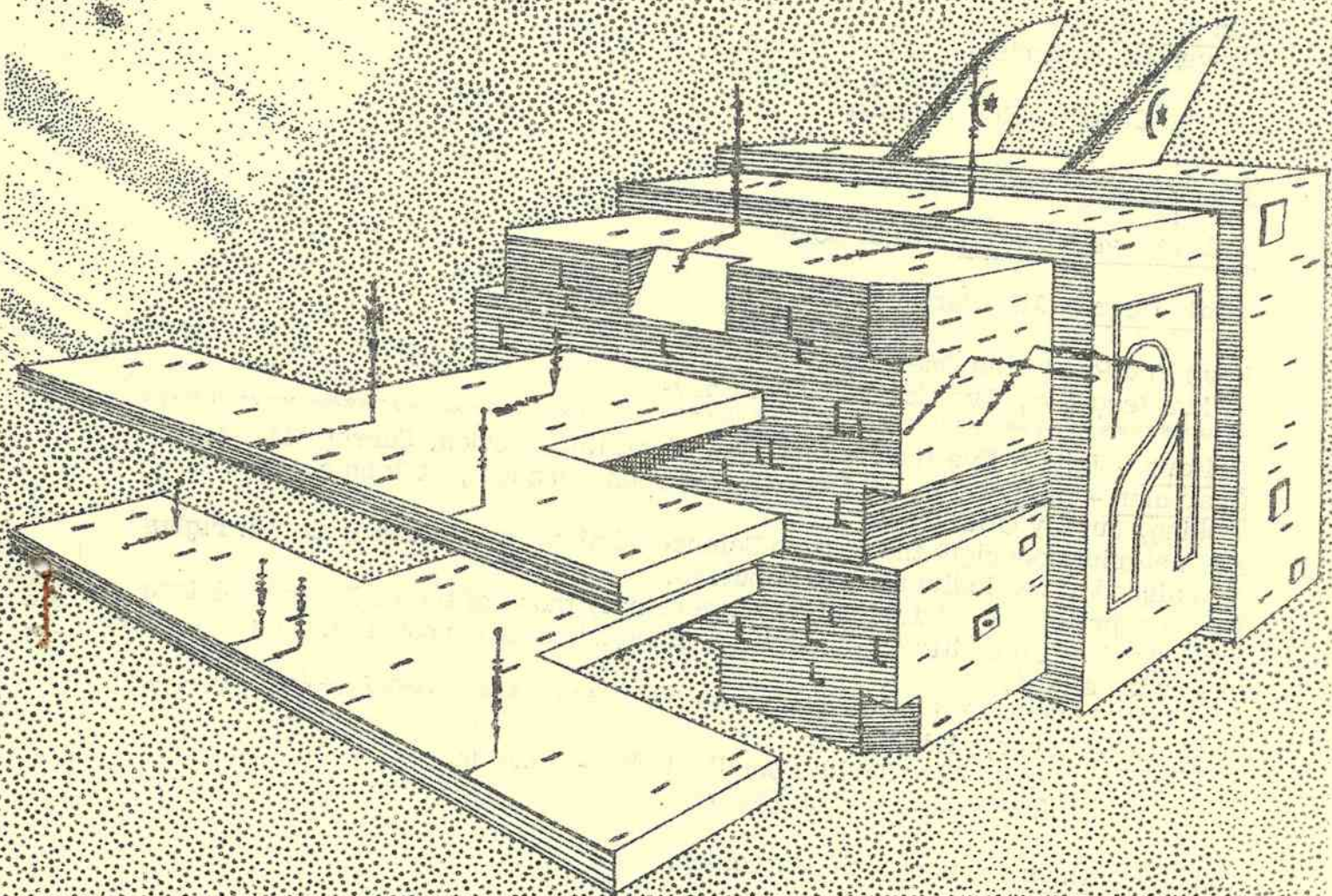


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Copy Deadlines Friday 26th September.

Next Mailing is scheduled for Saturday & Sunday, 18th & 19th October. All
helpers welcome. For further details contact either Alan Dorey or Eve &
John Harvey (tel: 640 1349)

Editorial

PARTING SHOTS

Our final Matrix looks like its going to be a little atypical. For one thing there's no lead article as such, and Simon Ounsley's column is conspicuous by its absence. The reason for these omissions may be attributed to another unusual feature (for the whole mailing, though) and that is the fact that we're a fortnight early. Yes, 2 whole weeks ahead of time, not behind as was becoming not uncommon. This amazing effort is due to holidays etc clashing with the mailing date previously set. Thus my deadlines, as recorded in M30, have become nonsense and the above omissions therefore necessary. Still, it has enabled us to run an extensive letter column and include more reviews than is usual.

As most of you (well, at least 95%) should be aware, this is the Harveys' swan song as editors of Matrix (who said about time too? Oh, it was you, Eve!). We should now be announcing the new editor(s) of Matrix but with the advanced publishing date one hasn't been decided upon yet. So far we've had two applications, obviously the rest of you are keeping a cunning silence; you're not that stupid are you! Seriously, if anybody does feel reckless enough, there's still chance to offer your services, just contact Alan Dorey and let him know. For the time being if you would all like to use our address as the editorial address and we'll ensure that the new editor gets all your letters.

One thing has just occurred to me whilst looking through the contents of this issue - there's a plethora of material by a certain person who shall remain nameless but whose initials are JN; so before any rumour can start, he is definitely not in the running for Matrix editor!

ON THE LITHO FRONT

Following the cost breakdown in M30 and a subsequent committee meeting, the BSFA is now the proud owner of litho printing equipment. So you will all be pleased to know that as you read this Eve and I are up to our elbows in ink and paper trying to master the machine. It arrived too late for this Matrix but, assuming we win the battle with it, the next issue and Vector should display our new-found skills!

DADDY, WHAT'S AN APA?

The following letter was forwarded to me by Dave Langford. It's from American fan Harry Andruschak and, whilst not all that easy to follow, does suggest an idea that some members might like to try.

(Harry Andruschak, PO Box 606, La Canada-Flintridge, CA 91011, USA)
If I were to start an apa in the UK, I'd try to make it APA:BSFA. There are good reasons. One is that apas are a good place for the neos and younger fans to start... because it is cheap. The apa would be bi-monthly. The initial copy count would be 20.

As the membership rose, I would set a limit of 20 members, 25 copy count. Once the waitlist grew over 5, I'd go up to 25 members and 30 copy count, then call a halt after rising to 35 members and 40 copy count.

It would require for membership 4 pages every 2 mailings, with the initial

zine only needing 2 pages. I'd like the BSFA to pay for the first few mailings, but it is not really needed. Dues on account system... you pay the postage and printing costs. Again, I point out that having the printing done at a central point saves postage. If the contributor wants to have more copies printed, he can so have them, and the extra copies mailed back to him along with his (or her, if you want to be fussy about it) mailing. So he could also send his zine out to non-APA:BSFA members. In fact, this should be encouraged.

Specimen copies would be sent mostly to young fans who have just started out... maybe they have only written a few LOCs, but cannot publish a full zine due to costs. Apas would make a good way for them to get experience.

And I'd do it, too!! All those old farts who say that the UK doesn't need an apa, or cannot support one, would be in for a big surprise.

Right then, what's an apa? The initials stand for Amateur Publishing Association and it is basically a group of fans who regularly contribute to a collective fanzine. The mechanism works roughly as follows: a minimum contribution of, say, four sides is set; the contributor writes, types and duplicates his piece; all contributions are sent to a co-ordinator who collates all the contributions and distributes them to the members. Thus, as Harry says, it's cheap and easy to be active in and a good introduction to fanzines for the new fan - or even the older one who doesn't want to have to produce a complete fanzine himself.

So it appears to me an excellent idea to throw out to the membership to see if anyone likes the idea. Based on Harry's suggestions, here's some preliminary rules:

1. Bi-monthly mailing sent out independently of the regular BSFA mailing.
2. Minimum contribution 4 sides to every 2nd mailing.
3. Contributions to be either on stencil or duplicated already.
4. Mailing costs to be covered by members of the apa.

I've not mentioned the limitation of membership - I don't think this is a good idea for something that is intended to encourage newcomers. But the problem is that the apa fanzine could become too large, and if contributions are going to be sent in to the co-ordinator already duplicated, some idea of the number of copies required is needed, so there would have to be more discussion on this point. So anybody out there interested? Anybody want to co-ordinate? (NO, don't look at me!)

So, as the sun sets on the Harvey's last edition of Matrix we bid a fond farewell to all you loyal BSFA members. No, those aren't tear stains on the pages, just sweat. Editing Matrix hasn't been easy (in fact it's hell keeping to a bi-monthly schedule) but it has been rewarding and a way of meeting new faces in fandom (there must be an easier way though!). Let me finish by wishing all the best to the new editor (you'll need it mate).

John Harvey

Hey, John, what are we going to do without Matrix to take over our lives?
I'm sure we'll find something else, dear

Hey, John, what will we do without papers all over the flat for Matrix?
I'm sure we'll find something else, dear.

Hey, John, what are we going to argue about without Matrix?
I'm sure we'll find something else, dear.

Won't Get Fooled Again?

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN reviewed by JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Time travel is one of SF's most enduring staples, the grandest "What if . . .?" of all, and its paradoxes have been the fascination of almost every SF writer who's ever dealt with the subject. The most oft-quoted illustrative example is of course that relating to the killing of your own grandfather before he sired your father: would you then cease to exist and, if so, how could you have gone back in time to kill him? and to widen the canvas from the personal to the impersonal, supposing you could go back in time to influence the key events of history, to rectify the mistakes that were made at the time and bring into being a more perfect world? As a power fantasy, this last takes quite some beating, and it, together with the grandfather paradox, is one of the points touched upon in The Final Countdown, which has the U.S.S. Nimitz, the largest and most powerful aircraft carrier in the world, caught in a freak electrical storm while exercising in the Pacific off Hawaii and sent back to confront the Japanese fleet as it steams towards Pearl Harbour in December 1941. The captain, a dedicated by-the-book military type played by Kirk Douglas, wants to engage and annihilate the fleet in accordance with his service oath to defend his country against all enemies, while the civilian time-and-motion efficiency expert, played by Martin Sheen, placed aboard the ship for the duration of the exercise wants them to maintain a strict neutrality for fear of jeopardising the existence of both themselves and the world from which they came. With two such characters and such a plotline the stage could have been set for a quite fascinating and thought-provoking film, but the trouble with it is that it's got this bloody great aircraft carrier stuck slap in its middle . . .

The film's producers have naturally received full co-operation from the U.S. Navy, and in the circumstances it's hard to blame them for going gaga over the fact that they've been given the largest warship afloat to play with (wouldn't you?), but in their obsession with it and its sophisticated technology they've effectively crippled The Final Countdown before it's properly begun, throwing away any and all development of the plot and the two main characters in favour of an interminable and ultimately pointless series of scenes of the carrier and its crew at work. There are whole sequences in which the characters, ostensibly discussing their situation, actually do no more than walk from one part of the ship to another in order to show the audience just how triffic it is; and yet more sequences devoted to little better than a chauvinist celebration of the Nimitz's destructive might by means of the launching, in wave after wave after wave after . . ., of its airplanes. (To be sure, the shots of the first F14 Tomcat to go blasting off the deck do have a perversely exhilarating punch, but the second is merely repetitive and the third is boring and the fourth has you struggling to keep your eyes open and the fifth . . .) As if all this wasn't bad enough, the plot itself has more holes in it than even the average hack time travel novelette - how is it, for example, that when the freak electrical storm so conveniently reappears to return the Nimitz to its own time just as its planes are about to swoop down on the Japanese fleet, the planes also manage to return safely despite being 130 miles away, untouched by the storm, when one of the ship's officers, marooned on a remote part of the Hawaiian chain, remains in 1941?

This officer is actually rather important to the film's denouement, which touches upon the question of one man's ability to be in the same place at the same

as his younger counterpart; but this, as with so much else in the film, is simply thrown away unused. So too is the earlier subplot that revolves around his knowledge of the Pacific War and of the way in which the U.S.A. might have conducted it if a certain U.S. Senator (whom the Nimitz naturally rescues) hadn't been killed by the strafing runs made on his yacht by two Japanese Zeros the day before Pearl Harbour's catastrophe, since the chances of his becoming Roosevelt's Vice-President after the 1944 elections were apparently very high - but instead of a discussion of possible changes in the course of post-war history we get a desperately twee and oh-so-blushingly romantic attraction between the officer and the Senator's secretary (played by Katherine Ross displaying even less emotional range than Charlton Heston), and the script-writers contrive to kill the Senator anyway. "Preserving the balance," I suppose one might term it - and, certainly, everything of any genuine interest in the film is ultimately cancelled out by something or other. Not even Kirk Douglas's dimpled chin and Martin Sheen's boyish grin can survive the sheer tedium that infuses so much of The Final Countdown and neither, I suspect, will you.

THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY - Ken Campbell's stage

production at the Rainbow - reviewed by COLIN FINE

The Rainbow is one of the most amazing and delightful buildings it has ever been my pleasure to see. It is almost worth a £3 ticket just to experience its roomy Art-Nouveau foyers, its steeply raked auditorium with not so much a proscenium as a castle, the remarkable colonnades down the sides.

Ken Campbell's productions in the past have also been impressive and enjoyable. I did not succeed in getting a ticket to the Hitch-Hiker's Guide at the I.C.A. last year, but such as I have seen were very fine.

What a pity, therefore, that this marriage of two entertaining eccentrics should be almost devoid of virtue.

The 'almost' is quickly explained. Some few features of the performance merit appreciative note: the laser display and one or two of the actors.

Let us take the rest in order of increasing seriousness.

That some of the effects did not work cannot fairly be stressed - that sort of thing happens on the first night of a run. That the lighting was erratic is more of the same: though it seems to me a fault of the lighting design that one pair of spotlights was used both on the stage and on the Book (who was suspended above the stage): some degree of unsynchronised swivel is inevitable, I would have thought. That the sound was often bad is more serious but it was not that it was generally poor, more that certain things were wrong: the Vogons were distorted to incomprehensibility: the balance was such that dialogue was lost behind music and so on.

Much more important was the quality of the acting, which was for the most part bad: the thing had the air of a village-hall production, with people

standing around waiting for somebody to say something, or compensating for lack of any idea how to deliver lines by Declaiming Them Melodramatically - Trillian was a noticeable offender here. One only of the cast - playing Slartibartfast - was professional enough to ad lib through the various hitches, though it must be said that the Book also had a way of filling awkward pauses: "Emergency Speech No. 1. Would you like to hear about . . .", and he knew the speech at least as well as three-quarters of the audience.

But the worst thing of all was the direction: in particular the galling, crawling pace.

Everything was too slow: the pauses as they moved about on an obviously unaccustomedly large stage; the slowed-down excitement of the whale; and worst of all the gratuitous and mostly incomprehensible interminable rock gig that opened the second half: about 20 minutes I think. This slowness is well represented by the times of that first night: it started at 8, ended at 12.10!

