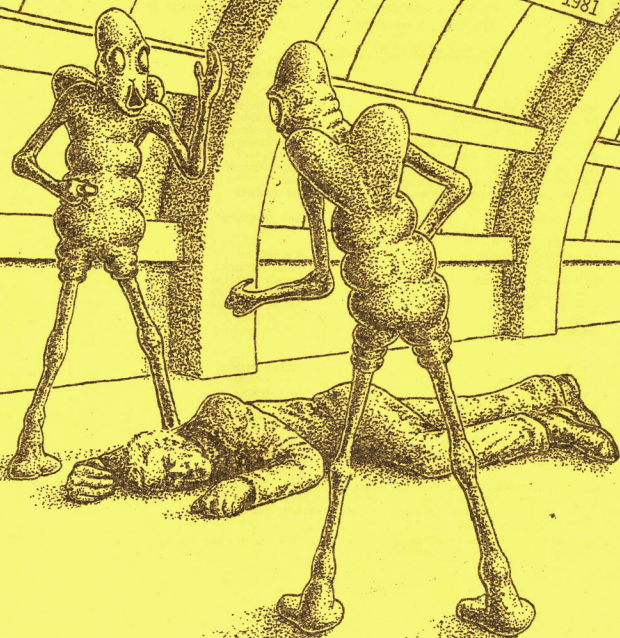
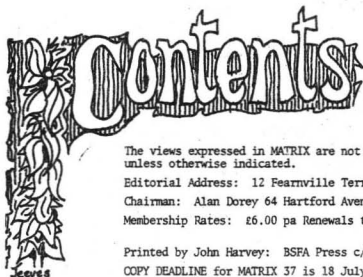


MATRIX

No. 36 JUNE/JULY 1981





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JUNE/JULY 1981

THE BSFA NEWSLETTER

EDITOR: GRAHAM JAMES

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**** EDITORIAL ****

Introduction to M36

You'll have realised two things by now, or three if you've read the contents page, in detail. Firstly, MATRIX has a smaller number of pages this issue - but its overall volume is the same, since the type has been reduced by around 20%. After the last mammoth issue of 48 pages, I was taken to task by the mailing crew - "too bloody long"; so, your humble editor, not wishing to fall out with the BSFA hierarchy, and at the same time, not wishing to incur the wrath of members - "Too bloody short" - decided to go for a reduction job. I hope this is still readable - I'm sure John Harvey will have done a good job, as usual. Secondly, the June mailing was put back one week for "technical" reasons - not too bad when you consider that the bi-monthly schedule has been maintained for over two years. And, thirdly (...and ninthly, he said...), Bob Shaw's 'Serious Scientific Talk' will be included next issue, complete with Pete Lyon illos.

To Include or Not to Include ---

I have mentioned, in previous issues, that I would welcome articles and artwork from members, and I'm now receiving quite a few contributions from you. My thanks to those concerned. If you think you can help in some way, drop me a line first, and I'll try and advise. Otherwise, I feel MATRIX is shaping up well, with a good deal of participation from members. As regards the contents, the response to the last issue (see letter-col) invoked a good deal of controversy over the Life on the Dole article - both in support and against its inclusion. Why did I include it? Well, after my editorial in MATRIX 34, I received the largest response of all, with considerable support for widening the coverage of MATRIX; so, in issue 35 I pushed the boat out even further. The title, "Life on the Dole" was deliberately chosen as a parody on the title "Life on Mars" - maybe those of you who got so worked up, will be brought down to earth by the arguments for its inclusion in the letter-col. It goes without saying that the BSFA is concerned with SF, but, part of its activities are concerned with fandom and the interview was, after all, concerned with what a long-time fan, Mike Dickinson, was doing with his life.

Who are we? What are we doing? Where are we going?

On that last point, one of the intentions behind setting up the BSFA some 20 years ago, was to help to introduce SF fans to fandom; I wonder if you think that it is fulfilling its obligations in this respect? Certainly

the co-ordination and publicity of local clubs helps, as do the fanzine reviews and convention listings, which are both ideal routes for "getting into fandom", but is there more which the BSFA could do? Could it, for example, run its own conventions, principally for BSFA members? OK, there may be enough cons now organised in the UK, but the BSFA used to organise the British Easter SF conventions. Despite the recent proliferation of mini-cons, particularly at universities and colleges, there is still virtually no competition in bidding for the following year's convention (none for the last 3-4 years to my recollection). Alan has mentioned in his article that the attendance at the BSFA meetings in London is dropping off, so maybe there is no interest in organising a convention, but it's a point we might wish to store away in our collective brain-cells.

Conventions - Towards a Critical Standpoint

Personally, I'm just about exhausted after being on the committee for Yorcon II, much hard work, plenty of fun and really satisfying when people, including Guests of Honour, write in and thank you for the convention. I should have had a con-rep in this issue, but one of my ex-contributors failed to turn up with said report - too shy or reticent to let her prose be subject to the knives of BSFA members.... "How the hell will they know about Rob Holdstock's ****" she claimed, in defence. So, I could hardly write a con-rep myself, could I? No objectivity, eh? So, Linda, kindly "volunteered" to write a few, totally unbiased, lines. Next issue I'll feature some of the art-work/cartoons done at the convention - any volunteers to write the associated report? But, before I hand over to Linda, I'd like to return to the point about objective, unbiased, reporting on the con. There has been one person who has since taken every opportunity to have a go at the committee, and I started to wonder why. It occurred to me that he had some vested interest in trying to put down the Leeds fans, who organised Yorcon - and I think I've got the answer as to why. Well, you see, this gentleman is involved in preparing a bid for 1983 - and who does he think his rivals will be? - Naturally he reckons he has two main opponents; the crew who ran Albacon (which most of his fellow bidders refused to attend "in protest") and yes, you've got it, the Leeds mob. So, what better bidding tactics than to try and stomp over your rivals, with half-truths and lies about their previous convention, even before the bidding show gets on the road. Sharp practice, I say - but generally in keeping with financially-minded individuals. The Leeds fans have, vaguely, thought about a bid for '83 - and maybe now they will get one going. After all, we may have had some bar problems on the first day of Yorcon II (which were later settled) but we didn't allow the hotel to POLICE convention members and stop room parties, as happened at one particular convention. Remember that Kev?

