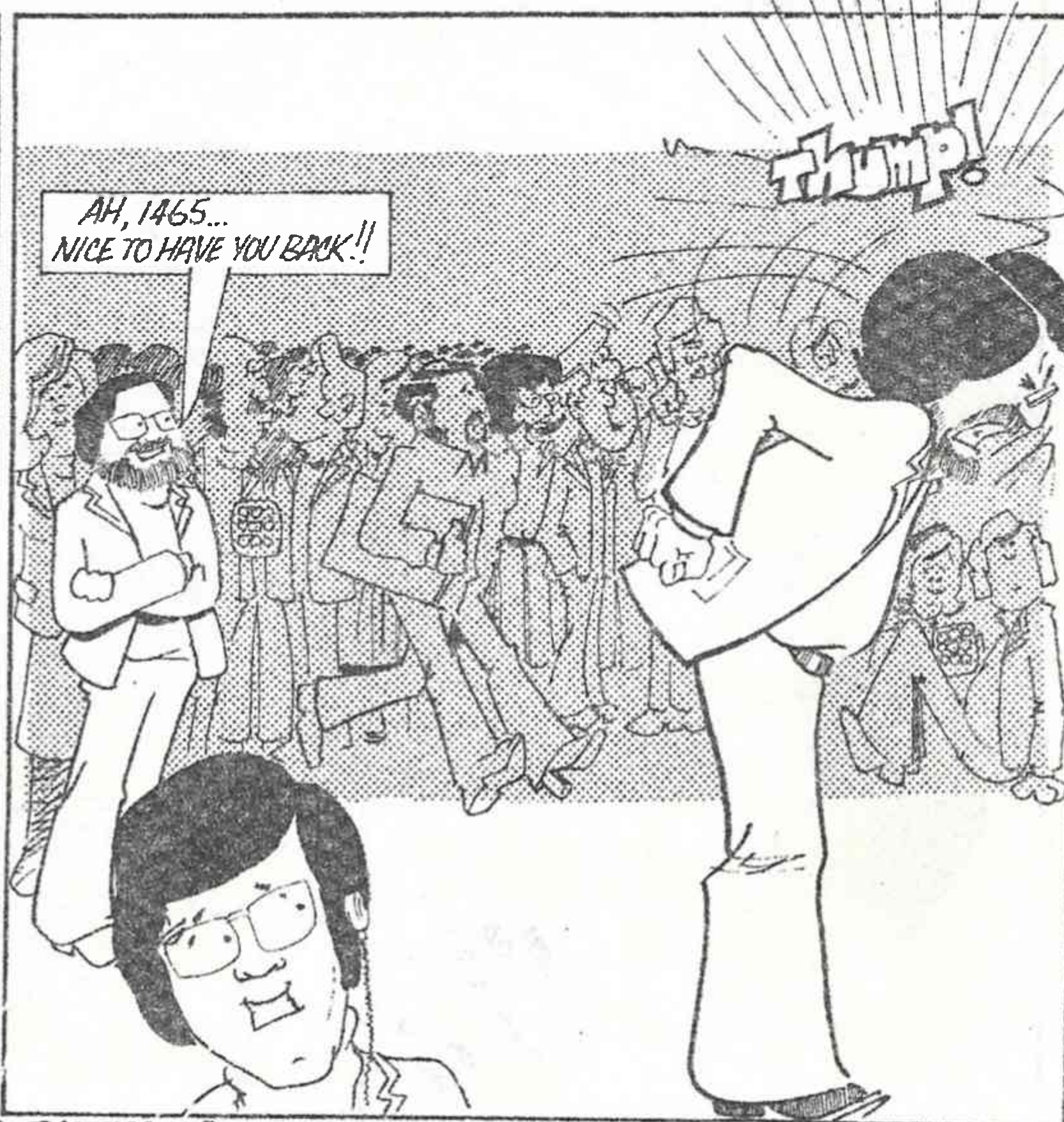
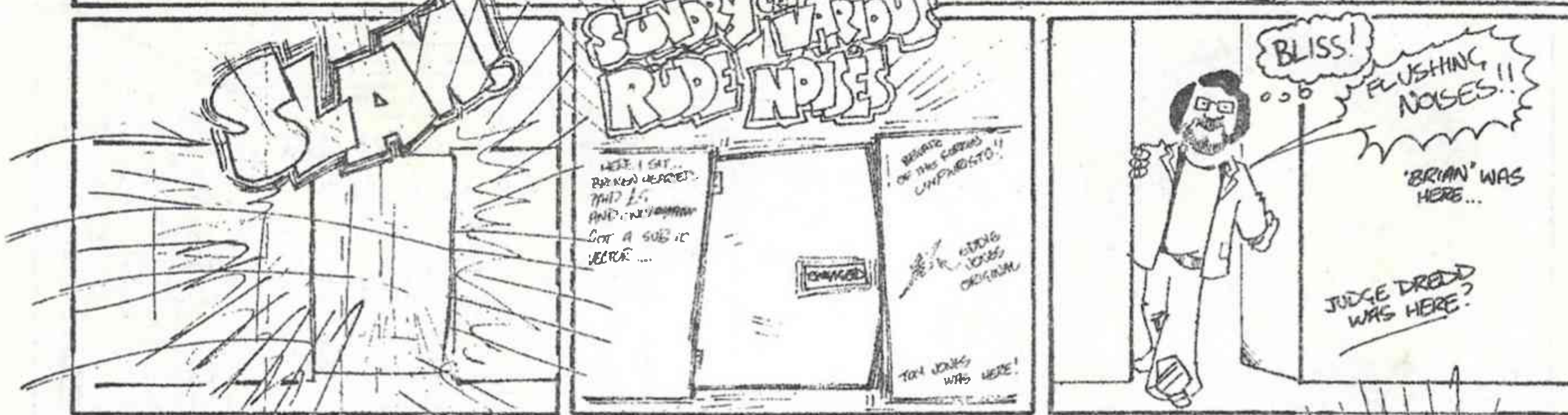
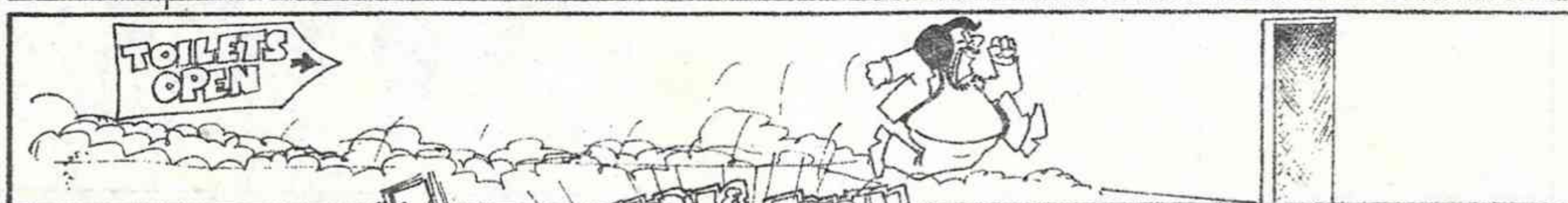
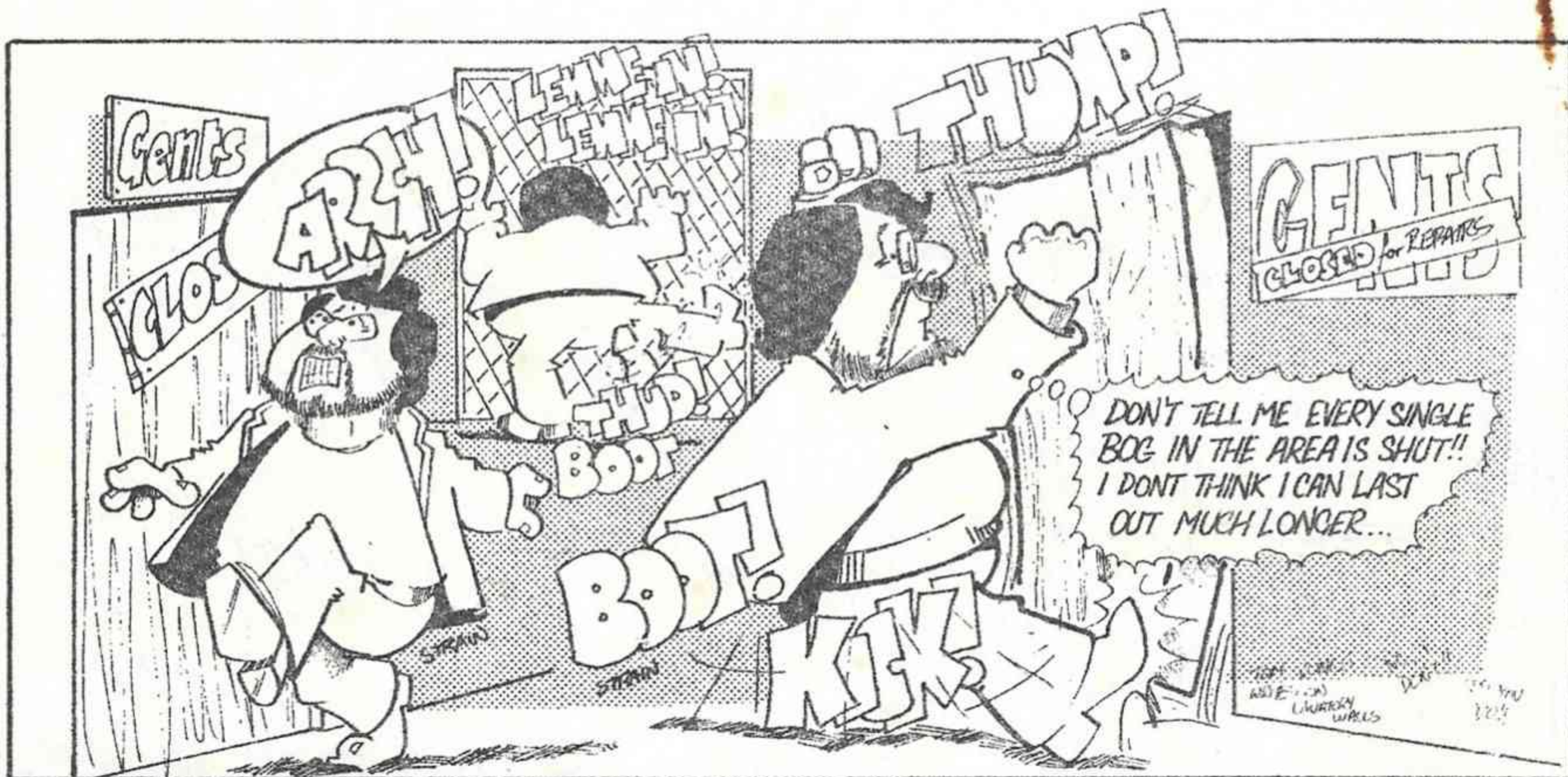
the captive

THE CAPTIVE CONTINUES HIS EFFORTS TO ESCAPE "THE CONVENTION" WITHOUT TELLING WHY HE RESIGNED FROM THE BSFA



BY KEV SMITH & JIM BARKER (BLAME THEM)





DEDICATED TO MIKE DICKINSON AND THE TERRIBLE AFTERMATH OF SILICON THREEIB.