Having thus demolished almost the whole performance, I must now turn apologist. It is clear in retrospect that the apparent eccentricity in giving a week of 'previews' followed by (originally) about 3 nights of run was in fact quite seriously meant. They gave every indication of having been given use of the theatre for the first time that day: the performance we saw was quite likely the first full run-through on site. It was noticeable, for example, that the sound was better (i.e. worked more often) in the second half - perhaps the interlude following the interval was extended to give them time to get it right? And I am told that it did not run so ridiculously late other nights - and nor was there a 'cabaret' after the interval.

However, improve the technical faults never so much, I cannot believe that the standard of performance I saw on the first night could ever raise the show above 'poor'.

What a pity!



MAILBAG

Well, here we are, our last Mailbag and it looks like a rather bumper edition this time. We hope you enjoy it and let's get straight into the meat...

Although I've passed on comments about PI to Joseph Nicholas since PI seems the best place for a discussion on its own contents, some general thoughts on SF and criticism have surfaced.

PHIL PALMER, 3 Longlands Road, Sidcup, Kent

One can rather sympathise with the bozos (Watkins, Whittington, etc.) in the last issue of your inestimable publication. The BSFA's idea of criticism seems to have deteriorated into a parrot-chant of "Asimov is bad, Heinlein is bad, Niven is bad, Anderson is very bad, Watson is bad..." and so on. This of course is the result of you-know-who's influence, but it has become so incredibly passe and boring to attack JN these days that instead it is only right that I should commend him for making such a good fist of reviewing all the drivel that comes out every two months.

Part of Joe's trouble is that the publishers trot out so much instant garbage that it seems almost necessary to respond automatically with "rubbish... rubbish...rubbish..." as the production line moves it inevitably past. But why allow ourselves to be conditioned by the evil plutocrats in this simple-minded fashion? It now transpires that there are people who think that unless there are funny stains on the pages whenever the hero's rippling biceps are mentioned, a book cannot be latently homosexual. Perhaps Paperback Inferno could sprout a junior section in which the techniques used by pro writers to get us to buy their books and subscribe to their inane philosophies might be explained to the unperceptive.

The rest of Joe's trouble is his audience of creeps. You see, it damages the personality and judgement of this lovable, if crusty, old eccentric to be repeatedly told what a wonderful influence on the twentieth century nurds like Campbell were. Joseph now appears quite incapable of appreciating the brilliance of The Martian Inca or Miracle Visitors because he feels Ian Watson is pulling sf back into the idea-is-hero mould of rubbishy stories like marooned off Vesta (or whatever it was called). This, incidentally, must surely be an inconsistency of his, unless he regards Jorge Luis Borges in the same way. Tanith Lee has written two mind-enhancing sf novels, Don't Bitch The Sun and Drinking Sapphire Wine, which get panned for containing a synthetic idiom called Jang, which is presumably judged by the BSFA not on its own merits, which are terrific, but on the record of its bloody awful predecessors, such as the cringeworthy crypto-Russian of A Clockwork Orange.

To David Watkins I would like to suggest that instead of persevering with these unworthy efforts of my own to convince him, he tries reading the article by Tom Disch in Explorations of the Marvellous, ed. P Nicholls, published by Fontana for an unlikely sum of money, concerning the homosexuality in Starship Troopers. This quite changed my own appreciation of this

work so that where my first copy left the train I was on an appreciable time before I did, my second copy kept me glued to my armchair watching out for the leathers and the earrings and for bits that other people might have missed, such as nights of torrid passion in the sergeant-major's arms.

Unfortunately, however, beneath the rib-tickling attractions of this and similar books, there lies the sad and pitiable state of affairs that people take them seriously. As a result the American right sells its readership a sterile half-baked farrago of how wonderful the world would be if only America was great, suggesting that America would be great if it only followed the pioneering spirit of free markets and public floggings. This of course is Starship Troopers again, but it only goes to show that some people will believe anything if they read it in a book. (They believed Dianetics and they believed in the whatever-it-was space drive. Did it have a crankshaft?) The most breath-taking piece of proof by ignorance must be Heinlein's mud-pies and apple-pies, with which he "dismisses" the Marxist theory of value and hence all economic theories with which he disagrees. If no amount of labour can turn a mud pie into an apple-pie made by a great chef, then no amount of labour can be said to increase the value of an item and hence only its market value can be said to be its true value. It's almost a pity that economics is the method precisely by which one can turn mud-pies into apple-pies, namely by selling the one (after baking them, assembling them, and calling them 'houses') and buying the other. Or by producing the one according to one's means and receiving the other according to one's needs, depending on what system you prefer. As for all the public floggings, which Heinlein seems to regard as bracing and patriotic, I noticed they had them last year in Pakistan under a system very like the one he recommends. The victims were miked up to loudspeakers so that their humiliation could be properly observed, but rather unsportingly they took the opportunity to shout pro-Bhutto solgans which the crowd applauded.

It is an enormous pity that the level of appreciation in the BSFA should still be grinding along at this low level. These arguments, and better ones, were all made about 15 years ago by New Worlds and it would be nice to think that we could learn something in this time. It is quite frustrating to spend an evening on a letter about American half-rate authors when one would much rather be addressing more subtle and interesting questions of a more recent vintage, such as the hairbreadth division between the previously-mentioned unworth ones and the unparalleled Keith Laumer, or the fissure between the excellent Alan Garner and the awful Susan Cooper, or even anything at all to do with a science fiction of the present and not of the past. Sigh.

*****We'll return to some more comments on David Watkins's letter at a later stage, but now here's some more about criticism.

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 Commercial Street, Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire
Criticism, it seems to me, both in the BSFA journals and elsewhere, is becoming an artform akin to the novels under scrutiny rather than the original service to the reading public. I mean, to take the current crop, Alan Dean Foster and Piers Anthony aren't going to be worried by any negative reviews; they've got their money, and it isn't going to worry the publishers either; they wouldn't be publishing if they didn't expect a return on their investment, for they are after all men of business, they know what their market is, and what will sell... They know there's a great gathering of people out there who'll buy that latest Anthony, however old; and to this end, would even welcome scathing reviews, on the grounds that bad publicity is better than no publicity.

Oh, in the myriad of alternate worlds so often forecast by sf writers, there's probably justice on one, where the reviewer's word is law, where the publishers come bowing and scraping to his throne for his seal of approval; but in this imperfect world, books are sold by what will give the best return, what will

sell. And most often, it is the entertaining and undemanding; which state of affairs is due more to the reader than the publisher. The only answer for a reviewer these days would seem to be silence, or a refusal to admit that these books exist!

Personally, I favour a more positive form of criticism, such as accidentally knocking the offending volume off the shelf at Smiths or Menzies, and just as accidentally grinding it into the floor; or (an even more positive step) take a job as a publisher's reader and spot the offending novel before forests are decimated to put it on the market; negative criticism gets you nowhere...

Please, no more on The Empire Strikes Back! I've seen clips from the film together with personal appearances by the stars on Blue Peter, seen Mark Hamill interviewed (with more clips) on Ask Aspel, seen The Risk Business featuring the British film industry, or lack of it, with yet more clips and interviews, and even seen the Everyman religious programme get in on the act with the myth of the hero, with particular reference to The Empire... and Star Wars. And then, I've read a four-page colour feature in Time, one on how the special effects were made, in the Sunday Times Magazine, and all the story in pull-out pages from the Sun; in fact, I could almost write a thesis on the film, without the bother of going to see it; and after all this exposure, I don't think I really want to...

*****It is a shame the way the advertising agencies employed by the film makers these days subscribe to the overkill theory... Eve and I have been put off several films through this, but believe me The Empire is well worth seeing. Sorry, Roger, there is some further comment coming up on that subject, but you can skip it if you insist!

MARK GREENER, 2 White Hart Close, Buntingford, Herts

Personally I do not take the views of any critic seriously. All people have their own tastes and any review can only be subjective. Reviews do have their place however as they give a taste of the book in question.

Sturgeon's law states that 90% of everything is crap (including his own work?) and this applies to artwork on books. I have seen perhaps 5 good artists in the many who's artwork I have seen. Artwork on a book is there with the express purpose of selling a book. Although authors may know how to write they may not know how to draw a cover; thus if a book, to be successful, needs semi-nude females on the cover we'll just have to grin and bear it. Anyway Sphere, Pan et al are not going to take much notice of a few sf fen now are they?

HUSSAIN R MOHAMED, 64 Stanthorpe Road, LONDON SW16

What would you say to changing the name of Matri to Mailbag? Who wants to read articles and serious scientific dissertations when we can revel in the invective and indignation of an SF lettercolumn! Mailbag anyway says I. I was delighted though a little surprised to see so many members defending their wrong-headedness and execrable taste in such spirited fashion. If I did not feel it was fruitless I would suggest the disparagers of the Campbell Cohorts try looking into exactly why so many apparently sensible people (BSFA members yet!) like these authors. Sadly I doubt such a thing will happen - we shall instead be subjected to periodic outbursts of similar sour self-righteous "criticism" which in turn will face rebuttal and so the saga will continue. For what seems like a thousand years I have read "reviews" in Foundation (to name but one UK SF journal) more or less telling me what is good SF and what is bad, what I should read and what I should avoid like the plague. As the man said, frankly my dear I don't give a damn. Constructive, lucid, perceptive argument I will buy - hysteria can go fly a kite. Chauvenism likewise. Remember what Mr Cowper said about ego.

Offhand I can think of only three people from the SF circle whose opinion in review (and in other ways I suppose) I really value - Algis Budrys, Fritz Leiber and Harlan Ellison. Important characteristics shared by all are literacy and compassion. For all his use of thundering rhetoric I have never felt Mr Ellison to be even fractionally malicious in his critiques. A passing OED whispers, "Eclectic - something to do with disparate taste?" Damn right!

Incidentally, in the current F & SF Mr Budrys denies SF is a genre. Now there is a subject which could profitably fill a whole year of Matrixes. But I doubt if it ever will. Ah well.

MICK HOLDER, 137 Whipp's Cross Rd, Leytonstone, London

Between the writers & readers of the stuff you publish there must be the largest collection of SF snobs in the world. You spend too much time analysing the author and slaging him off as sexist/flat/blue/queer/red/normal bloody-well anything apart from admitting that a story is a good yarn.

If the BSFA (Bloody Sweet FA?) was about at the time I'd love to see the letters and reviews you published about "Stranger in a Strange Land", "Time Enough for Love", "Rendezvous with Rama" etc. Probably dismissed them as sexist excreta for fans of "Star Wars", "Alien" & "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century", which were all bloody good & ENJOYABLE even though they were lamebrain. Better some SF on film than none!

Let's face it, Heinlein, Asimov, Herbert etc have all written hum books, but what about the brilliant, classic SF they have written. Sod snobbery, let's get back to reading books/watching films to enjoy them.

*****The BSFA was in existence in the early 70's Mick, although Matrix didn't exist then, and we had hoped to be able to quote some of the reviews in answer to your letter, but unfortunately tempus fugit and the deadline is too close. Perhaps the new editor would like to look out some of the old reviews - it might be a laugh...

I know I said I was trying to pass all PI comments to Joseph for inclusion in that publication, but here are two that have slipped through.

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

Miss... Please Miss, can I join the Society Dedicated To Annoying & Aggravating Joe Nicholas By Directing All Comments On His Paperback Inferno To Matrix or Vector Or Focus Or... I don't want to add anything further to the Asimov/Heinlein/Anderson debate, enough's been said but I would like to pick up a couple of points he made in his last two BLOOD ON THE RACKS Columns. I'm afraid I find his views, so oft expressed almost as wearisome as he obviously finds those of Analog and Omni.

He talks about the naivety of people who believe that because it is possible to do something, it will be done. There is a certain amount of truth in this, but surely it is better to look ahead, to dream of what might be attempted, so that perhaps, eventually, even a small part might come into existence than to sit back and contemplate 'reality'. Remember all those dreams of 'conquering' ("Neo-colonialist" they cry) the oceans, farming the fish etc so that they and we might survive. Wouldn't it be more positive to work towards that than sit back and watch the detergent bottles wash up on the beach, or the Japanese and Russian fleets hunt the whales into extinction?

Is it escapist to allow people to have their dreams of making a better world? Of course we can still have personal relationships if we went back to the caves but what would there be to talk about; the pH value of the rain perhaps?

Of course there is a tendency to preach Instant Salvation but that should be recognized and allowed for by those working towards achieving a more modest goal. Even so, I must admit I often find that some of the literature is pretty tiresome. Often it gives the impression that the settlers of the High Frontier will be packing six-guns on their hips as they fly out to 'homestead' the planetoids.

"Art? Suffering? Toil? Sweat? Never; talk of money is the mark of only the unrepentant hack."

So who's talking of money? Will he deny us a few hundred billion dollars to fulfil our artistic, our creative needs. We don't all get our kicks out of Conrad.

Is it any wonder that in interstellar communications everyone might be listening and no-one talking if all civilizations think like those people who huddle round their fires and refuse to look over their shoulders into the darkness behind.

The 'Space Age' is not over (it's just having a subtler, but growing, impact on our society) and if electromagnetic radiation proves to be the only possible means of interstellar contact then a vigorous space programme is essential to the construction of the extremely large antennae needed. (And a bonus; they would enable astronomers to escape the earthbound interference from millions of electric typewriters endlessly churning out polemics on the futility of "banging the rocks together.")

IAN BELL, 87 High Street, Chalgrove, Oxford

It would seem from the last issue of Paperback Inferno (Vol 3 No 6), that Joseph Nicholas is falling into exactly the same trap as that which he continually accuses Robert Heinlein et al of, namely sacrificing the quality of his writing on the altar of didacticism. He has turned his reviews into dogmatic diatribes, in which he dismisses those SF authors with right-wing views as 'thugs and hacks', and then proceeds to deal with their books in the same high-handed manner.

While Joseph Nicholas is perfectly entitled to his own political views, the excessive intrusion of these into his book reviews has resulted in a situation whereby he is not so much assessing the literary/entertainment value of the book in question, but is instead giving his own personal appraisal of the political stance of the author. A good example of this is his review of John Wyndham's 'Web', in which his unfavourable critique of the book is seemingly entirely based on his interpretation of the work as a political allegory in which the wicked bourgeoisie triumph over the innocent 'lumpenproletariat'. However, not content with having fearlessly exposed Wyndham as a 'reactionary', thus enlightening us poor naive BSFA members!, Joseph then goes on to use the review as a platform for his condemnation of the right-wing 'American SF community'. The overall effect of this is to make the piece of writing more like Moses' Sermon on the Mount than a book review. It is as if Joseph sees the task of evaluating the book under review as of secondary importance to his statements about the state of SF today and world politics.

My quarrel with Joseph Nicholas's style of reviewing is that he seems to have descended to the level of, to use his own words from the 'Gernsback Delusion' from the last Paperback Inferno, 'empty sloganising and vociferous name-calling'. His categorisation of American right-wing SF authors as 'wolfish reactionaries' is simplistic in the extreme, and ultimately detracts from the arguments which he puts forward. A more perceptive and balanced approach would, I believe, be far more persuasive than the highly emotional, almost hysterical, 'blood and guts' approach being followed at present.