For me, YORCON II began a long time before the actual convention started, since I came back to UK in March, just in time to help Graham answer the telephone and deal with the mail concerning hotel bookings, transportation, requests to bring one's pet cat, demands for non-gluten diets customs arrangements for the demised film GOLEM, etc etc. In the run-up to the convention, if we received less than 40 letters a week, we phoned up the GPO to complain about lost mail. In the two weeks preceding the con, Graham (cleverly, I think) had to spend most of the time in Newcastle on business and the rest of the committee had to help out with some of his duties; I mean, with a 5-year-old child and our newborn baby, I needed some help! This was provided, on a large scale, on the Wednesday before the con when we had to stuff the program books, badges, and other info into plastic bags. Stu Shiffman (US TAFF winner) and Gerbish (film projectionist extraordinaire) arrived at our house with assorted committee members and with our two children, helped out; if anyone found a baby's rattle with their programme book, could you return it please? Gerbish's Malt Whiskey completed the evening, and Simon drove back through Leeds, more on alcohol than petrol I reckon.

If you're organising a con, one advantage is that you haven't got very far to travel to the hotel - I mean, 10 minutes into Leeds is far better than California to Florida for SUNCON (four days by bus). I seem, vaguely, to remember seeing Graham at the con; in between sorting out the proliferation of minor hassles "I asked for a foam pillow in my room - I'm allergic to feathers" --- "They're closing the bar for 3 hours every day" cried Simon - "What?" exclaimed Graham. "I've a piece of paper here that says they'll only close for half an hour for restocking." Urgent negotiations, and the bar manager produces a rotar whereby the bar doesn't close at all - except at 1.30 a.m. which some people still complain is too early. Surely the majority of convention attendees by now are used to having private stocks of alcohol (or whatever) to take to room parties after the bar closes?

One of the things that struck me about this convention (even though I've been to two British cons before) is the amazing leaning towards fannish programme items - as opposed to many of the US cons where Very Famous Authors read selected extracts from their Very Wonderful Novels, and the programme is full of Very Serious Debates. I mean, Dupers for Poland, with Roz Kaveney, Geoff Ryman and Abi Frost, with their sponsored "Stop Us Reading!" were outrageous. There was a similar humorous vein running through the convention with Alan's "Just A Minute" panel, Bob Shaw's "Serious Scientific Talk" and both the Guests of Honour, Tom Disch and Ian Watson, producing witty anecdotal speeches. I think that was really the hallmark of the convention; John Sladek wrote afterwards saying what a great time he had, and he couldn't understand why he hadn't been to a convention before. Both Disch and Watson made great contributions to the con - to see 16 stone of Disch gyrating with a miniature Ian Watson to disco music was an event I shall not easily forget. As Ian remarked 'We enjoyed ourselves greatly ... Among my golden moments: the presentation of the Easter egg to John Clute as 'Best Person Dressed as a Critic'; and sitting next to Peter Nicholls at the Disco and hearing him groaning prolongedly at the vista of the nakedest bottom undulating gently a few feet from his eyes for half an hour, periodically stroked by leather gauntlets. 'That's how she holds her riding crop,' I murmured to him. 'I know, Ian, I know,' he moaned. Tut tut."

Of course, fun and games sometimes turn into Serious Business, and so it was with Graham's panel on "Should SF Support Causes". There was Chris Priest, John Sladek, Ian Watson and John Brunner, quietly, seriously, and meaningfully discussing the subject when Ian proposed to the audience that a vote should be taken on whether members supported unilateral disarmament of nuclear weapons. Pow! Up roar! I have never, ever witnessed fans almost fighting to ask a question; normally a question panel has to ask ... er, um, ... any questions ... er, what do you think then, Nigel There were calls for a Tannoy announcement that the vote was to take place, motions on motions on whether a vote should be taken - general uproar indeed! Almost all seemed to enjoy the opportunity for a good argument, but I must confess that one or two got pretty worked up about the subject and talked about (sigh) ... "This is the end of British conventions as we know them, etc etc." I think that, to his credit, Graham chaired the proceedings very well since, although he and I support unilateral disarmament, he did steer a middle course and let each side of the fence have their say: (By the way, the vote was 74 for disarmament, 30 against, and 60 abstentions.)

There is little doubt that, if you looked at the programme, you would realise that much of the committee were concerned with matters closely related to the nuclear weapons issue - for example, the inclusion of the two films "War Games" and "Dr. Strangelove", in addition to the above programme item. However, I feel they did present a balanced programme; the alternate programme was a good case in point. Mike Ford ran this extremely well and there was full opportunity for convention members to hold their own programme items; there were talks from Bob (FOKT) Shaw on the Space Shuttle; talks on Arthurian Legends; sects and comics. There was also a real fine fancy dress show organised by Anne Page, something which fannish fans have turned their noses up at before.

(continued on page 36)

THE CHANNELCON FAN ROOM

Jim Barker

Those of you who were at the bidding session at Yorcon II may remember me babbling inanely about my plans for the Channelcon fan room. I don't think I put it over too well so this (hopefully) is a slightly more coherent and elaborate version of what I said then.

Basically, what I want to do is put on a display with the theme; The Fannish Year-Eastercon to Eastercon. This would cover as many events as possible occurring between Yorcon and Channelcon which would be of fannish interest...conventions, parties, outings, marriages, births, the lot. This would be broken down on a month-to-month basis, giving everything at least a mention and, at best, providing written reports and photographic coverage of major events. Obviously, this is a large undertaking and, since I'm stuck away up here in the land of instant porridge and ten-gallon kilts I'm looking for help.