I should like to say, lest I be misunderstood, that I am neither a supporter of right-wing policies nor a fan of Jerry Pournelle. However, to call the latter a 'thug' is the type of cheap sensationalism worthy only of the Sun or the Daily Express, and does Joseph Nicholas no credit whatsoever. Pournelle may have been accused of many things by BSFA members who attended Seacon, but I don't think GEH was one of them!

*****Joseph says he'll reply in the next issue (new editor willing!).
Now I'm coming under fire from...

CYRIL SIMSA, 18 Muswell Avenue, London

How can you on the one hand print letters complaining that a small and vocal fringe is trying to impose their tastes upon the membership at large, and on the other hand accept Philip J Wright's suggestion that Blake's 7 fans ought to be weaned to "real" SF. Whilst you are not quite as extreme as Philip Wright's letter itself (you do at least only suggest these people should be "made aware" of the "much broader" SF spectrum), your comments are patronising, and presumptuous too, to boot: who says a Star Wars "type" of fan (you'll note the word is yours, not mine) wants to discover "real" SF, any more than some of our members seem to want to learn about Joe Nicholas's taste in fiction.

You are being inconsistent.

My own attitude is that every individual has the right to their opinions, and that equally they are entitled to think others wrong. If one is sure somebody's wrong, one should be free to argue with them, using every technique at one's disposal (not excluding strident language). That does not, however, mean the listener has to agree.

N.B. - this process is fascistic only if force is applied to reinforce the verbal onslaught (David Watkins please take note).

*****I suppose I was being slightly patronising but I deny being presumptuous. If "Star Wars type" fans don't want to discover "real" SF then they won't, no matter what we do. All I was suggesting is that we help those who want to, to broaden their SF horizons (is that presumptuous?)

Now here is a positive suggestion...

ALAN FERGUSON, 26 Hoccroft Court, Hoe Lane, Enfield, Middx

I was interested to read Philip Wright's comments about the BSFA introducing "Star Wars/Blake's Seven Type Fans" to "far better sf". Although I have only recently joined, I have as yet seen little evidence of this introduction to better reading habits. In the mailings that I have received I have ploughed my way through masses of very negative criticism of recent publications. The "most SF is rubbish" school of thought is unlikely to encourage the newcomer to hunt for his renewal form when the time comes.

On the premise that there is a lot more of the past than there is of the present, it stands to reason that there's an awful lot of good SF that is known of, but seldom mentioned.

When friends ask me about SF books, I don't discourage them by saying that a lot of it is not worth the trouble. I tell them that SF IS GREAT and recommend a worthwhile read. Can I therefore suggest that the BSFA starts a recommendation list that takes a wholly positive view of what to read rather than the continual negative one that comes across. The list could be of 20 to 30 titles and would only fill about half a page, but it could be an important guide to the

newcomer and give him/her an indication of what the rest of the membership is reading and enjoying.

I am not saying that all modern writing is bad, nor am I saying that all the older stuff is classic, I would just like to see the same gusto and energy put into praising a fine story that is expended on destroying an average one.

So please, make an effort. The idea is a simple one, just put on the list what you would recommend to any friend that was about to buy a terrible book, or when someone down the pub asks "what's this guy Priest's stuff like?". Complete the following sentences, and you've helped start the list:

"If you like stories that play around with time, you'll love _____"
"Bob Shaw's latest was OK but have you read _____"
"There are loads of parallel world stories, but nothing touches _____"
"For the tops in compulsive reading, you must try _____"
"If you're after memorable characters try _____"

All it takes is a couple of lines at the end of each letter to mention a good read or an old memorable one.

*****Eve & I think that's a good idea and you'll find Alan's suggestions, together with a few of our own elsewhere in this issue. It could be the start of a regular column but that's up to you (and the incoming editor). It might be of even greater help if any suggestions can be accompanied by a couple of sentences by way of explanation of why these books are thought of as good. That way if readers haven't heard of it they can have some idea of whether it's the type of book they would enjoy.

Now let's hear about 'The Empire Strikes Back' - this is the bit you skip Roger Waddington.....

PAUL OLDROYD, 136 Askern Chase, Hunslet, Leeds

I must disagree with Chris Evans's review of 'The Empire Strikes Back' in M30. 'Empire' was a much better film than 'Star Wars' in that the characters became two-dimensional, the script was immeasurably superior (apart from an abominable scene at the start, where the Rebel Commander tells Han Solo what a Jolly Good Chap he is, and how he'll be Sorry To Lose Him), but best of all it made 'Star Wars' fit into place. I always wondered where the story got to in that film; now I know - it was never supposed to exist. Neither film really has a beginning, middle and end - although 'Star Wars' beat 'Empire' marginally on this count - but then you wouldn't expect them to. The very fact that the action that occurs is on a very small and inconclusive scale compared to the immensity of the Empire creates a feeling of reality.

Neatly juxtaposed against this is Luke's very mortality. He cocks things up monotonously time after time, and is ultimately dispensable. The last we see of Yoda, we hear him muttering something to the effect that he's got somebody else up his sleeve. Sorry, Chris, no way is Luke larger than life.

I must be the only person who hasn't seen the Muppets: this, however, pays dividends when Frank Oz turns up out of context, so Yoda was a completely fresh character to me. In fact the thing that sprang to mind as soon as Yoda appeared was that Oz had lifted Gollum straight out of 'the Hobbit' for Yoda. It worked perfectly.

Doubts remain, however, about the whole enterprise. A more vivid depiction of the glories of war won't be found anywhere outside 'Where Eagles Dare' and its like. The same old value-judgements apply as do in America today - boy still

unfailingly falls in love with girl, good is good and bad is bad. If Lucas manages an 'Apocalypse Now' somewhere in this saga, with Luke or whoever finally realising the horror and ultimate futility of war, then he'll have pulled it off. Somehow I doubt if he'll manage it.

*****I haven't heard anybody say they hated the film, but most people have reservations, myself included. Compare it to 'Battlestar Galactica - The Cylon Attack' and I think nobody would hesitate to name the better film.

In a similar vein here's some comment on the Hitch Hikers Guide.

MIKE BROWN, 20 Huntsmans Way, Milton Ernest, Nr Bedford

Re the letter from Philip Wright on page 29 of Matrix 30 regarding the second series of HHGTTG. I would like to add my thoughts and comments. I think it can be safely stated that the 2nd series was not the success that the first six were. Sadly the record was a BOMBER too. It is too easy to say that, flushed with the success of the first series Douglas Adams lost his towel. I don't know what part John Lloyd played in the writing of the first script, but I sus' an editorial and focusing one. The very act of sitting down and reading through a script with somebody of like mind helps to think of new lines, extra situations and additional background. After the first series, episode 7, as I call it (that was the odd one between the 1st and 2nd series) was an episode which really became a 'get out of that' situation. The appearance of the Frog Star was I feel borne out of the Death Star/Star Wars film. However it did allow entry into a 2nd series, and Fit the First was quite a good episode.

Sadly, although these five episodes had inspired moments certain obvious characterizations got lost. This I feel is where things start to go wrong. Dear ol' Marvin, the hit of the first series didn't follow up his well-loved chatch-phrases, and was found lacking. To coin a Kenneth Williams saying, Marvin, unlike Zaphod, wasn't fully serviced. As for Zaphod, well, Mark Wing Davey fitted, developed, enlarged and WAS Zaphod. Only the script screwed him up in the last show. Whilst he showed he could overcome everything the universe could throw at him excepting the last episode, which in my opinion should have not been written in the Total Perspective Vortex. It was completely wrong to use Stephen Moore as the Man in the Shack, even the shell-shocked Radio Times listed him played by Ron Hate! Ken Campbell's characterization of Megadodo's wayout publisher was as 'straight' as a BBC radio 3 announcer introducing a piano recital, and was completely wrong for this character. The plot resolved that the destruction of the Earth was all down to Zaphod, yet if you've followed the story from the beginning this didn't seem to be the case. The verbals from the Man in the Shack had more than a hint of Vonnegut, which might be all right for some radio show, but did nothing for the story except confuse and make a nonsense of the last episode. To sum up, the last show had all the hallmarks of a writer bent on suicide, as far as the show is concerned, that is. In fact, in an article in Broadcast Magazine on 21st January this year, Adams was quoted as saying. "Up to yesterday I was determined I wouldn't do another series, but this morning I awoke with an idea I would like to work on..." One can't help but wish that the idea hadn't come sooner, thus preventing the mess and confused writing of that last show.

Finally, one last thought, as this concept has not improved as it has expanded, I can only dread what the guys at TV Centre are facing trying to get two heads on Zaphod to work. Special FX over the years have become extremely clever but boy, have they got their work cut out for them with that one!

*****Now for some further reaction to David Watkins's comments on Anderson in the last issue.

ANDY SAWYER, 59 Mallory Rd, Birkenhead

Interesting letter-column. David Watkins makes some good points about Asimov - although considering the adulation the man gets a bit of reassessment wouldn't come amiss - but shows some strange opinions in his last paragraph. Oh dear - I suppose I'd better not turn Matrix into the British Sexual Fantasy Association newsletter, but briefly: you're confusing, mate, the physical signs of sexual arousal with the way the mind represses or sublimates desires which are part of our nature, but which are not deemed "nice" by our particular culture. Sorry, but just as the review does not do anything so bat-witted as "seek to prove that Anderson is homosexual", nor does your "proof" show that his fiction does not offer a paen to the "all guys together" vision which certain American writers use to express toughness and virility but which when you look at it dissipates to boorishness and banality.

Nice to see Rob Hansen's piece on Judge Dredd although I'd quarrel with a few assessments. In the first place, 2000 AD, when it came out, was trash. The 'change' came with Starlord which lasted far too short a time but which added freshness and wit to 2000 AD when the inevitable amalgamation came. Strips like "Strontium Dog" and "Ro-Busters" leavened the unrelenting diet of nastiness and "if it's different, stomp it" which you get in most of IPC's comics.

Judge Dredd is not "based on attitudes now regarded as unfashionable. The "fashionable" attitudes nowadays seem to be just exactly those "illiberal" ideas of solving problems by brutality and "might-makes-right". Witness the moral sense shown by our present Government, the open preparation for nuclear war that's taking place, the "man-in-the-street's" attitude to the poor, unemployed, youth, blacks, foreigners, etc. When Rob writes of "the very novelty of these ideas in modern comics", if I didn't know better, I'd think he hadn't read any comic produced in the last 30 years. These attitudes are part of the general currency of comics, of any form of popular art which glorifies the "independent use of force" by whatever superhero who lays his will on the populace and defends the status quo.

But Rob's assessment of JD as something different is totally correct, and I'd put this down to a more subtle approach on the writer's part. Given the background to the strip - overcrowded, high-technology Megacity surrounded by the result of atomic war - dictatorship and fascist control may be the only way of keeping any form of viable society functioning. Megacity One is our society extrapolated into the future - is it possible to avoid this fate or have we already made the decisions which will lead to it? I'm quite aware that most people who read the strip will not think in those terms, but if you look just a little closer into it you find a tragic edge, a sense of waste which makes Judge Dredd more than just an exercise in putting the boot in.

Anyway - what about the Stainless Steel Rat, then? 2000 AD is currently serialising "The Stainless Steel Rat Saves the World". Excellent stuff!

*****Simon Ounsley appears to have raised a little ire in a couple of fans with a piece which I thought quite innocent (am I naive? Don't answer that!).

CHUCK CONNOR, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Nr Halesworth, Suffolk
Just a quick word or two for Simon Ounsley, and that silly hoax he's trying to put over - viz TC47M (Could be right with the cassette deck bit, Simon, put your glasses back on and have another check of the Sony catalogue.)

Maybe he was sort of short for pages - hence the 'guidelines for setting up a club/group' - but surely this is the wrong way of filling a page? Maybe it would've been better if Simon had come straight to the point and let everyone know that he just can't stand Rob Jackson's guts. Personally I think so -

should've done what the rest of us do and write a personal letter to Mailbag, instead of letting his emotions run away with him. Bad taste is something that I pride myself in, but there are times when even I draw the line - such would've been the case the Chrounsley's hoax (surely your lax editorial policy should have warranted the editing out of that?)

The major give-away was the bit about "long fiction" not being split up. Nobody in their right minds could think that a fiction fanzine can print a full novel whole? All right, I admit that I think that word limits are stupid, but only when they're not realistic word limits. Now I'm not going to start any "Limit Wars" (I've already had enough trouble from one little tyke about such things), but I'd just like to ask Simon what he would've done if people believed all that garbage and actually wrote in to LIFE ON MARS?

Personally, this sort of childishness, especially in an official clubzine, really pisses me off something chronic. If he feels that strongly about it then use Keith Freeman and publish a one-shot - at least it'd keep the BSFA duplicating service going (and no, Keith didn't pay me for that plug, more's the pity).

*****Are you being serious, Chuck, or are you perpetrating a very clever piss-take. You can't honestly be serious, can you? No-one in their right mind would take a small joke so seriously. To get facts straight - the joke was not perpetrated by Simon, he received a letter to that effect and adds "I was only doing my job by including it!" Surely if anybody's going to rant and rave it should be Rob Jackson himself, who has been conspicuous in his silence - at least he can take a joke - hell, that's what fandom is all about anyway. And as to our lax editorial policy - well, we'll just ignore that.

Right, I'll drag the direction of Mailbag back to a saner view of the BSFA and more constructive suggestions.

MICHAEL ASHLEY, 86 St James Rd, Mitcham, Surrey

There's one point I'd like to raise in the Matrix mailbag and that's the increasing overlap between articles on both BSFA zines and non-BSFA zines; e.g. 'Genocide for Fun and Profit' and 'Meetings with Remarkable Men' (Drilkjis and Vector) and 'Eau De Clone' (Inca and Matrix). In the past when fandom and the BSFA were different groups with little overlap, this hardly mattered; but today there is a much larger overlap: large chunks of the Drilkjis and Inca audience also belong to the BSFA, and may feel a little 'cheated' to be constantly reading re-cycled material (six quid's a lot of money to read what's available for the usual). Well, okay, 'constantly' is an exaggeration but it still occurs. Arguments for reprints are, I suppose, that they show newer BSFA fans the quality of some material in fanzines (and what better examples than Langford, Priest, and Shaw), and that good articles deserve to be read throughout the world and thus shouldn't be restricted to a British SF Association fanzine. (Thus do I answer my original query. End of debate.)

That last point has an interesting follow-through: as the content of all four BSFA zines is of considerable interest to American fans (e.g. Chris Priest's SFWA article), could we perhaps go for increased membership in the US? Their reaction to the acerbic views of Joe Nicholas on, say, American magazines would make for an interesting and lively letter column (aside from the point of view of fairness; allowing the victim the right of reply as kick after kick goes in). I know this sounds paradoxical, filling the British SF Association with Americans, but, at the very least, it would put a few more pence in the BSFA coffer.

*****As far as I'm aware our US agent is making quite an effort to encourage transatlantic members and although overseas membership might appear paradoxical, it is a worthwhile asset to the BSFA to have these disparate groups in its membership. Now here're some comments from one of them (nice link, eh?)...