I'm looking for volunteers to write reports on the various conventions being held in Britain throughout the year. Ideally, these would be kept to one side of an A4 page and not be published elsewhere. And if you're planning to take photographs, can I borrow some prints for display purposes? These will be returned. These requests also apply to coverage of things like Tenth Anniversary parties or Anglo/American marriages and suchlike If you think you can be of help, please contact me at the address below.

If you see any snippets concerning SF fans or silly stories about SF in general, in the national or regional press, could you send me a cutting. I'm particularly interested in the "Way Out Sci Fi Guys" type of story

ry and unlikely stories concerning people with names not dissimilar to well-known SF fans. If you or your fan group publish a fanzine, could you please send me a copy or make sure a committee member gets one. Just like the British Library, I'd like to display a copy of every zine published in Britain during the period. There is also a possibility that we'll be producing a Fanzine Index for 1981-82 and we'd like it as complete as possible.

I have various bits and pieces of the fan room programme in the works, but I'm always on the lookout for comments, criticisms, suggestions. Is there anything from recent conventions you'd like to see repeated or avoided? Again, please get in touch. Volunteers to participate on programme items will be looked on with great favour.

If you can help with any of the above, please contact me at; 113 Windsor Road, Falkirk, Stirlingshire FK1 5DB, Central Scotland. Telephone 0324 24959 (office hours) or 0324 35452 (after six).

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## SCIENCE FICTION WEIRDIES? Observations by Dorothy Davies

I was working yesterday, I promise you I was working, using the radio for background music and occasional inspiration, when I heard the disc jockey, who was seeking to make some rude comment about Jonathan King (and who doesn't) say something like "Jonathan King will be standing for the Science Fiction Looney Party." This in turn led me to remember my mother's comments after reading my carbons, "Why do you write such weird things?" and again, my sister introducing me to a friend, "She writes, you know" and adds, "science fiction; she's really weird."

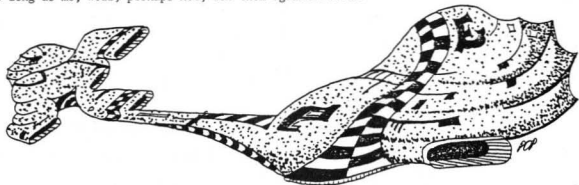
A question for you to ponder. Are people who read and write science fiction weird?

There is definitely something different about people who like science fiction, that's for sure, for no other group of people start societies, write to each other, print magazines, and generally get involved, do they? There are no societies for, just as an example off the top of my head - Coronation Street viewers, Crossroad viewers, Mills and Boon readers, Who Dunit addicts or Jean Plaidy fans. Yet, think of even a moderately successful TV series, any TV series, Dr. Who, Star Trek, Blakes'7, Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy - Appreciation Societies spawn like rabbits all over the place, and more all the time!

So, why can't we just sit at home and read our books, and watch TV, laughing over the bad ones and crying over the moving ones, and appreciating the good ones - alone? Why do we have to find someone else who thinks as we do, someone we can write to and say, "Didn't Terry Nation write a good script last week?" "What about that Larry Niven? Do you agree he has cardboard characters?" and on and over onward? There has to be something in our psyche that cries out for human contact whilst we delve into strange worlds, perhaps we are afraid of losing touch with reality while we go? What, for another example, is the strange urge that makes Mike Harding put out a

'faxsheet' in an effort, I assume, to start a correspondence with 800 BSFA members? (Good job not all of us will reply, he'd be bankrupt in a month!) (no disrespect Mike, but anyone who can say "anything musical before 1976 isn't worth your attention" isn't on my wavelength!)

Have another question to ponder. Having set up this cure for the craving for human companionship, why then the snobbishness? I've heard (and experienced) snobbishness with classical music lovers, who look down their patrician noses at people who think Dine Straits are IT, so the 'purists' among the SF hierarchy make comments like 'perhaps they'll progress to real SF later on' when referring to Blake 7 viewers, or whoever. I'm a Blake 7 fan, says me with a quick touch of the forelock, Squire, and all that..... There is no room for such attitudes, says me, firmly and with both feet stamping the ground as I say it. I'm not attempting to answer these questions, I'm putting them on the sheet for you to think about, and give you something else to write to Graham about as a nice change from tearing each other's throats out in an effort to be nastier than the last one who wrote in. I'd like your theories on the phenomenon known as 'fandom' which has been around almost as long as me, well, perhaps not, but then again.....



#### SOUTH OF THE BORDER (DOWN MEXICO WAY...) by Yves Vandezande

As a member of the BSFA majority known as the Silents (not to be confused with the Cylons), it is not my custom to write complaints to poor overworked editors. But, while reading fellow foreign member Roelof Goudriaan's article on fandom in the Netherlands ('Where once the sea guzzled' -MATRIX 35), I felt that a few comments of my own were needed.

To begin with, I live and work in the Flemish part of Belgium. The only thing Roelof and I would normally have in common would be our language. Although there is a slight difference between Flemish and Dutch, we understand each other without having to speak a tongue foreign to both of us. But we have another thing in common. As fans, we are much closer in fandom than say, a French and a British fan. I have been active in Beneluxfandom (let's call it that) for over 10 years now and practically from the start I realised that Belgian and Dutch fandom was a Gordian knot. What I mean to say is that the two have always worked together well and very closely and can't be separated from each other. A Belgian fan is very much aware of what's happening in Holland and vice versa. We go to each other's Beneluxcons and other meetings as if they were our own. We actually read (yes, read!) each other's fanzines. Okay, so maybe the Belgians drink harder and faster, but then the Dutch have a way of explaining things better.... So I was really sorry to see Roelof giving Dutch fandom such a boast without mentioning at all what happens south of his border. If you don't mind, I'll do it for him.

But first, some words on the Dutch scene. Kees Van Toorn, publisher of the prozine ORBIT, is a friend of mine and I have no wish to put him down. Orbit is indeed a huge success but only because it's a very, very commercial enterprise and features a lot of glossy STAR WARS pictures aimed at the very young. And yes, the fiction is by big names but unfortunately the stories are never their best or even average ones. I hope for all of us that, once Kees has established a big enough market for himself, he will turn to more serious fiction and forget about STAR TREK pictures and colour posters. But still, it's good to see that at least someone is making an effort towards professionalism.

I fully agree with Roelof Goudriaan on Rob Vooren's geniality. KING KONG SF was the scene to belong to. But Roelof doesn't mention the fact that nowadays Rob is quite fed up with fanpublishing and wants to devote his spare time exclusively to serious drinking (aah! a Dutchman close to my heart. The man should be living south of the border.) King Kong SF was published when Rob felt like it, which is quite normal in fanpublishing. But sometimes this procedure had odd results. For instance, Rob asked me to do a report on Season and received it within one week after the convention ended. But, unfortunately, his next issue of KKSF only came out in the autumn of 1980... and featured my report of an event that had taken place more than a year before. Another thing, his famous short story contest, the King Kong Award, will never be the same again now that he has given it into the hands of two young commandos who don't possess even one-tenth of the charisma he has.

But then, what is the King Kong Award? (hear this, Dave Langford!) It is an annual short story contest organised by the King Kong fanzine that usually attracts around 80 entries and has been a huge success in the five years of its existence. The 3 best stories each receive a lump sum of money and the best gets an award as well (in the past these awards have been designed by artists such as Karel Thole and Tais Teng). What makes the contest special is the fact that the prize money is always brought together from contributions by fans. There is no set minimum to the amount you can give, nor is there a maximum. Naturally, the total amount is different every year but it averages around £400.

Roelof also mentions 'a ficzine enthusiastically published by a young fan in a thousand-copy print-run', meaning 'Fantastisch Vertellingen' (Fantastic Tales) by Remco Meisner. It's the kind of fanzine everybody laughs at and whether he sells fifty copies or a thousand nobody will every know. But then we must consider the fact that Remco Meisner succeeded in appearing on the National Dutch television for fifteen minutes, promoting his zine. Something even NCSF, in all their years of existence, never managed. But enough criticism of our Dutch friends; onto the Belgians.

Before I begin, I should say that I will only talk about Flemish fandom. Whatever happens in the French-speaking part of Belgium is as alien to me as, say, the Sandinasta movement. Odd? Not to me, it isn't.

Our national organisation is called SFAN and its publication Rigel Magazine. Rigel's latest issue was no. 77 (so look out Vector!) and it contains the usual mixture of fiction, articles, reviews and letters (Rob Jackson mentions it in MATRIX 27). Despite its name changes (from Info-Sfan to SF-Magazine to Rigel) and its different editors (Simon Joukes, Robert Smets, Guido Eekhaut, myself and Smets again) it always kept its numbering and stayed a true clubzine. SFAN itself has existed for over ten years now and has local branches in Antwerp, Ghent and Louvain. It is the organiser of the Beneluxcons when in Belgium. Last year they had Joe Haldeman in Ghent and the year before Rob Holdstock in Louvain.

A second club, also based in Antwerp, is Progressef. They publish a small fanzine called Progressef Magazine. Originally devoted to Perry Rhodan and space games, they soon recovered from this madness and went straight. In 1980 they published Progressef pockets as well, each one containing a novella by Belgian writers such as Eddy C. Bertin, Julien Raasveld and Guido Eekhaut.

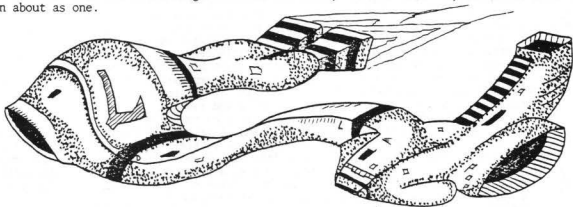
Hot news is that this club will soon merge with SFAN, causing Rigel to change its name once more, this time to Progressef. But there's more. Semi-pro writer Eddy C. Bertin (you'll find a story by him in New Writings in SF 13) has a fanzine of his own called SF-Gids (SF Guide). It's comparable to King Kong SF; it has no set publication date.

Abraxas is a zine mainly devoted to horror and fantasy, occasionally accepting SF stories. It is published by two youngsters from Ghent, Bart Mynlaert and Peter Steyeart and is now in its second year of publication. Recently they even started a new series of 'specials', the first containing novelettes by Christiane Vaeren and Guido Eekhaut and a short story by yours truly.

And finally, the youngest of them all. A semi-pro publication entirely devoted to fantasy. It's called Hexa and is edited/published by Ronald Grossey from Antwerp (Yes, I know, always Antwerp; this must be very boring). Hexa has published five issues so far, each one containing fiction and a lot of articles ranging from Tolkien to ancient Irish mythology. Hexa prints and sells 500 copies per issue and has gone up to 1,000 since it found a Dutch distributor. I must admit that it looks very good with its glossy b&w cover and thick paper and can only be recommended to fantasy readers everywhere.

The magazines mentioned above are the most important around at the moment. Apart from some small-time local efforts, there isn't much more since Belgium has no prozines at all. And, to talk about zines that no longer exist would be a waste of time in this context.

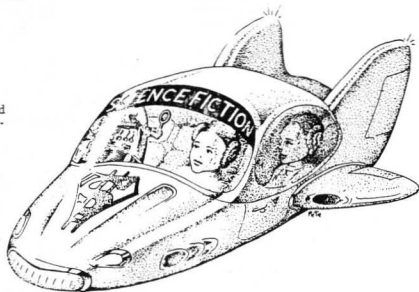
I could say a few words about our young (and not so young) authors, but since this article was meant as a reply to the Dutch fandom article, perhaps another time. I'll just say that they do exist. Finally I want to say that I never meant to attack Roelof Goudriaan (I met him once and he's a decent chap. So if you meet him and he buys you a drink, make sure the next round's on you). But I feel that Dutch and Belgian fandom are really one and that they should be seen and written about as one.