ROELOF GOUDRIAAN, PO Box 90255, Amsterdam, Netherlands

James Corley made some interesting remarks in the last mailbag. Complaints about differences in exposure are not new, but still true. Only remedy I see is wait about three years before giving an award. That may not be a commercial success however.

Opening the administration of nominations for the BSFA award all year seems useless to me. Reasons for this bold statement: (1) the best novel of the year should have some impact. If it's totally forgotten in 11 months you had better forget the whole award; (2) a lot of extra work for you; (3) more impulsive nominations made before a calm comparison; (4) it still doesn't solve problems like differences in exposure.

Furthermore, if you want to raise voting figures of the BSFA award the ONLY way to do this is to activate more BSFA members: it's nice when you get into triple figures by throwing voting open to Eastercon members, but the result is not a BSFA award any more.

*****More reaction to James Corley comes from.....

ARNOLD AKIEN, 6 Dunblane Road, Seaburn, Sunderland

As James Corley mentioned, the obscurity of the BSFA Award does render some protection against corruption. But we are off to a bad start, already we are concealing the significance of the voting figures, and I can see dangers of Award-fever taking hold. These awards have a tendency to become far better known than the organisations which start them. How many people who buy a book with "Nebula Award Winner" on its cover know much about the organisation which started it? To them the award is the organisation. And because the Award circus does sell books the publishers love Awards; so there is a strong chance that with sufficient effort we could get out award emblazoned on book covers. And eventually the BSFA Award would be so well known that, in the public mind, it would be the sole reason the BSFA's existence. We could indeed get cheap publicity this way. Bit it would be cheap! I repeat, do we want the BSFA's chief claim to fame to be that we run the British equivalent of the Nebula?

There are better ways of proclaiming our existence, and importance. The best prospect by far is the proposal that we should spearhead the effort to hold the 1984 European Convention in Britain. As an objective for the BSFA this idea can't be beaten. If I understand you correctly up till now cons in this country; whether they were British cons, or world cons, were initiated by small groups of enthusiastic fans, with a bit of support by the BSFA after the bid was won by that group. But the bid for the 84 Eurocon would be different, it would be a BSFA initiated bid, won and largely run by BSFA members. This is the way the BSFA should gain attention and build up its prestige; not by setting up hollow awards in the hope that if we make a large enough monolith people will pay attention, and not realise what a hollow sham it is.

Bringing the Eurocon to Britain is something we could be proud of, it would be a solid accomplishment and would gain us prestige we would have earned. Not fame gained through operating a slick confidence trick! At least one enthusiastic BSFA member thinks that the Eurocon is the best idea since sliced Jerry Pournelle.

I've figured out the reason, the real reason, for the non-appearance of the BSFA Info Book. Alan's having it bound in the form of a little red book, with "The Thoughts of Chairman Dorey" in large gold letters across its cover. Mind you I must admit he does do the 'great leader' bit terribly well. The way he greeted the cheering crowds at Unicon with a Winston Churchill style V for victory salute, as he stepped out of his chauffeur-driven Rolls, was truly inspiring! At least I think it was a V-for-victory sign.

*****I don't think the idea behind Eurocon is for the BSFA to run the whole thing, but it is usual for a national organisation to arrange the bid and support the eventual committee, Arnold.
And now for something completely different, a few contentious comments...

KEN MANN, 22 Pennethorne Rd, Peckham, London SE15

Rising at the moment is a groundswell against fandom by fans. They don't like the established cliques ('Fandom is the 9 people in the BSFA who send their fanzines to one another.') and the idea that to be successful in fandom (whatever that is), you need to conform to the dictates of the chosen few.

Please understand that this is not the reaction of neos (they abhor the jargon as well) but of fans who want to enjoy themselves in their own way - and the established cliques can go to hell: they have become ingrown and irrelevant.

Fandom does not exist. People are more important.

Being a Big Name Fan does not impress them (they have no desire to become one); and they see no reason to pander to egos.

To quote a friend of mine: "In the old days, there was only one creative SF anarchist: Mike Moorcock. Today, we have at least 20 doing their own thing without reference to any other person."

These renegades will (I hope) revitalise the importance of the individual, rather than the group. By the way, these people BITE.

With the splintering of fandom into various specialist and fringe groups (media, Dr Who, Blake's Seven, authors, etc), the original concept has been lost. In olden times, everyone knew each other and a round of drinks for the whole of fandom would not stretch personal resources too much. Today, you'd need an overdraft the size of Fort Knox to meet the drinks bill.

Fandom has become outdated as a concept. It is time for fans to be allowed to breathe again. The established order will fight, of course; but individuals are always more flexible. Watch the 'fanzine' listings. If the reviewer does not understand what's happening, then buy the zine. He'll probably slag it off cos he's confused.

I apologise to the new Mike Moorcocks for communicating in fandom's language instead of plain English, but understanding is half the battle....

WE ALSO HEARD FROM
William Goodall

"I find On the Carpet a very useful and enjoyable feature - though perhaps the majority of BSFA members (not being into fanzines) do not. Paradoxically, if

more members did take an interest and write off to the recommended zines, it would cause chaos - what fanzine editor could cope with (say) 500 enquiries?"

ARNOLD AKIEN (again)

Who sent a colour postcard of Seaburn.

MICKY POLLAND

Who also sent a colour postcard but this time of a rather splendid castle in Germany.

MARTIN PERRY

Whose letter will probably end up split between Paperback Inferno and the next Vector.

WILLIAM BAINS

Who is also condemned to P.I.!

Geoff Cox, Paul Thorley, Eunice Pearson, Richard Allen and Clive Yelf, Chris Lewis.

Thank you, all. Our postman is going to wonder what's happening without all your letters weighing down his sack every two months.

MAILBAG SUPPLEMENT

There can be little doubt that the greatest blood boiler in the recent BSFA mailings must be Paperback Inferno as shown by the great influx of mail I've received on the subject of Joseph Nicholas's views and reviews (where do you buy those asbestos envelopes?). In the last edition of Matrix I published four letters of comment on PI and Joseph, defensive of his baby, expressed his irritation that I'd not given him the chance to respond in the same issue. So by way of an apology, here's Joseph to reply.

THE EDITOR STRIKES BACK

To begin with the comments about Inferno voiced in Matrix 30... David Watkins can't have been paying all that much attention to what he was reading, since he's somehow managed to attribute the magazine reviews to Roz Kaveney and the Poul Anderson review to Keith Plunkett (or is it not by now obvious that all the "uncredited" material is mine?), which doesn't bode too well for his defence of Poul Anderson. It's a remarkably silly defence anyway, since it seems to assume that men who fancy other men automatically and of necessity develop enormously conspicuous hard-ons. For Heavens' sake! I put it to him: when he finds himself attracted to a particular woman, does he suddenly experience a vast and uncontrollable bulging at the front of his trousers? Of course he bloody doesn't (and if he does then by God he'd better turn himself in for treatment as a potential rapist, and quick). To be completely serious, however: I dispute his claim that Anderson would be in full control of what he's doing since writers (all writers) operate as much from their subconscious as their conscious and although they undeniably determine what goes down on the paper the wellsprings from where it all initially arises are more or less hidden from them. There's nothing to stop them from plumbing the depths of their subconscious in search of those wellsprings, of course, but it's in the nature of the beast that any answer they find will be at best only partial, and very probably inaccurate to boot.

Roger Whittington's comments about Asimov merely miss the point - one so obvious that I'm astonished it has to be explained in so laborious a fashion. Look again at that quote from his magazine's editorial: he first lists those who've won the SFWA's Grand Master Awards, then points out how much they were influenced by Campbell, then states how much he was influenced by Campbell - is the next

step in his chain of argument not as plain as a bloody pikestaff? He is making a play for the Award, as near as makes no difference actually asking for it to be given him. Hence my accusation of his "naked greed" - a greed that is also evident in his comments about money. Here again the point is obvious: despite all his previous statements in other contexts about how much he enjoys writing SF, he has chosen to put science writing first because it pays him more. He has to make his living, yes, but my objection to him stems from the outright commercialism of his approach and from the fact that he doesn't care who knows how much money he makes. Commercialism is the death of art - and Asimov has so prostituted whatever talent he may once have possessed in pursuit of the megabuck as to destroy his art beyond recovery. Nor do I find his egocentricity at all funny; it may once have been a harmless joke, but has long since gone beyond even a wearisome affectation to become a piece of thoroughly objectionable self-promotional hype.

Paul Smith seems possessed of the quaint belief that Clarke's presidency of the BSFA automatically rules out anything but glowing reviews of his books, which is absolute nonsense. Such cannot possibly be employed as an excuse for the suspension of critical criteria, not only because it would result in similar suspensions in other so-called (and inevitably proliferating) "special" cases but also because to duck out of the purveying of the "bitter truth" in such ephemeral and unimportant circumstances (yes - and if you're tempted to think otherwise, ask yourselves how Clarke's presidency can possibly have the slightest effect on what he writes, or vice versa) would be to reduce the critical process to an illogical, slapped-together, time-wasting and contradictory shambles. If it is to be of any value either now or in the future (and far be it for me to make any claims on behalf of what I write; only time can judge its worth), then criticism cannot afford to compromise; it must pursue its rigorous and demanding line regardless of the consequences.

William Bains seems just as hysterical now as he did when he wrote all those venom-laden letters to SFM tearing it apart for not doing all the things he wanted it to, and just as prone to the same overuse of sweeping generalisations and outright distortions in order to get his points across. To give him his due, however, I am no scientist and have no formal training in any scientific discipline; and thus, painfully aware that in reviewing science books I may commit many errors and omissions, confine myself to straightforward descriptions of their contents and statements as to whether or not they succeed in communicating their ideas. Bains presumably believes that even this is a mark of incompetence, and in attempting to prove so employs a pair of distortions so blatant that I'm frankly amazed he thinks he can get away with them. He claims that in reviewing Edelson's Who Goes There? I indulged myself in a "ramble" about the Drake formula (he calls it an equation, but there is a difference; why does he attempt to blur it?) when in fact I merely mentioned that the book discussed it in length, adding as a rider to that a statement of what it was supposed to be for; and then he goes on to claim that I praised Dawkins for discussing in more detail something upon which Wilson only touched when in fact it was once again a mere mention. (Perhaps he was misled by my use of the word "fascinating", which he seems to think means "praise" when it means nothing of the kind. Doubtless if I were to describe Mein Kampf as fascinating he'd think I was praising that as well.) On a previous point he is at least partially correct, since at the time I typed the stencils for Vol 3 No 6 I hadn't had the chance to read the New Scientist article on massive neutrinos - but having since read same it's clear that the finding elucidated therein aren't yet sufficient to provide proof of a closed universe, providing instead no more than a foundation upon which a workable hypothesis may be erected. As a scientist, he should be perfectly well aware of the distinction between hypothesis and theory, yet for some reason known only to himself he here attempts to blur it. (As before: why? Or is he just attempting to pull the wool over everyone's eyes?) None of which prevents him from using these distortions (all two-and-a-half of them!) as a base for his unsubstantiated generalisation to the effect that I'm not competent to review science books - or even SF books, a claim which is actually the only remotely

interesting part of his entire diatribe. Having stated that any examination of these latter reviews must be left to the "alert, genuinely critical reader" he then goes on to condemn them as "garbage" anyway, which suggests either that he can't decide in his own mind whether or not he is such a reader, or that his remarks previous to that weren't intended as genuine criticism. Some mystery, eh? Perhaps he'll one day provide a solution.

Martin Perry's defence of SF-as-entertainment is doomed to instant failure because of the extraordinarily narrow way in which he chooses to define "entertainment". From the tone and approach of his letter, it's evident that he thinks it to mean no more than escapism, which it most certainly doesn't. Entertainment may be derived from many different facets of a book: the grace of the author's prose style, the interplay of his characters and plot, the ideas he puts forward... (Indeed, that Perry should push the escapist line so vigorously makes his defence of SF as "the literature of ideas" in the later part of his letter hopelessly inconsistent from the word go.) The purpose of criticism and, particularly, book reviews, is to enhance the readers' appreciation of these things - but in comparing me to Lester Del Rey Perry simply misses Chris Priest's point. They are reviews inasmuch as they are critiques of specific books, and in no way prevent me from styling myself as a critic, whereas Del Rey prefers to indulge himself in all manner of hairsplitting to style himself otherwise (mainly in order that he, like his counterpart Spider Robinson, can then devote himself to impassioned but primitively-reasoned attacks on those who do call themselves critics). Certainly, critics may often appear arrogant - nobody ever appointed them as such, after all: they merely appropriated the role for themselves, as can anyone else - and, since criticism is also intended to elucidate and educate, they may sometimes appear condescending as well; but pompous and self-righteous? Perry should read some of the academic criticism that comes out of America, for then he might have a better understanding of what those words really mean. As for rudeness: critics aim high and expect the best, and when they don't get it they feel as frustrated and as annoyed as any mortal. And they certainly don't get much of the best from SF which, because of its genre nature, is all too often inbred, incestuous, derivative, unimaginative and self-plagiaristic, and hence for the most part absolute rubbish. Perry should bear in mind not only Sturgeon's Law, which states that the vast majority of it is crap anyway, but also that what we condemn we've actually read; outside our cosy ghetto walls most of the stuff is ignored completely and, if it were to be read, would probably be condemned in even harsher terms. Not that I and Roz and the others can be said to conspire in the promulgation of these judgements for, although the establishment of valid critical standards is our one common purpose, we disagree over as much, if not more, as we agree. We all have our own individual stances and approaches, Perry being (to give him some credit) well aware of mine - but even so I don't comprehend his demand that I shape up my act, unless by it he wishes me to abandon my position for one that will cause him less aggravation, in which respect I could as legitimately demand exactly the same of him.

And now, to speak more overtly of myself... I somehow suspect that the foregoing is unlikely to mollify those who find my entire angle of approach (SF as a high literary endeavour) alien to their tastes and inclinations; but then I suspect that some of the problems I've been facing with Inferno stem from the fact that "it's not the same as it was under Phil Stephensen-Payne" - a complaint that seems tantamount to wilfully ignoring the fact that, because I'm not Phil Stephensen-Payne, my methods, techniques, desires, standards and approach will be of necessity different. Then, too, most of the complaints that have been voiced up to now seem incredibly literal-minded, their originators (Roger Whittington springs instantly to mind as a near-perfect example) revealing a strange but determined refusal to look below the surface of what's being said in order to examine both the assumptions that underlie it and implications that arise from it. Debates over specific points, as per all the foregoing, can in no way contribute to the wider and more important debate over these assumptions

and implications - which could of course be spelled out in detail, but if I were to engage in such I would (apart from taking up space that's best devoted to other things, being overly didactic and as boring as hell) thus be talking down to my readers, treating them as though they were particularly stupid children who can't understand anything for themselves unless their noses are rubbed very firmly in it. I prefer instead to believe that my readers are aware, intelligent and dedicated enough to work these not-especially-subtle things out for themselves - readers who can thus engage in debate over the assumptions and implications. Only by such, and not by nitpicking haggles over whether or not some antiquated old toad like Asimov actually deserves something as intrinsically valueless as the SFWA's Grand Master Award, can criticism progress; a progression in which I and Roz Kaveney and Chris Priest and many others are vitally interested. Why do the rest of you continue to hang back?

Joseph Nicholas

After all that I had the feeling that Matrix could turn into the PI letter supplement, so if you look at the latest PI you'll find a letter-column containing the correspondence I've passed on to Joseph.

Miscellany Corner

MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

Cardiff takes off at last! We have formed an SF & Fantasy group with Lionel Fanthorpe as President. We would like to meet more members, so why not come along to 'The Crwys' at Crwys Road, Cardiff on Sundays. For further information contact The Secretary, Tony Donovan, 29 Llanbleddian Gardens, Clathays, Cardiff CF2 4AT.

Poetry/Fiction Magazine Association is a new group set up by Ken Mann and Chuck Connor. Those of you interested in amateur poetry/fiction magazines should contact Ken Mann at 22 Pennethorne Road, Peckham, London SE15 or Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Nr Halesworth, Suffolk for their first Information Sheet.

WANTED - poetry/fiction, 7,500 words or less for Fusion. On any subject except SF and fantasy. Contact Ken Mann at 22 Pennethorne Road, Peckham, London SE15.

COMPETITION

It's confession time folks - the cover of the last issue was done by Mr J Barker of Scotland in 1972. Strangely enough only one person stuck his neck out and said so, so I'll have to declare the winner as Chris Lewis and say congratulations.

Right, 3 competitions this time, the first you'll find at the end of The Captive Strip. Secondly, the following from Dave Langford.

"Past Matrix puzzles and competitions have often tended to involve ingenuity and effort on the part of the setter (who constructs a pageful of anagrams or something) but not so much from you miserable members out there. Since I'm an extremely lazy competition-setter, I'm demanding more effort - along the lines of the popular New Statesman or F&SF competitions. Huge prizes will be awarded on the standard scale...

Your first task:

There's been some discussion of Adam and Eve stories in Vector of late. In not more than 150 words, write the last paragraph of an Adam and Eve-type story as it might have been written by some noted SF author (your choice of author). Points will be awarded for parodic brilliance and general hilarity. No points at all will be awarded for entries wherein Eve turns out to be Eve Harvey. The winner(s) will be printed in the next Matrix... deadline is 3 October.

Dave has envisaged this as the first of a regular series of similar competitions and as such he will be the judge, so please send your entries directly to Dave at 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks.

And now the next one comes from Kenneth Walton

"A certain book shop kept its stock records in a computer. They were filed in alphabetical order by author, but within the groups of a single author's work they were not arranged in any particular way, except the trilogies etc, which were in the correct sequence.

One day, a new member of the book shop's staff wanted a list of the SF books in stock and asked the computer to print out the titles each on a separate card.

Unfortunately, the employee did not know how to work the computer and gave it incorrect instructions. Instead of printing each title on a separate card, the computer divided the list of books into groups of three words and printed each group of three on a separate card. (e.g. The Earth Book of Stormgate and Of All Possible Worlds would come out as The Earth Book, Of Stormgate Of and All Possible Worlds.) The computer also omitted to print the authors of the books.

When the employee saw this, he was so frustrated that he threw all the cards into the air, thus mixing them up.

Below are the 77 cards as they were picked up off the floor. There are in fact only 70 titles in all. Work these out and so name the authors, of which there are 31. The first card in the pile, before they were mixed up, said The Hitch Hiker's and the last card Of His Mouth.

The Hitch Hikers, The Sands Of, The Galactic Hero, The Mote In, Doctor Moreau Damnation, Doors Of His, Who Folded Himself, Walker Kronk Seahorse, Demons The Big, I Robot The, Machine Way Station, Behold The Man, A Strange Land, Canticle For Leibowitz, Policeman Said A, Road To Corlay, The Ocean Of, Condition Of Muzak, Is Legion Lord, Scanner Darkly The, Steel Rat Bill, Galazy Orbit

Unlimited, Rama The Overman, Catherine Cornelius In, The Forever War, Congress Shipwreck I, Of Shadows The, Guide To The, Childhood's End The, My Tears The, Earth Stranger In, Am Legend Dragonsong, God's Eye Ringworld, Tital The Ophiuchi, Of the Worlds, The Island Of, Face The Lamps, Deathbird Stories Dangerous, Man Who Japed, Sky The Futurological, Ruins The Final, In Black Promised, Godwhale Soul Of, Of Briarius Flow, A Robot In, Profundis The Twilight, Night Fahrenheit 451, The Custodians The, Fountains Of Paradise, In The Sky, Mars Rendezvous With, Culture The Cloud, Visions The Man, Waiting Dreamsnake A, Breakfast In The, Pern The Exile, Mindbridge The Stainless, Dragonsinger Harper Of, One Step From, Show The Other, A Plague Of, Programme A Cure, Hotline The War, For Cancer The, Device Swan Song, English Assassain The, Game The Fenris, The Adventures Of, Land The Paradise, Una Persson And, Halcyon Drift Rhapsody, The Twentieth Century, Wessex The Space, A Dream Of, Alley My Name, Of Light Jack, Of His Mouth.

Don't forget that some titles will be correct because they have three words in them but other three-word titles will be split up.

Let's have the entries for that one to the Matrix editorial address by the same deadline as Dave's competition.

News

NEWS OF THE SF WORLD

New Books

Savoy Books

- May - The Tides of Lust, Samuel R Delany
- June - The Eye of the Lens, Langdon Jones
- July - The Gas, Charles Platt
My experiences in the Third World War, Michael Moorcock
- August - Who Writes Science Fiction?, Charles Platt
- October - Michael Moorcock: The Cruel World and its Pierrot, John Clute
(an in depth study of Moorcock's work)

Dobson

- July - The Spacejacks, Robert Wells
Not to Mention Camels, R A Lafferty

Millington

- July - The Menagerie, Michael Coney
- August - Silence is Deadly, Lloyd Biggle Jr

Pan

- July - New Terrors Vol 1, ed Ramsey Campbell
- September - 100 Great Science Fiction Stories
- October - Clone and Profundis, Richard Cowper
- November - The Second Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams

Futura (who seem to have cornered the women SF writers!)

- July - The Snow Queen, Joan D Vinge
- August - Dinosaur Planet 2, Anne McCaffrey
Hunter of World, C J Cherryh

- September - The Outcasts of Heavenbelt, Joan D Vinge
Tales of Known Space and A Hole in Space, both by Larry Niven
October - The Long Arm of Gil Hamilton, Larry Niven
High Justice, Jerry Pournelle

Sphere

- August - The Stars in Shroud, Gregory Benford
September - My Name is Legion, Roger Zelazny

Macdonalds

- September - Firestarter, Stephen King
October - Cosmos, Carl Sagan (from his TV series)

Virgin Books

Tentatively scheduled for early 1981 is Josephine Saxton's first novel in twelve years, "Jane Saint's Travails". It is said to be a witty, feminist cross between Lord of the Rings and Alice in Wonderland!

PEOPLE

Isaac Asimov has incorporated himself as a company, Nightfall Inc, in order to reduce his tax bill. He probably got his inspiration from British authors such as Brian Aldiss, John Brunner, John Fowles, Brian Stableford and R L Fanthorpe.

Marion Zimmer Bradley has signed with DAW for two more Darkover novels tentatively titled Sharra's Exile and Hawkmistress. Work in progress is a novel about the women in Malory's King Arthur cycle entitled Mistress of Magic.

Due soon from Pierrot is "Tour of the Universe" by Robert Holdstock and Malcolm Edwards, which is a follow-up to "Alien Landscapes". Tour is an extensively illustrated (by Tony Roberts) excursion round the galaxy of the 26th century. I wonder if Thomas Cook will be distributing it?

Gene Wolfe has sold Volume 2 of his four part series "Book of the New Sun", to pocket/Schuster entitled "The Claw of the Conciliator".

Those of you who've been following with bated breath the Ellison/Bova vs ABC/Paramount plagiarism drama will be relieved to know that a final settlement has been reached! It also looks like plans to sue Ellison for libel and slander have been dropped. We can all sleep easy in our beds at night now.

Christopher Priest's new novel "The Affirmation" has been submitted to his publishers.

MAGAZINES

The American SF magazines appear to be in constant flux, judging by the regular reports we feature, at least it shows some sign of life in them! This time it's Amazing and Fantastic in motion as Fantastic is absorbed by Amazing in November. The resulting magazine, Amazing Science Fiction Stories, will be published bi-monthly.

Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine and Analog are going to a four-week publication schedule. Thus thirteen issues of each magazine will be produced per year.

CONVENTION UPDATE

31 October - 2nd November 1980 - NOVACON 10
Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Brian Aldiss
Progress Report 2 is now out and the hotel booking forms come with it.
Attending membership is £4.50 and a deadline of October 1st has been set for joining. Programme includes films, disco and fancy dress, quizzes, art room

and all the regular items. Contact Krystina Bula, c/o 183 Shenley Road, Boreham Wood, Herts.

Fabula 80 - 24 - 26 October 1980

Copenhagen University, Amager, Njalsgade 80, 2300 Copenhagen S Denmark

Guests of honour planned include Ursula LeGuin, Poul Anderson and Anthony

Burgess. The publicity for this event takes the form of a newspaper! Those Danes have money. Membership is 120 dkr (150 dkr after September 1). Contact Fabula 80, postbox 329, DK-1500 Copenhagen V, Denmark.

Yorcon II (Eastercon 1980) - 17-20 April 1981

Dragonara Hotel, Leeds. GoH (British) Ian Watson, GoH (American) Tom Disch

Fan GoH Dave Langford. Membership rates: £6 attending, £3 supporting (£1 extra on door). Contact Graham James, 12 Fernville Terrace, Oakwood, Leeds LS8 3DU; telephone Leeds 721478.

Project Starcast - 8-10 October 1982, Harrogate Exhibition Centre.

An all-singing-all-dancing-"multimedia experience", commercially organised at commercial prices. Membership is £12-00 now, gradually sliding up to £20-00 on the day. Plus 85p for each quarterly progress report or add £5 to the membership rate. They expect over 4,000 members so it might be a huge one.

Contact address is Project Starcast, Third Floor, 121 Princess Street, Manchester.

FANWORLD

CONVENTION REPORTS

FIFTH CONGRESSO EUROPEO DI SCIENCE FICTION

Unlike British conventions but like most conventions in Europe, EUROCON 1980 was held at the Palazzo Congressi (Town Hall) at Stresa in Italy. The venue was beautiful as Stresa is on the Lake Bella. The Town Hall was splendidly laid out, having a spacious theatre, a large hall set up with P.A. for immediate transmission of all speeches into Italian, French and English, a well-lit art exhibition, a room set aside for showing films and, of course, a bar... where snacks and coffee were also available.

Of course conventions are primarily social affairs so it is a pleasure to see familiar faces, such as Lars-Olov Strandberg, Sweden's unofficial ambassador who turns up everywhere (rather like Harry Harrison); Waldemar Kummig, jovial as ever covering the convention for Munich Round-Up; Patrice Duvic from Paris, writer, editor, linguist; and there was Gian Paolo Cossato running the bookstall known to many as a long-time associate of the London SF Circle, who now operates the Science Fiction bookshop in Venice. (The one missing face was Tania van der Sande who has been running Pepperland in Brussels for ten years). But apart from old friends there were a number of new ones to be made who came from further away, especially this year when political tensions have become topics of conversation and discussion. So it was also exciting to meet a group from Yugoslavia, a large party from Hungary, quite a few Poles, a number of Russians, Austrians, Danes and two Israelis (yes, they are now planning an SF convention in Israel -

when?). The guests of honour were the brilliant Dutch linguist and artist Karel Thole and the 'official' representative of science fiction in Romania, Jon Hobana who is also a linguist. So with all the English being spoken by people from everywhere, where were the English only speaking British fans and writers? I must say they missed a wonderful long week-end.

There were talks and discussions on such subjects as, "History and prospects of European SF Conventions", "Some Thoughts about SF Comics", "Sex in the Works of Pavle Likar", "SF in Poland", "Relation between Fantastic Literature and Nordic Mythology", from the US Ben Bova was there to discuss "What is the Best SF Magazine Policy in Order to Gain and Keep up a Great Readership... (Omni)", "Italian SF in 1980", Alfred Bester also from the US spoke about "The Collaboration between the Author and his Readers", etc, etc. In spite of all the earnest sounding discourses there was a great deal of humour, but we did miss a really erudite address such as on "Eau de Clone".

The Italians made a number of awards giving the recipients an elegant plaque; there was a real banquet, I darenot quote the menu in this report, when more awards were given and great fun was had by everybody. There was no fancy dress parade, a pity.

As this convention was held in Italy, I suppose it was inevitable that there should be a demonstration. It took place during the main award-giving ceremony in the theatre, and threatened to disrupt the formalities. But being a democratic gathering it was suggested that the agitators should be given time to air their views after the awards had been made. They seemed to be literary anarchists and they made known by a poster what they did NOT like, but in spite of a vociferous discussion later in passionate Italian we never did find out what they DID like. It certainly brought a little harmless excitement to the final proceedings - I wonder what the Russians thought about it?

John Brunner missed a number of items as he was co-chairing the committee with Aline Keshokov and this international group was deciding upon the venue for Eurocon 1982. The decision is Hungary, so I suggest that fans start saving now and maybe we can hire a coach for an exhilarating time in a beautiful country.

Marjorie Brunner

IF I DIE IN A COMBAT ZONE

(with apologies to Tim O'Brien)

Once upon a time there was Mancon 6, the 1976 Easter convention, organised (if that's the word I'm really looking for) by the ever-wonderful MaD group (led by their equally wonderful chairperson, Peter Presdorf) and held on the cold, draughty and decidedly unfriendly campus of Manchester University. So bad that it couldn't even be dignified as a "noble experiment", a spastic and unsalvageable shambles from start to finish, it deep-fixed forever - at least as far as most people were concerned - the idea of a campus convention. "Never again!" we told ourselves, fervently praying that the awful memory of it would one day fade away entirely - and then found ourselves reeling with horror when Unicon 80, to be held on the campus of Keele University on 4-7 July, was first announced. Hadn't these people even heard of Mancon, for God's sake? Didn't they realise the problems of layout and accommodation and meals and bar times with which a university campus would face them? Knew they not the utter contempt with which Presdorf's protestations that Mancon "hadn't been so bad, really" were greeted, or that the average convention-going fan had grown so used to luxury four-star hotel treatment that he was barely prepared to tolerate anything less?

Well, yes, they had heard, and yes, they did realise, and yes, they did know - and unlike Presdorf and his unholy crew, didn't attempt to ignore or belittle or cover up for any of it. Well aware of the tremendous uphill struggle they were facing, Chairman John Fairey and his committee devoted part of each of their three

Progress Reports to a discussion of those problems - which might have intensified their uphill struggle but at least demonstrated that they weren't about to overreach themselves by promising what they knew they couldn't deliver.