## SF AND ALTERNATIVE COMICS

Mike Weller

Science-fiction was not my favourite sort of literature as a child. I believed it to be as boring as physics and chemistry, subjects I did not get along with. I imagined SF might be the material a science master would write on an evening off to supplement his income. My mind was changed sometime in the early seventies when I found 'New Worlds' among the publications distributed by the underground press network. The moon had been conquered, the magic taken out of space as the final frontier. In other words, SF had come down to earth with an anti-climactic thud at the same time as I was



contributing 'alternative' comic strips to 'Oz' magazine. If the connection between a magazine emerging out of the counter-culture and an old SF magazine undergoing a radical face-lift seemed tenuous at the time it is no longer so. As underground comics died with the seventies cultural backlash or 'moral panic', science-fiction has embraced the developments in comic strips and graphics where the alternative press left off. This has posed a problem with my own work. While the underground comics that grew out of the magazines were still a commercial proposition (*Nasty Tales*, *Cosmic Comics*) it was possible for me to continue to combine my expressionistic, distorted drawing with a new form of writing; an onomatopoeia influenced by the contemporary freedom in rock lyrics. As the developments of comics in France concentrated around fantastic and surrealist art; a disinterest in text (it wasn't important the French couldn't be understood) - and a quality of production designed with immense technical virtuosity - the British underground ceased to exist. A few attempts grappled unsuccessfully with these changes but were vastly inferior to the original 'Metal Hurlant'. The best work in the mid-seventies was done by Birmingham Arts Lab Press, although clinging to a hippy legacy of out-dated ideals, they cautiously introduced the work of myself and younger artists attune with the 'punk explosion' (c.f. *Street Comix*, *Committed Comix*, *Heroine*, *Arzak Microcomiks*). The punk 'fanzine' at the same time with its fresh burst of energy, ease in finding a distribution network, do-it-yourself printing methods and lack of concern about commercial success buried the traditional underground comic once and for all. A few 'punkzines' published comic strips as well (c.f. *Surrey Vomets* No. 3, *Chainsaw*).

I xeroxed 'Coffin Blood' with the idea of combining a SF/comic fanzine with a punkzine and plastered SCIENCE FICTION IS DEAD on the cover of issue 2 in July 1979. After making statements like; 'Science fiction...a rich and unpleasant Babylonian uncle...has turned into the monster-machine it once set out to destroy...Fantastic modern world reality has taken over...' I produced the xeroxed fanzine '1988', a graphic experiment in SF set in the near future based on the old theme of a right-wing takeover in Britain combined with speculative realism. It would be easy to share the despondency about science-fiction common among distinguished practitioners in the USA and Europe but I don't feel it is entirely justified despite my own earlier condemnation of the genre. SF is being used on the introductory 1980-81 Cultural Studies course here at NELP. Alan O'Shea, a tutor on cultural studies, suggests that science-fiction can be used as a device to examine the present in a new and different way by an alien presentation of the familiar. How much disillusionment with SF comes from the shift of its own emphasis from the strange to the familiar? In some ways science-fiction has become too familiar, it has been absorbed into daily journalism and advertising, blockbuster movies, top twenty hits and radio and TV comedy.

I was swayed into travelling a considerable distance to a course at NELP because of the SF Foundation and the possibility of exploring word and image in a SF context for the reasons mentioned above. If there is a despondency about SF as a literary form I fail to see why this feeling should extend to para-literature. Unlike the USA, France, Italy and Spain the response to a para-literary form like comics in the UK is centred around a combination of juvenility (Beano, Dandy, Rupert Bear), influence of imported sex and violence (both the Oz Schoolkids issue and *Nasty Tales* were prosecuted for American comic-strip contributions) and nostalgia (Eagle, Film Fun, the newspaper strip). A 'problematic' could be based around why the satirical cartoon in

Britain has structured tradition (from Hogarth to Steadman) along with the humorous cartoon which for over a century and a half has appeared in numerous publication with varied cultural positions: yet the form of comic strip that extends for more than one page is not examined by either the art or literary critical establishment and is left to sociologists for analysis.<sup>2</sup> As a first year mature student in cultural studies I see this problematic as one worth analysing through the themes of literature and popular culture. The SF Foundation will be an essential resource for students undertaking research of this nature and any results from an analysis of literacy will almost certainly have an immediate bearing outside the academic structure.

Under the instigation of Colin Greenland at the SF Foundation, a Writers' Workshop has been formed with a small nucleus of students with the emphasis on creative writing. It is important to state that the writers' workshop is not restricted to students of cultural studies and equally important to stress that the writers' workshop is not confined to science fiction. It is only a loose definition which is easier to clarify if you share the not-so-new proposition that we live in a 'science fiction world'. Writers and readers included. The most common remark for new members of the workshop to make is 'What I've written is not really science-fiction but...' Contributions to the first workshop sessions ranged from extracts from a spy thriller to my own experiments with graphic science-fiction. Poems accompanied by photographs have also been contributed. An early workshop exercise was a 'one page' interpretation of the 'City' theme. The response left the theme open to everything from an orthodox alien city story, typographic experiment to a piece of pop art and social allegory. The current work in progress is an attempt at a collaborative piece built around a skeleton plot of alien invasion and interpreted through the styles and forms of each individual workshop contributor. The writers' workshop is therefore developing on two levels. The encouragement of new writing by individuals in the sense of not being tied down by theme or genre and an active experimental workshop that is exploring approaches consciously defined as science-fiction.

#### NOTES

1. The term para-literature was used by Christopher Finch in examining the graphic work of Eduardo Paolozzi in 'Image as Language - Aspects of British Art 1950-1968' - (Pelican Books).
2. The Perry/Aldridge 'Penguin Book of Comics' attempted a serious analysis of the British comic strip but it remains an isolated study.

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I'd hoped that this, my last LIFE ON MARS column, would be a nice, quiet retirement issue, with a few leisurely mentions of a few nice quiet SF groups who do nothing but sit amicably in a corner, peacefully drinking, till eventually they slide softly under the table pissed out of their skulls. But no, I should be so lucky. I have to get saddled with bloody controversy again. The other day, you see, I got this letter -

"During one of my frequent visits to a local public house, I soon found that it was also being used by a certain WEST MIDLANDS SF GROUP under the apparent control of one Mr. G Boswell. Being somewhat wary and cautious it took me a little time to discover that they were not the collection of longhaired, hippy-type layabouts one has come to expect. In fact, I can state now that they are a warm and friendly collection of near human beings as one will ever find - connected with that silly space fiction stuff, that is.

"Still, on the night of which I am complaining about, the WEST MIDLANDS SF GROUP was the victim of what I can only describe as one of the nastiest pieces of terrorism I have ever seen, and I can assure you that, as a member of the BRIGHTON DEFENCE LEAGUE (ex-Army Officers Against Long-Haired Layabouts Division), I have probably seen it all.

"I am referring to the BRIGHTON SF FILM GROUP and one Ms Jean Frost. (Though how the BSFFG can call VIRGINS IN SPACE a Science Fiction Film I just do not know. In my day, this was the thing normally shown to elderly gentlemen in soiled raincoats.) Ms Frost came to one of the WMSFG's meetings where, when no-one fell down in front of her in admiration awe, she proceeded to hide away in a corner constructing a malicious and fictitious article for her 'rag', entitled JOURNEY TO THE EARTH'S BORE - a particularly uninspired title for a piece of utter rubbish.

"In true gutter press style, Ms Frost then proceeded to send her collection of lies to one Dan Llanfed, for inclusion in said Llanfed's scandal rag, ANTSCRIBBLE, where the for once innocent Llanfed printed it.

"I wish to point out that, during the whole proceedings, Ms Frost failed to make herself anything other than invisible and that, if she and her pet crone had had the guts to come up and introduce themselves to even one member of the WMSFG, then she would have received a very warm and friendly reception indeed.

((There's a bit in here about tossed salads which I don't understand, but I think is probably rude, so I'll leave it out. Wouldn't want to put anything rude in this column, would I? - S.O.))

"In closing, I should like to state that, should Ms Frost ever come to one of the WMSFG's meetings in the future, she will receive a very warm and entertaining reception. She will be burned alive in the market square, as should all witches, hags and malicious trouble-causers."

The letter claims to come from Private P Parts (ret'd) p.p. Major Jumperbit VD and SCAR (ret'd) at Shooters Cottage, Bagemansuffem, Little Useinlife, Nr Dudley, West Midlands. Oh dear, oh lor, wonder who could have sent it?

I would not, of course, have included anything so scurrious as the above in this column, except that Jean Frost did, indeed, make some disparaging remark or other about the West Midlands Group in Dave Langford's publication, and since ANTSCRIBBLE almost approaches the influence of MATRIX itself, it does seem appropriate to balance things up a bit.

I can't, of course, comment on the rights or wrongs of this particular case, because, fortunately I wasn't there at the time, but I do - for what it's worth - have a few thoughts on this sort of incident in general. Something similar has happened a couple of times at the Leeds Group - someone new has come along and left with the impression that we hadn't exactly tried to make them welcome. As luck would have it, in neither case did they write immediately to Dave Langford to complain about us. Instead, they rather sensibly came back and tried again, and in both cases enjoyed themselves the second time; in fact, one of them is now a regular attendee at our meetings (where the hell did I get a word like attendee from? Doesn't sound like the sort of person who lives in Leeds) and both have since admitted that their feelings of rejection were, at least partly, due to their own attitudes at the time.

Of course, there are faults on both sides in this sort of situation, but human nature does demand that the newcomer push himself forward a bit, at least come up and introduce himself, rather than sit in a corner and wait for people to speak to him. (Incidentally, that sentence also applies to women.) Whatever kind of group you want to join, be it SF, stamp-collecting, pigeon-fancying, or whatever, the same rule applies. However much a group of people would like new members, they're not going to be particularly friendly or talkative to someone who isn't friendly and talkative with them. I know it should be easier for the established members - they're on home ground and relaxed - but they've also got less to gain than the newcomer and have probably had a hard day and don't feel much like talking anyway. It can be hard for the newcomer I know, but that's the way it is. Just bear in mind that no group really sets out to resist new members - just stick at it and the bastards will soften in time. We, at the Leeds Group, for instance, are much friendlier these days. No newcomers have left our meetings in tears for almost three weeks now.

Nore of neofannish problems later ... first a few pieces of information.

#### THE SOUTH HANTS SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

Almost famous fanzine editor Jeff Suter writes -

"The group has been in existence for six months and now has established itself in the area with contacts in local colleges, book and record shops. ((That should probably read "shops" by the way. Jeff doesn't write very well - S.O.))

"Meetings are every Thursday fortnight in the lounge bar at the George and Dragon public house in Cosham High Street. We also meet on some Saturdays for special events and guest speakers. The pub is easily accessible by car, bus and train. (The station is three-minute's walk from the pub and makes it available to people from a wide area in the south.)

"We have already had a guest author to speak to us (Michael Vyse) and are holding SF quizzes in preparation for a challenge on the NOVACON event currently presided over by the Limpwrist. More guests and activities are being planned. For further information, please contact Jeff Suter at 18 Norton Close, Southwick, Fareham, Hants PO17 6MD or telephone COSHAM 373956 between 6pm and 7pm."

Thanks for the info, Jeff. By the way, apologies, but I lost the copy of PERIPHERY you gave me at Yorcon II (hint, hint).

#### SHEFFIELD SF CLUB

Ian Goffin has heard from Terry Jeeves about this, and apparently the group meets at 7.30pm on the last Wednesday of the month at the West Street Hotel (not to be confused with the West

End Hotel or - presumably - any other kind of West Hotel) in an upstairs room. The hotel is immediately after the Employment Exchange (hope we're allowed to mention that) on the same side of the road. Unfortunately, Terry hasn't been to the group for some time, so the venue may have changed. Stay tuned for further details from Ian, I hope. Thanks for writing, Ian.