I must admit that, my memories of Mancon 6 being as strong as ever, I wasn't originally intending to go to Unicon 80. But then I heard that Peter Roberts, a one-time student at Keele University, was to be the Fan Guest-of-Honour, and that Alan Dorey and Geoff Rippington and Paul Oldroyd and maybe one or two others would also be in attendance... so I signed up and went. And had, as it turned out, a great time.

There were several reasons for this. For one thing, the weather, which had spent the previous few weeks making nonsense of the Great British Summer, cleared up sufficiently to give us sunshine for most of the weekend - a more important factor than you might at first suppose, considering that a fair amount of your time there had to be spent outdoors, walking between one building and another. Secondly, although the bedrooms and the bar areas were as spartan as you'd expect of student accommodation, the surroundings as a whole were considerably more attractive than those of Mancon - whereas the Manchester University campus appeared to consist of no more than an untidy agglomeration of concrete blocks plonked down in the middle of a sea of concrete, Keele's is set in the grounds of an old country estate, with rolling fields and brooding woodlands on almost every side. (On the Sunday morning, in fact, a bunch of us went for a walk in those same woods, striding boldly down well-beaten paths into the Great Unknown, fitful shafts of sunlight dappling the undergrowth about us, only to arrive at the lake, where Peter Roberts instructed us in the lifestyle of the common coot, Jean Maudsley complained about the inappropriateness for country walking of the high-heeled shoes she was wearing, Geoff Rippington mused on the eternal verities of the modern SF novel and I wondered when the vampire-Hunters would come leaping out from behind the trees to drive their stakes into Alan Dorey's black and terrible heart.) And, thirdly, the committee were always to be seen, scurrying around to make sure that everything ran as smoothly as possible.

Despite which there were, not unnaturally, a few problems. That there were no less than four Guests-of-Honour - Harry Harrison as Professional, Peter Roberts as Fan, Dave De Leuw as Professional Artist and Ashley Walker as Fan Artist - plus Bob Shaw as a special guest, was probably dictated more by ambition than by commonsense since, for a projected attendance of about 250, two would have been ample; all five were of course very welcome, but even so I got the impression that there were times when they didn't have much to do. Ambition was probably also responsible for there being both a main and a fan programme which, considering that Unicon was the first-ever convention for the majority of the members, meant that the latter was consistently underattended. Then, too, far too many of the programme items were cancelled or rescheduled at too little notice, with the result that nobody but the committee had any clear idea of what was supposed to happen when and where - on top of which the general paucity of well-known names in attendance meant that most of the panel discussions were dominated by the same faces saying the same things over and over again, which must eventually have been very boring for both the audience and the participants.

Which isn't to say that all the programme items were boring since, although I obviously didn't attend them all, there seemed (from the official programme listing) to be a fairly wide variety of subject-matter. Of those that I did attend, however, the best was undeniably Peter Roberts's Fan GoH speech. Gifted with the ability to speak, ad-lib, exactly as he writes, with intelligence, insight and wry humour, and without the need for extensive preparation beforehand, his talents were on full display in his talk on fanzines, based on the fourteen different categories of animals listed in an old Chinese encyclopedia supposedly discovered by Borges, but with the word "animal" replaced by the word "fanzine". Thus we had such truly bizarre but inventive nonsense as "Fanzines That Belong To

The Emperor", "Fanzines That Have Strayed", "Fanzines That Have Been Embalmed", "Fanzines That Have Been Painted With A Fine Camel-Hair Brush" and, the piece de resistance, "Fanzines That Resemble Flies Seen From A Very Long Way Away" (although there was only one: Keith Walker's Fanzine Fanatique). It was indeed a most illuminating and amusing speech, but the tragedy of it is that nobody saw fit to tape it, with the result that it will now be lost to posterity. (This is not fake pathos: everyone who witnessed it will surely agree that it was an absolutely marvellous piece of work.)

Peter's ad-lib brilliance was also well to the fore in the spaceship debate, onto which I was drafted at the last moment, choosing - out of sheer perversity - to impersonate Jerry Pournelle, and being not at all surprised at my summary ejection from the airlock after a few seconds of shouting "Kill! Kill everyone!", which in theory should have allowed me to heckle from the audience but for the fact that Peter, impersonating William Hope Hodgson, proceeded to clinch his victory in the first few minutes with an amazing dissertation on the role of pigs in proto-SF. Shortly before this debate, however (and here I'm well aware that you won't forgive my immodesty), I'd won the SF Mastermind contest (and the bottle of Teachers that had been acquired as the prize) in what I suppose, judging by the applause which greeted my victory, must have been a reasonably convincing manner, although I nevertheless felt vaguely guilty at knowing less about my chosen specialist subjects ("The Life and Works of Cordwainer Smith" and "The British New Wave, 1964-1970") than I did general knowledge. In point of fact, I only just scraped through to the final, which didn't prevent John Faurey (who'd set the questions) from continuously telling me that I was bound to win - statements doubtless designed to boost my confidence but which, because I'm always scared shitless of losing any contest that I enter, strangely didn't help. And (here comes yet another chunk of immodesty) in the event even my closest opponent wanted me to win. You'd think they'd all developed a sudden aversion to whisky, or something...

Other things? Well, Harry Harrison was as ebullient and as outgoing as ever, Bob Shaw his usual laid-back and entertaining self, several people were induced to join the BSFA, I sold a few more copies of By British fanthology (all profits to TAFF; send your order now!) and raised some money for GUFF (help send me to Australia next year!) from the well-supplied and well-attended auction, there were plenty of games machines on which people could waste their money, beer was sold at subsidised student prices, the late-night room parties were as hot and as crowded as late-night room parties usually are, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves to some degree or other. The pious hope that must inevitably be voiced at this juncture is that the 150-odd first-timers will have enjoyed themselves sufficiently to want to attend other conventions in the future... and in fact the large number of first-timers and neos in attendance at Unicon 80 was one of its hidden pleasures, not just because of the prospect of their future involvement in fandom but also because it meant that we old hands, instead of taking the easy way out and closeting ourselves in conversation with people we already knew, had to make a genuine effort to get to know them... and in the process be rightly reminded that we were once just as they.

As to whether or not there will ever be another Unicon is an open question; this one at least had only ever been conceived as an experimental one-off - and a "spirit of Scientific Enquiry" was in truth one of my reasons for going to it. Quite simply, I wanted to know whether or not a campus convention could ever be a success: and the answer is yes, with a good committee and a membership that knows what to expect, it can be. Certainly, Presdorf's perennial complaint about everyone's attitude to Mancon, that they had come expecting to have an awful time, does now seem to some degree justifiable - but not entirely, given that the said expectations derived as much from the known incompetence of he and his committee as from his continuous extolling

Contd. on page 35

ON THE CARPET

Rob Jackson's regular look at fanzines and other publications received; this time covering June and July 1980. For review send your zine to Rob at 8 Lavender Rd., West Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT19 9EB, UK.

Abbreviations and symbols used: Letters by recommended zines mean the following: F: fan-nish fanzine. G: general interest zine. N: newszine, particularly about fannish items. P: personalzine. S: zine mainly about SF or fantasy.

Sizes and production methods: F: foolscap (13" x 8"). A4: 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". USQ: 11" x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Q: quarto (10" x 8"). A5: 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". L: photolithographed. D: duplicated. X: Xeroxed (photocopied). R: reduced in size.

Availability: "The Usual" means for show of interest by writing a letter of comment, sending a contribution in the form of an article or artwork, or exchange for your own fan-zine (trade). Prices given are for single issues unless indicated otherwise, and include postage. If no price given, sample copies usually available for a polite letter asking for one.

It often seems in this column that I don't like fiction published in fanzines. God knows, though, I want to like it. Here's why.

Like a lot of the people now in university SF groups, I too wrote fiction which was published in my university SF group zine (mine was Oxford's zine, Sfinx). That was back in 1972, though; ancient history to today's undergraduates and other newcomers to the activities of SF fans, to whom I may now seem a dyed-in-the-wool fannish fan, blinkered against fan fiction. Not true, boss.

When I left Oxford and joined my local group of fannish fans (the Gannets back home in Newcastle), I made earnest attempts to turn my new colleagues on to the worth of the fiction in Sfinx. They humoured me.

But in further discussion the reason they humoured me became apparent. Simply, this is that writing fiction is a far more ambitious undertaking than writing nonfiction.

Writing good SF involves technique and touch, vision (something to say) and voice (the mental tools to say it with). This isn't the place for an extensive discussion of the rules of writing fiction, but suffice it to say that there are certain rules involving the incorporation of theme, plot, setting, characterisation, dialogue and other elements that you need to be aware of before you can break. Getting all that into a brief enough compass to be printed comfortably in a fanzine is a very fine art indeed, one that only writers with outstanding natural gifts or a great deal of luck get right early in their careers.

By contrast, picking nits about a book or reporting one's own and one's friends idiosyncrasies at a con is very easy to do well or at least amusingly. And it gets done well more often in fanzines than in fiction writing. Consequently, though, those who do show talent in fiction writing in fanzines deserve our special attention.

SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS

S* Locus 233, 234 (ed. Charles N. Brown; in UK for 12 issues airmail send £9.50, or seamail send £6.00 to A.C. Atkinson, 28 Duckett Rd., London N4 1BN; USQ RL; 20pp, 20pp.) Professional newszine, keeping you up to date with the U.S. SF scene. Frank Herbert's record advance for Dune the fourth, and the Nebula results are the lead stories of these two issues. Many of you would also find the comprehensive listings of new American books useful, as well as the market notes; but there's a slight overall lack of sparkle.

FANZINES

United Kingdom

Amanita 3 (Cyril Simsa, 18 Muswell Ave., London N10 2EG; the usual or postage stamps; A4 D; 20pp.) Parts of this fanzine are fairly normal, viz. the editorial about SF being in truth a reactionary art form, and the locs; but the rest... 4 pages in praise of punk rock & punk fanzines, a tasty little 2-page cartoon on the adventures of a tapeworm, and an even worse quote about an elephant which died of fits after being given a massive dose of LSD as an experiment. Cyril's still collecting esoterica.

N* Ansible 10 (Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave., Reading, Berks. RG2 7PW; 4/60p UK, 6/£1 Europe, 5/£1 elsewhere; Q L/D; 4pp.) As I seem to remember having said before, the indispensable British fannish newszine, written with wit and, I think, a bit more attention to accuracy now. This issue contains the Checkpoint/Ansible Fan Poll results.

G* Cidereal Times 10 (Allen Boyd-Newton, c/o 42 Church Lane Bicknoller, Via Taunton, Somerset; the usual or 30p; A4 D; 30pp.) Competent, well-produced clubzine. Layout a little cramped, but extremely good printing of black areas in the illos. Contains a long interview with Jack L. Chalker done at Seacon which is more of a monologue — there are hardly any questions; they just switched him on and off he went, it seems. Lively lettercol, with D. West bashing Allen for having non-text-related artwork. I agree, Allen: I can't see why a piece of artwork shouldn't be allowed to stand on its own either (given that it's worth display, and also given a reasonable dissplay area).

Discount Future 1 (Clive Yelf, 31 John Clynes Ct., Woodborough Rd., Putney, London SW15; the usual, I assume; A4 X; 16pp.) Experimental but quite interesting first issue. A hotch-potch of literate contents about witches, a book on H.G. Wells' life after death which Clive finds rubbishy, and various silly old engravings enlivened slightly with word balloons.

P* Dot 9 (Kevin Smith, 10 Cleves Ct., St. Mark's Hill, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4PS; the usual; Q D; 16pp.) Bigger-than-usual issue, so the wit is a little diluted. Good stuff about the impossibility of writing in his fanzine about his work, and a brilliant guide on "How to Write like Joseph Nicholas" in which "The cat sat on the mat" is expanded by stages to a ten-line one-sentence tirade against the Hugos and Spider Robinson. The lettercolumn, the bit about Tony Blackburn, and the fanzine reviews are all competent but not too remarkable.

Drygulch 1 (Jimmy Robertson, Bill Carlin & Sandy Brown, c/o 78 Abbeycraig Rd., Glasgow G34 0DN; the usual; F D; 5pp.) Quickly thrown together but readable bit of burble: fear and loathing at Novacon, plus two bits of fiction, one purportedly by a Russian soldier invading Yugoslavia, and the other full of people with the initials PJF. I wonder why.

S* Erg 71 (Terry Jeeves, 230 Bannerdale Rd., Sheffield S11 9FE; loc each issue + 25p in stamps; Q D; 26pp.) Predictable, reliable fanzine, which appears quarterly steady as a rock. Lots of brief reviews, articles on space travel and allied subjects, reviews of fanzines which Terry likes (he doesn't believe in "hatchet jobs"), and a review of an Airfix kit. Well worth a try if you find fannish fanzines too ingroupish and backbiting.

Grok 9 (UMIST SF & Fantasy Soc., ed. Neil Richards; Students' Union, PO Box 88, Sackville St., Manchester M60 1QD; 42p or the usual; A4 L; 48pp.) Far better printed and typed than last issue, so I'm immediately better disposed towards it. Mainly reviews and other features, all at least reasonable in quality. Novacon report, information page, and one piece of fiction about a chap with odd metabolism who becomes rather frog-like, which had an offputting beginning: "In setting down this narrative I have no expectation that I shall be believed." Lessons in Suspension of Disbelief, vol. 1.

Gross Encounters 7 (Alan Dorey, 20 Hermitage Woods Cres., St. John's, Woking, Surrey GU21 1UE; the usual; A4 D; 14pp.) Rather thin & late, but don't blame Alan — he's been busy.

Still is. The usual got-drunk-and-fell-over personalzine contents, entertainingly written — "D. whipped the covers from the female sleeping under the chest of drawers, who upon waking angrily, banged her head on the chest." Slapstick stuff, boss. Funny for people who like that sort of thing, including me. However, he missed me out of his list of Surrey Limpwrist who drink bitter rather than lager. Hmrrph. There are even a few sober bits.

Instant Fanzine 1 (Jim Barker, Eve Harvey and others, 55 Blanchland Rd., Morden, Surrey SM4 5NE; at least 20p in aid of the Barker to Boston Fund; Q D; 4pp.) The best bit of this is the cover, which must have taken Jim at least 3 minutes. The rest is just burble.

F* Nabu 9 (Ian & Janice Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd., New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY; the usual; Q D; 36pp.) Honest-to-goodness fannish genzine, with lively locs on the-state-of-fandom and other topics, and articles: Ian's editorial on digging holes as a little boy (a right little Baby Grumpling, he was), Paul Kincaid on his job writing brochures for package holidays, Janice on the history of the Surrey Limpwrist, Kev Smith notes and annotates the Constitution of the Limpwrist in a suitably warped way, and Joe Nicholas reviews fanzines in a literate, reasoned way without overstatement, convolution or hyperbole; lively, but without too much hatchet work.

The Northern Guffblower 7 (me, address above; for interest in GUFF, the Get Under Fan Fund; Q D; 2pp.) Details of the forthcoming poll for a UK fan to visit Australia next year, & publications available in aid of the fund.