#### EALING AND BEYOND

This could have been a long section, except that, whoever kindly helped John Collick take the clubs info down from the screens at Yoron II also threw it away, so, unfortunately, I don't have any of the information which was doubtless put up there during the con to supplement last issue's club listing. However, I do remember being taken to task by an outraged Greg Pickersgill about the lack of a mention for FRIENDS IN SPACE in the listing. "I thought it was a joke," I meekly replied, at which Greg thrust an out-turned palm against his forehead... in disbelief, I thought, until people like Roy Kettle and Rob Holdstock appeared and made similar gestures. (I say people like Roy Kettle and Rob Holdstock, because you can never be too sure about these things.) Anyway, all these people assured me that FRIENDS IN SPACE (or, to use the secret name recently revealed to Dave Pringle, HARINGEY SCI-FI DISCUSSION GROUP) still meet regularly at - I presume - the place and time I've got written down somewhere way back in my files, which is Sunday night at the Queen Victoria, The Green, Ealing. If it's changed, then no doubt some friend in space will write in and tell my successor.....

.....because, yes, this is my twelfth and last LIFE ON MARS column. From this moment on, all enquiries, news, info and complaints about this issue's column (tee hee) should be addressed to Steven J Green at 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, B27 7SD. Perhaps a few words are in order (ahem).....

Although I tend to trace my journey through fandom with a sort of grim inevitability from the moment I walked into the lounge of a place called Lumb Bank at Heptonstall, and found Alan Dorey, Mike Dickinson and Paul Kincaid sitting on a settee discussing how awful the BSFA was, I had actually attended my first convention earlier that year. A Fantasycon, it was, in Birmingham, and I went along entirely alone and with little idea of what to expect. I walked into the hotel bar and found it packed full of people all talking and drinking and completely oblivious - or at any rate, careless - of the fact that I'd just arrived and didn't know anyone and would rather have liked to speak to someone. I waited there for a few moments, choosing a victim (though I wouldn't have seen it like that), then I walked forward and seized him with a steely eye and said, "ahem, excuse me, but are there any fans around here?"

I can't remember what my victim's reply was, but I remember he turned out to be Steve Green, and an SF fan not a fantasy fan. He carefully dissociated himself from fantasy fandom and all its works, and spent the weekend very conscientiously teaching me not to say "sci-fi", for which I must remain eternally grateful.

So, I leave you in good hands. Next issue, I'm fanzine reviewer. See you then.

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I wouldn't like to let Simon depart from the Club Scene without expressing my sincere appreciation to him for his sterling work. Simon never failed to meet the deadline and often helped out by typing up his own article - we need more people like you, Simon. More importantly, though, I think that Simon has done much to help with the formation of a number of groups up and down the country whilst, at the same time, providing witty and well-written articles on the Club Scene. I'm sure Steve Green will continue in the same mould.



**WANTED DESPERATELY:** Episodes 6 & 7 of the BBC RADIO 4 adaptation of THE LORD OF THE RINGS on cassette. Must be in stereo and of a good quality (no interference and preferably with Dolby). Must include intro music and end credits. Will pay £7 for the tapes or £3.50 to borrow tape and make a copy. Write to: Steve Gooch, 4 Ping Grove, Rugby, Warks CV21 4BL

**WANTED:** AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS by H P Lovecraft, any edition, any condition. Contact: A W Robertson, 20 Kingsley Road, Brighton; tel 0273-558775.

(continued page

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# On The Carpet

Fanzines and other small press publications received during March and April 1981 reviewed by Rob Jackson. From the beginning of May onwards, zines for review should go (or should already have gone) to Simon Unsley, 13A Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3AE.

This is my final fanzine listing column for Matrix. Anything I've received since the end of April won't get reviewed unless you send a copy to Simon Unsley. Sorry. Many (in fact most) editors who've sent me zines may still receive a zine or two from me in trade, if spare time, energy and money materialises — so don't give up completely on sending me fanzines, especially if I've shown signs of liking something you've sent.

A final word about the lack of comic, film and Star Trek zines: there are a good number published, but I haven't been able to afford to subscribe to them on your behalf, and your editors haven't sent me free copies. (Maybe they don't know Matrix exists, just as I don't know some of them exist.)

Abbreviations by recommended zines: A\*: good art, graphics or visual production. C\*: about comic or visual SF. F\*: fanzine. Fic\*: containing fiction. G\*: with general contents. N\*: containing news. P\*: with personal contents. S\*: about written SF or fantasy.

The Usual means a zine is available for the following: trade (exchange) with other fanzines, letter of comment, or contribution of written or artistic material. If available for money, the price is listed; if not, an initial sample is available free from most editors (provided they've got copies left): just write politely and ask.

Page sizes: FC (foolscap) 14" x 8". A4: 11 1/2" x 8 1/4". C (quarto) 10" x 8". A5: 8 1/2" x 5 7/8".

Printing methods: D: duplicated. L: lithographed. X: Xeroxed (photocopied). R: reduced typeface like this, giving more words per page.

## SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS

S\* Foundation 21 (ed. David Pringle for SF Foundation, N.E. London Polytechnic, Longbridge Rd., Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS; £5 for 3 (1 year); A5 RL; 114pp.) As usual, excellent powerful critical writing about SF and related areas of fiction. The cover sums up the contents well, including "Naomi Mitchison on the Deathless Ditties of SF, Christopher Priest lambasts Lester del Rey" (with superb aggression), "K.V. Bailey on Dickens as a proto-SF writer, Gregory Benford unravels his String of Days, D. West against the Marching Morons," plus writing by Greenland, Bailey, Clute, Bishop, Kaveney, Stableford, Watson and others. Get it if you've half a brain or more.