F* Ocelot 3 (Graham James & Simon Ounsley, c/o 13a Cardigan Rd., Headingley, Leeds 6, Yorks; the usual or 20p in stamps; A4 X; 26pp.) Good fannish fanzine. Starts with Simon fascinatingly bending reality in suggesting the reasons many fans are psychically possessed; both he and Graham write interestingly on their involvement in Sixties rock; D. West does three full-page cartoon strips, one brilliantly tasteless; the locs are also lively.

Ragnarok 1 (John Shire, Ponderosa, Church St., Merriott, Somerset; the usual or 15p; A4X; 12pp.) All sorts of little bits squashed up together. Editorial about the current fannish interregnum; fanzine reviews; an article by Mike Paine (scrappily interrupted by John) on how depressing 1980 so far and Albacon were; plus some stuff about books and bookshops. Pleasant enough but nothing substantial. Very scrappy layout.

Ring Pull 1 (Aberdeen University SF Soc., ed. William T. Goodall, Aberdeen Univ. Union, Broad St., Aberdeen AB9 1AW; 30p or the usual; A4 D; 10pp.) Despite the drunkenly fuzzy cover photo of a beer can being opened, the body of this zine is sercon stuff: book & media reviews which are numbered, no less. Badly faded print down many pages on the right.

Rubber Crab 3 (Graham James, 12 Fearnville Tce., Oakwood, Leeds LS8 3DU; editorial whim or at the Northern Tun; A4 X; 6pp.) Front cover is a page of trivial rubbishy snippets from local papers; from there Graham enlarges on and goes partly against D. West's recent diatribe about current British fanzine standards: "The local press has totally failed to keep abreast of new & current ideas, with the result that they face declining sales & eventual closure. Much the same has happened with fanzines. New fannish writers tend to be inhibited by some unwritten, but nevertheless apparent, Code of what & whom should, or should not, be written about." Quite.

Scope 5 (Keele Univ. SF Soc., ed. Steve Tanner & Steve Hennessy, Students' Union, Univ. of Keele, Keele, Staffs; free to members, or the usual; 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " RL; 40pp.) Fair quality clubzine. Three bits of fiction, the longest of which decries dull suburbanity in depicting a meddlesome guardian angel who condemns an otherwise boring young lad to a whirlwind of prostutes & rock stardom then gets his comeuppance. Also a fair number of reviews, some rather goshwow, viz. the one about recent Van Vogt; and artwork which varies between the two-dimensional and the childish.

G* Scottishe 79 (Ethel Lindsay, 69 Barry Rd., Carnoustie, Angus DD7 7QQ; 50p or the usual; A4 D; 22pp.) Good, practised fanzine. Brief book & fanzine reviews that sum their sub-

et matter up neatly, unpretentiously & without malice, plus locs & editorial. Ethel has recently retired, & has sadly decided her fanzine should retire too at the end of next year, so 3 issues to go. Try to get her to send you a copy before it goes.

F* Secondhand Wave 2 (Alan Ferguson & Trev Briggs, 26 Hoecroft Ct., Hoe Lane; Enfield, Middx; the usual or postage stamps; A4 X; 26pp.) More hits than misses in this zine which aims for the funny (both humorous and odd). The Alkycon report doesn't quite come off, but the pieces about words and the practical-joking airline pilot were fascinating. (Would you be pleased to hold a couple of bits of string leading out of the cabin, very carefully, while the pilot went to the loo?) There's also a real photo of the fake Bob Shaw being hosed down, and some absolutely brilliant Pete Lyon art showing Picasso, Matisse, Lowry, Dali & others having a go at SF themes. Soft flying saucers? Picasso's "Woman With Raygun"?

P* Snorkel 1, 2 (Harry Bell, 9 Lincoln St., Gateshead, Tyne & Wear NE8 4EE; editorial whim; Q D; 6pp, 10pp.) Quite a conventional sort of personalzine, with Harry demonstrating, as usual, that his standards of self-criticism are high: if he's satisfied with his own work (writing or artwork) then most other people will be. The first issue contains sensible thoughts on well-trodden subjects — whither fandom, particularly the FAAn Awards; plus locs and two amusing personal vignettes. The second is more substantial and outward-looking, with an article on being a stooge in a police identity parade: "We looked like half a dozen civil servants without ties or jackets. He looked like a suspect." Also good stuff about France: "You can... watch the kerbcrawlers and the hookers play some kind of intricate game in which the moves up and down and across the street owe little to chess but nonetheless end in mating."

Starfan (Rob Hansen, c/o 7a Lawrence Rd., South Ealing, London W5 7SG; no availability details given — write and ask; A4 D; 26pp.) The not-entirely-serious adventures of a fictional small, hairy, bespectacled SF fan with a surely coincidental facial resemblance to a real fan of some influence. This is completely in comic-strip form; in it, Starfan meets and generally conquers all kinds of odd creatures at, and away from, an SF con. Moderately amusing and pretty well drawn; Rob's touch is getting surer all the time.

This Farce 1 (Glen Warminger & Alan Marshall, 72 Linacre Ave., Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 8PG; trade, loc, or whim; A4 D; 8pp.) A readable declaration that having been involved in the Norwich Group for a few years they want to get into other aspects of fandom, with a few "Reasons for Not Pubbing a Ficzine" including an all-too-believable parody of the type of brief story they've been sent for Sfear. Good dictionary of fan terms, serious with a few suitably feeble jokes. Could be quite good when they get going with future issues.

Twentythird 1 (Jimmy Robertson, 64 Hamilton Rd., Bellshill, Lanarkshire ML4 1AG; the usual; F D; 6pp.) Brief, punchy articles in brief, punchy sentences, all editor-written. He tackles the difficulty of breaking down the divisions between different groups of fans, particularly his dilemma at being invited to Aghacon in Leeds and what his Scots mates would think if he went; plus bits about political issues and Crossroads (which he *aaagh* likes parts of).

The Usual 1 (Nic Howard, 5 Gray's Lane, Downley, & Chris Lewis, 4 Southfield Rd., both High Wycombe, Bucks; the usual; A4 D; 18pp.) Cheerful, badly typed burble. Everything from an Albacon report and a silly description of Nic's workplace's vending machine to brief book reviews (the plot summary of Mack Reynolds' Lagrange Five makes it sound appalling, but they comment "One of his better novels, if not his best so far.") plus a reverent article about H.P. Lovecraft full of plot summaries. Plenty of room for improvement here, lads.

My apologies for the lack of American and other overseas fanzine reviews this issue. John Harvey has almost run out of electrostencils, apparently, and this issue is being produced in a rush; so I've filled my four pages with great big easy-to-read print. Catch up next issue, I hope. Thus do space and time constrict us. Anybody got a spare dimension handy?

— Rob Jackson, August 1980.

The CAPTIVE

I am not a
number... I AM A
FREE FAN!

OH MORNING!
IN THE CONVENTION...

Y'ERE, MISTER...
JUST A MINUTE
PLEASE MISTER.

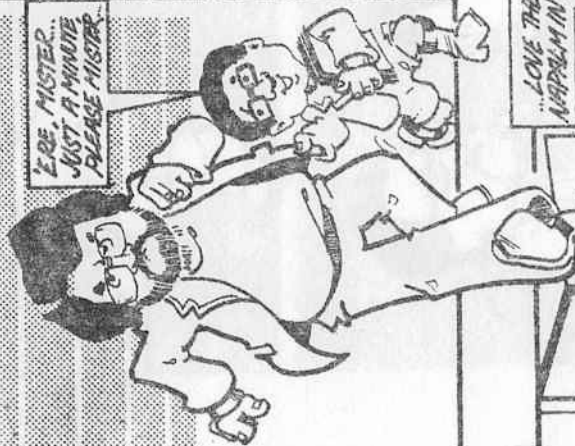
OH, WHAT IS
IT, SONNY?

PLEASE MISTER, WILL YOU
READ MY NOVEL? IT'S FULL
OF TONFI CHARACTERS AND
'ACTION!'... AN' I WROTE IT IN
JANED-UP LETTERS...

IT'S NOT UP TO
ELBERT HACK'S
STANDARD!

...LOVE THE SMELL OF
NAPPALUM IN THE MORNING!

SHOWE CHER AND LET A
SERIOUS DRINKER IN!
BOB, GIVE ME A PINT!!





I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE
TO KNOW YOUR LEBER
SUPPLY'S ARRIVED!

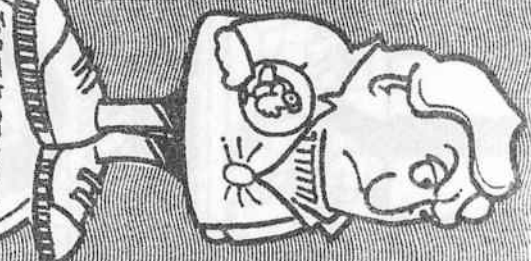
SEE WHAT I MEAN, NUMBER
TWO? HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS
ALL MORNING!

HMM... HE'S CERTAINLY
ACTING OUT OF CHARACTER!
KEEP AN EYE ON HIM...
I'M NOT SURE I LIKE THIS!
IT'S NOT LIKE HIM AT ALL...



STORY & ART: JIM BARKER.

THE GOT EVIDENCE YOU FIDDED THE
HIT RESULTS, BOY! YOU CANNA QUIT NOW
OR SHALL I PUBLISH THESE?



CALLS HIMSELF A
CHARTIST, BUT GUES
HE CHARACTERS
FEEL FINERS!!

NEVER GONNA HEAD
THE CHARTIST/
ANGELS YOU LIKE
THAT, BOY!

NUMBER TWO
IS A GREAT KITE

NO, I WONT DO THIS FOR
YOUR FRAUDS... I'M LOOKING
FOR BETTER CHARTS!

FOR THE REST OF
THE DAY, THE CHARTIST
CONTINUES HIS OLD
BEHAVIOUR, MAKING
ENEMIES RIGHT
LEFT & CENTRE!

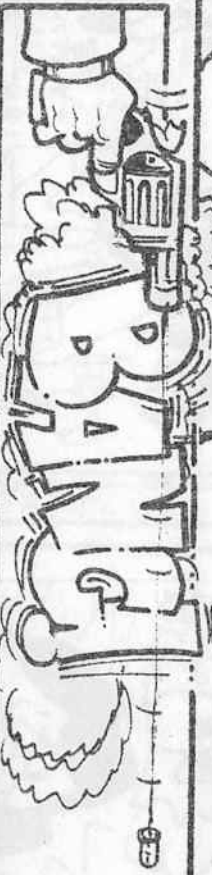


WATCH OUT, BOY!
GONNA HAND UP BACK
IN THE CHARTIST/
WHERE YOU BELONG!

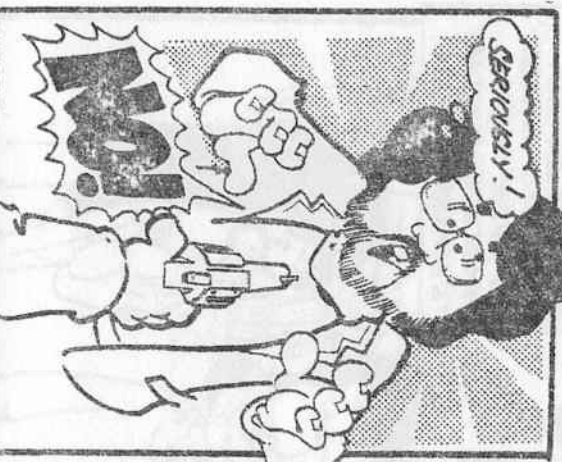
LATER... THE CHARTIST
RETURNS TO HIS ROOM

I THINK IT'S WORKING... THIS IS MY
BEST SCHEME SO FAR! ALL IVE GOT
TO DO IS BE AS OBSCIOUS AS
POSSIBLE, UPSET EVERYONE...
AND THEYRE BOUND TO THROW
ME OUT!!

I JUST HATE NO-ONE TAKES IT TOO...



SERIOUSLY!



WITH APOLAKIES TO: JOSEPH, ALAN, BOB, HAZEL, DAVID, HARRY, ELIZABETH, D., AND LILIAN... I DIDNT MEAN IT, HONEST!

THE CAPTIVE RETURNS (and goes away again...)

See! I told you he'd be back. Admittedly, I didn't think it would be quite so soon, but, what the heck. I enjoyed doing the strip one last time. And I'm afraid this episode will be the last for a while. I'm still working away on my portfolio and that's taking up most of my spare time.

So why take the time to do another episode? Three reasons: 1) A feeling of sentimentality. As you know, this is John and Eve's final issue. The Captive started his run with their second issue and I thought it appropriate that his last episode (for the present) should appear in their last issue. 2) It gave me an excuse to indulge my warped sense of humour by suggesting that it serve as the basis for this issue's third competition. By now, hopefully, you've read the strip. What I want to know is: WHO SHOT J.B.?

Write down who you thought was behind the gun and their reason for shooting J.B. and send it to me at 113 Windsor Road, Falkirk, Stirlingshire FK1 5DB, Central Scotland. The person who sends me the best reason will receive the usual book token, plus the original artwork for this episode. Go into as much detail as you want, but I'd appreciate it if you'd keep it to one page length.

The third reason? Well, I wanted him to go out with a bang...

Jim Barker

Contd. from page 28

of the dubious virtues of the Manchester University campus prior to the event - and if nothing else Unicon 80 has indeed made an important contribution to the slow rehabilitation in this country of the idea of the campus convention. Leaving it on the Monday was as much of a downer as it is to leave any really enjoyable convention, but at least I was travelling in the company of other fans and so could maintain the mood for a little while longer. And if a convention can do that to you then by God it must have been good.

Joseph Nicholas
3 August 1980

What can possibly follow The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy? (And we are not referring to THHGTTG No. 2!) Once you've read that book from cover to cover and can find your way from Alpha Centuri to Barnards Star with your eyes closed and your towel tied behind your back, what's left for you? What else can bring that sparkle to your life?.....

We know, it's THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE ASTRAL LEAGUE!!!!

Backed with THE ASTRAL LEAGUE DESERT ISLAND DISCO, this cassette (without which your life just will not be complete) is available from Graham Charnock, 4 Fletcher Road, Chiswick, London for the modest sum of £3 (P&P included). When ordering by post please state whether you require chrome or ferric tapes.

Buy now, while stocks last - Pat & Graham need the money to buy a new roof.

MIDSUMMER MADNESS
MIDSUMMER MADNESS
MIDSUMMER MADNESS
MIDSUMMER MADNESS
MIDSUMMER MADNESS

ALAN DOREY

I had hoped to commence this piece with exciting comments about the weather, like "Cool/Hot/Dry/Wet for the time of year, isn't it?", but as most of you will have realised, this year seems to be exceedingly odd. Even last night, having left the Harvey's in the throes of duplicating this issue of MATRIX, the heavens opened around me and flung all kinds of awesome revengeance in my direction. Sheets of water covered the streets, lights appeared like dim, glowing embers in menacing blackness, and the poor souls stranded at the local Chinese Takeaway must have been ordering enough panocake rolls to fashion a rudimentary umbrella. Still, I made it back home, and what do we get today, blazing sun (well, in Harrow, anyway), stifling heat and high humidity. You can't win, it seems. However, the BSFA struggles manfully on, looking to the future with more certainty than can any amateur meteorologist.

"BSFA PLANS TO FLEE ABANDONED"

Yes, after due thought and consideration, the committee have not decided to do a midnight flit to Bermuda, appropriating all the BSFA funds. Instead, we have actually bought the Litho Machine, together with a plate-maker and electric stapler. So, with nowt but the bottoms of our pockets to play with, this should be the last issue of Matrix printed by the Duplication method. Next mailing (due out over the weekend of 18/19 October) will see a photo-litho Vector and Matrix. Paperback Inferno will remain in its present format for a little while longer, but we have ideas for that as well. I hope you will think that it's all been worth it, and certainly, within a year, the money we'll have saved on mailings will have paid for the Litho machine. Also, we'll be able to take in work from other people to offer as a further service, and we hope to make some money out of this. Meanwhile, any further kind volunteers we may have to attend mailing sessions at Reading university are more than welcome....why not contact me, and I'll give you further details, You can catch me during the day on 01-902-8876 (Ext 261).

SMOOTHING OVER THE CRACKS

As you may have noticed (especially the eagle eyed amongst you), this article looks somewhat different from the rest of Matrix. This is because, I, in my ever efficient manner, have been 'busy' of late, and left it too late for John & Eve to type, so it's been left to me. Blame all mistakes, errors, splodges and small grey things that might have crawled onto the page on me.

BSFA TAKES OVER HAMMERSMITH

I could say that your everloving committee had spent hours of their precious spare time trudging the streets of London, seeking a suitable hostelry in which to hold the proposed BSFA meetings. I could say that we spent hours sampling all kinds of drink in a bold attempt to discover somewhere that suited everybody's tastes. I could also say that we wrote massive missives to every landlord in London imploring them to allow us to make use of their facilities. But, I won't, because, thanks to Clive Yelf, a BSFA member from Putney, we have finally found somewhere in which to hold our First meeting.

The venue will be THE RUTLAND pub in Hammersmith, West London. The date will be SEPTEMBER 19th, 1980, the time, 7.30 pm. We have booked a large room on the first floor of the pub, which will be used exclusively by ourselves, and they'll have a separate bar open on that floor specifically for us. We can accomodate up to about 60 people (probably more), so PLEASE, PLEASE turn up! The success of these meetings depends so much upon you, and they will be YOUR meetings, so come along to the first one brimming over with ideas as to what you would like to see happening. I hope to arrange some kind of informal programme that first evening, even if it's only some impromptu quiz and talk.

THE RUTLAND is on the river Thames embankment, just upstream of Hammersmith Bridge. It has a large car-park near to the A4 Flyover, and there are many other places to park within easy walking distance. Three underground lines converge on Hammersmith: Metropolitan (Hammersmith & City Line), District and Circle; there is a bus station at The Butterwick with Green line coaches and London Transport buses to many parts of west and Central London. So, all in all, it's very easy to get to (and away from), and we hope that as many of you who said they might make it along in the recent questionnaire will turn up. It'll be tending towards the Informal side this first time, so don't feel as though you've got to wear Top Hat and tails!

Once we have had a chance to gauge the interest and likely support, we should be able to form a small sub-committee of people who'll be responsible for running the basic programme of future meetings. We anticipate a small charge in the region of 25p per person being made simply to provide additional funds to get things organised. I'm sure that nobody will object to this. In time, of course, we might set up a new membership rate which will include free entry to all BSFA functions etc, but that's a little way off yet.

Anyway, I'll be there on the 19th, along with the rest of the BSFA committee, so if nothing else, for all those folk out there who just think that we're all figments of each other's imagination, why not just drop in and see how really ~~weird~~ ordinary some of us are. I mean, who else could pass up a chance to challenge mild-mannered Joseph Nicholas on his Book Reviews? Surely that's got to be worth 25p!

TAKEOVER BID FOR MATRIX

As you all know, this is John & Eve Harveys' last issue of MATRIX before they pass the reins on to some other poor, unsuspecting member of the public. So far I've had two firm offers to take on the Mighty Mantle, these being from Steve Ince of Hull, and Graham James from Leeds. Thus, it looks like it'll be a battle of the Yorkshire giants. You'll be able to find out who wins simply by opening the pages of the next Matrix. I shall be writing again to these two gallant people to let them know one way or another.

Before we leave the subject, I'd just like to spend a little time in lauding the efforts of John & Eve over the past two years. I'm sure you'll all agree that they have done a magnificent job. I couldn't have asked for more solid, dependable people (although when John finishes his diet I might have to re-write that sentence). They've not only edited the issues, but done all the typing, duplicating and a good deal of the collating and stapling at the regular bi-monthly mailing sessions. To list all the things they have helped us with would go on for too long, but I'd just like finally to say, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING.

Of course, all this praise mustn't go their heads of course... now we just have to shackle their chains to the Litho machine! Once the new editor of MATRIX is announced, Eve will leave the committee. Her place will be taken by either Graham James or Steve Ince, and John will remain, but swapping titles over. He'll be the Litho Machine Officer. Gosh wow...the responsibility!

APPOINTMENTS

I have to go and see the dentist some time next month. A filling fell out in Manchester a week or so ago, and IT'S AGONY. But, I'm sure you don't want to hear about my dental problems. It's just a strange way of introducing the idea of appointing Ian Maule as Distribution Officer. This means that Ian will have control over the distribution of BSFA publications to all book-shops and dealers, something that has been sadly lacking of late. Additionally, he'll be running the back number service, so if any of you need back-numbers from the lists we'll be publishing from time to time, Ian's your man.

SERIOUS MOMENT

Some of you may have heard of Project Starcast, the huge multi-media SF/Fantasy/Comix convention planned for Harrogate in a couple of years time. Some of you may already have heard of the prices they will be charging for memberships (a sliding scale of £12 to £20 depending upon when you sign), plus the extra £7.50 or so they'll be charging for Progress Reports should you want them. Admittedly, they will be glossy, coloured things, published quarterly...but can you really afford upwards of £30 just to go to a convention without a hotel bill and travelling, food and drink expenses on top?

It has been claimed that they'll be having a 24 hour bar, but at what cost(?). Bar staff are very expensive, and will demand all sorts of

weird and wonderful inducements to work unsocial shifts. Still, the Harrogate conference Centre is certainly large enough to cater for the anticipated 4000 members. Problem is, it hasn't actually been completely used by one single organisation yet, so what teething problems will arise are anybody's guess. Similarly, whilst the town can easily accomodate 4000 people if they camp out on the famous Stray, can you envisage 4000 hotel spaces in a medium-sized spa town of some 60,000 inhabitants? Who's to say that your hotel might not be in Knaresborough, some 3 miles away. Not everyone will be able to afford the undoubtedly high tariffs at establishments like the Prospect Hotel. However, this isn't to say that we as the BSFA don't welcome the idea of a large Convention devoted to SF. It's just that it's run by a professional body (no doubt wanting to make a huge profit) and could damage the aspirations of many smaller cons run by us, the fans. The BSFA is intending to pursue a policy of quietly ignoring this enterprise. We will, of course, subscribe to the PR's to keep you fully up to date just in case you would like to go along. One further thing.....no one seems to know who's running it. Wouldn't you like to? What have they to hide? I think we should be told.

BSFA AWARD DINNER

This is still being planned, and although it will happen, we can't say when...just yet. However, since the next mailing will be too short a notice, I will say that it'll be held in London during the month of October. J.G.Ballard and Chris Priest have already agreed to be present, and I'm sure other celebrities will also come along. Tickets for the dinner will be in the region of £6-£8 plus VAT, so anybody wanting to come along is urgently advised to write to me NOW, giving names and address together with how many tickets will be required. I'll then send out tickets and a letter confirming venue and time as soon as we have finally sorted this out. We hope this will be a worthy event, so I'd advise you to write in as soon as possible. It would be a help (though not necessary) if you could send stamped addressed envelopes with any firm bookings.

POSTERS...HANDBILLS...

Jim Barker has designed us an exciting new poster, which is now available : . Sized A2, it'll be suitable for libraries, bookshops, schools, colleges, poly-technics, universities and institutes. If you can dispose of some for us, let me know and I'll mail them to you. We also have some A4 handbills of the same poster, which we can send to local groups to hand to new members or any other interested people. The wider the distribution, the more folk we can get to join the bsfa to provide money to improve and extend our services. Sandy Brown has also produced some new editions of the Info Book (Available NOW) together with some new membership forms, so if anybody wants these (if you don't already have an Info book, or we neglect to send one), get in touch with Sandy at 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire, G72 9NA.

Right....that's it for another issue. Don't worry about Simon Ounsley's ROUND THE CLUBS...that's back next time. He's on a well-earned holiday in Crete at the moment. And me.....well, I'm off to sunny Reading. Got to get a mailing on the road!

MEDIA NOTES

According to Starlog magazine, the major studios have the following production for the coming months:

WARNER BROS: SUPERMAN II, Stephen King's THE SHINING ("the most terrifying thing to come around in years") and Ken Russel's version of ALTERED STATES.

AVCO EMBASSY: SHEENA OF THE JUNGLE, based on the 40's comic strip and not starring Raquel Welch, has been postponed.

PARAMOUNT: Although Paramount hasn't announced its plans for the sequel, Gene Roddenberry is apparently hard at work on STAR TREK II.

DISNEY: Moving into the fantasy field in a big way with CONDORMAN, (starring Michael Crawford), DRAGON SLAYER, a sixth-century sword and sorcery film; KNIGHTS OF EDEN and TIME WARP. No plans for a BLACK HOLE sequel.

A partial guest list for next season's Muppet Show includes James Coburn, Jane Fonda, Linda Ronstadt, Roger Moore and Debbie Harry.

Dave (Darth Vader) Prowse hopes to star in the feature film THE ORION PROJECT later this year. The third part of the STAR WARS saga, REVENGE OF THE JEDI, begins production in January and takes up the story where EMPIRE leaves off.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA: THE CYLON ATTACK was originally to have been called BATTLESTAR GALACTICA: THE CYLONS STRIKE BACK. Wonder why they changed it.....

VINCENT PRICE has escaped from the Time Express to head the cast of THE MONSTER CLUB. This film is based on the stories by R Chetwynd Hayes and the cast includes Simon Ward, Donald Pleasance, Anthony Valentine and Patrick Magee. It's produced by Milton Subotsky.

JUDGE DREDD, the hero of 2000 AD, gets his own annual from IPC comics this year. This is generally thought to be well above the average standard of normal annuals and is designed to be the definitive work on the Judge. As well as the usual complement of stories there are a number of behind-the-scenes features about his creation and the very first unpublished JD story. The annual (along with 2000 AD's own annual) is on sale from 21st August. FORBIDDEN PLANET are planning a special signing session with JD's writers and artists in attendance.

The new Dr Who series, soon to go into production, will see a change in style for the Doctor and quite a few new script writers on the small screen. In particular watch out for the third adventure, written by Andrew Smith - a professed fan and an accomplished writer; let's hope this new move will improve the standard even more.

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A convention mention that was omitted from the NEWS section. ...

Stancon 11/Beneluxcon 7 - 5th-7th September 1980 - Fabiolahome (University Stalhof), Ghent, Belgium. Guests of Honour - Joe Haldeman (USA), Wolfgang Jeschke (W Germany), Pierre Barbet (France) and Kees Van Toorn (Holland). Films, speeches, theatre/mime, art-show, international atmosphere, different languages! Attending membership 350fr (approx. £3-25) and 350fr per night bed and breakfast. Contact UK agent Ken Slater, 39 West Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire or directly Lou Grauwels, Lange Kievitstraat 27, B-2000 Antwerpen, Belgium.

HAVE YOU READ THIS ONE?

Following Alan Ferguson's comments in Mailbag, we list below his 'favourite reads' and a few of our own.... this could be the start of something big....

Alan Ferguson

Inverted World, Christopher Priest
The Ice Schooner, Michael Moorcock
By His Bootstraps, Robert Heinlein
Out of Their Minds, Clifford D Simak
Maze of Death, Philip K Dick

Eve Harvey

The Book of the Dun Cow, Walter Wangerin Jr
I read it after typing up Paul Kincaid's review for the last Vector and it's every bit as good as he said. The characterisation was great - perhaps a little Disneyish, but then I love Bambi.... Although I felt the ending left a bit to be desired

Dagger of the Mind, Bob Shaw

Not his usual style but one of the best I've read recently to make my skin crawl.

A Different Light, Elizabeth A Lynn (Readers Union)

It's a space adventure, but the lead character - an artist who's dying of cancer in a world where death by disease is virtually unknown - is excellent. She isn't visibly trying to pull at the heartstrings with such a hackneyed theme and therefore she succeeds - well at least with my and my mother's heartstrings anyway - we both thought it great.

Mission of Gravity, Hal Clement

Still my favourite human/alien collaboration story of all time.

Up The Walls of The World, James Tiptree Jr

I think James Tiptree's the best thing since sliced bread but have felt dissatisfied with her short stories - they finished too soon. This novel left me feeling I didn't want to get to the end of the book because that would mean it'd finished (I know that sounds like typical female logic, but I'm sure you know what I mean).

John Harvey

The Space Machine, Christopher Priest

Despite some critics' comments when published, this book was a really enjoyable combination and extrapolation of two of Wells's most famous themes.

Orbitsville, Bob Shaw

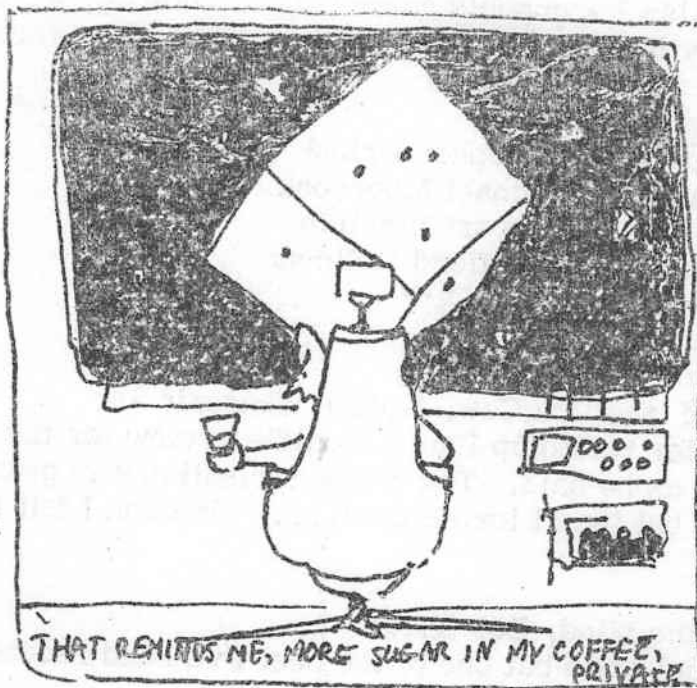
A great piece of interplanetary SF filled with real characters for a change.

Paradox Men, Charles Harness

Classic SF. Time and space travel beautifully combined.

Rite of Passage, Alexei Panshin

Brilliant characterisation compliments a brilliant adaptation of the standard generation-ship theme.



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