S/N\* Locus 242, 243 (ed. Charles N. Brown; in UK, subs to Fantast (Medway) Ltd., 39 West St., Wisbech, Cambs. PE13 2LX; 12/£11.50 or 24/£22.00 air or 12/£7.00 or 24/£13.00 seaml; USQ RL; 32, 24pp.) Full of American SF news as usual. Awards, publishing changes, new and forthcoming US books, a survey of last year, articles by an agent, people news, reviews, and big and small ads. Useful zine.

## FANZINES

### United Kingdom

N\* Ansible 16, 17 (Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave., Reading, Berks. RG2 7PW; 6/£1 UK, 5/£1 Europe, 4/£1 elsewhere; Q RL/D; 6, 10pp.) The British newsmagazine. Future cons, awards, and snippets of scurrilous rumours which may be true but Locus wouldn't dare print, e.g. the report that Carl Sagan's recently completed novel was largely by a girlfriend. There's a Holdstock/Evans news page backed by a Very Strange page from a novel Chris (Evans) read as a publisher's reader; also the

Checkpoint/Ansible Fan Poll voting form, which it's a bit late to mention as the deadline was May 30th.

Erg 74 (Terry Jeeves, 230 Bannerdale Rd., Sheffield S11 9FE; a LoC plus 30p in stamps; Q D; 28pp.) Longrunning gazette from a reliable old-generation fan and nice guy. Contents include lots of brief book reviews, NASA news, the second half of Terry's Neoscan trip report (First Fandom set up a special fund for him and his wife, which shows the respect they have for him), an article on relativity, and letters.

Fan Exiled from Tyne Zine 1 (Mike Hamilton, 38 Park Way, Etwell, Derbyshire DE6 6HU; the usual, I think; Q D; 6pp.) Personalzine from a young ex-Gannet marine engineer. Those who remember his previous fanzines will be mildly relieved to know his grammar and spelling have improved a fair bit. Contents include stuff about holes in oil tankers, shopping in Dakar (don't), and a batty cat.

G\* Fantasmagoria 4 (Chris Hughes, 1st gerbil house on the right, Psychology Dept., University of Keele, Keele, Staffs. ST5 5BG; the usual, 33p, or jokes about gerbils; A5 RL; 32pp.) This fanzine's getting to be very good: the material is variable, but it's lively, regular, nicely printed and competently presented. Contents include a very good Arnold Alden article about Stone Age paintings and communication among humanity, a postal interview with Dave Langford, an article on falcons and similar in SF (not my bag), news, letters and a nice silly sub-Jim Barker cartoon about fans vs. the rest.

P\* Gross Encounters 9 (Alan Dorey, 64 Hartford Ave., Kenton, Harrow, Middx. HA3 8SY; the usual, I guess; A4 D; 14 pp.) Pleasant, chatty fanzine from the man who put the Boss in BoSFA, and, judging by the number of typos, the man who put the pist in tylist. (Actually that's unfair — there are no more than ten typos per page really.) About his US trip: worth getting.

Fic\* In Defiance of Medical Opinion 5 (Chuck Connor, Rikid Nadire and Byron Shields, c/o Silvan House, Chediston Rd., Wissett, Nr. Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF; the usual, lots of stamps or large cheques, or naughty things; A4 D; 52pp.) This zine is spreading its net a little wider with more book, record and fanzine reviews, articles about cassette copyrighting, postal interviews (a young American author, and Shep Kirklbridge), poems, news, and locs. The major bits of fiction are by Tony Dixon, Alan Marshall, and Chuck. Tony Dixon's works the best, being a well-plotted look at computerised medicated sex.

Magus 10 (Phil Greenaway, 38 9th Ave., Galon Uchaf, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid-Glamorgan, S. Wales; the usual; A4 D/X; 6pp.) Letters and reactions to John Lennon's death, including pleas against violence. Phil announces he'll continue to vary subject-matter as he prefers, and from July it's to be called Free Press and include news items about fanzine happenings.

Nather's Ruin 2 (ed. by FORTH: reply to Jim Darroch, 21 Corslet Rd., Currie, Midlothian EH14 5LZ, or Owen Whitehead, Top Flat Left, 112 Polwarth Gdns., Edinburgh EH11 1LH; 50p or the usual; A5 RL; 36pp.) Two front halves of a zine back-to-back. Typically titillating Kevin Clark cover. Generally light-hearted; many of the contents reflect the strange tribal wars north of the Border. Also a wife's plea for a cure for SF; when her husband got together with other addicts the group therapy only made it worse.

Scottish 81 (Ethel Lindsay, 69 Barry Rd., Carnoustie, Angus DD7 7QQ, Scotland; 50p, 51 or the usual; A4 D; 24pp.) Second last issue of this well-liked and consistent fanzine. Contains the mixture as before: book and fanzine reviews of similar length to these, letters and two articles. Great art: don't go, AOM.

G\* Second-hand Wave '42 5 (Alan Ferguson and Trev Briggs, 26 Hoecroft Court, Hoe Lane, Enfield, Middx. EN3; the usual, "polite request, or malicious insult written on a £10 note (\$20 bill)"; A4 L; 28pp.) Three-quarters humorous, one-quarter somewhat serious, and mostly brilliant as usual. "In Praise of Bad Taste" is serious and fascinating, as is a little bit on computer animation and various other bits; brilliantly funny are a Spot the Star competition ("Clearly indicate where you think this BENEVOLENT SUPERCIVILISATION is situated and you could win one of these FABULOUS EXCITING PRIZES... total global



domination...") and a Pete Lyon cartoon showing Joe Nicholas gleefully dynamiting a pile of SF books with a toy helicopter. There are also Tax-Accountants of Dune by Colin Greenland — "The sands of the desert are as gold to the man with the busy typewriter!", "Roses are red/Violets are blue/Most poems rhyme/But this ain't most poems", and "Cunning Linguists" which lists mad translations e.g. "Non sequitur" = "I have no scissors." I'd better stop quoting or I'll ruin it for you. I hope this fanzine has won the Anisble Fan Poll; it deserves to.

A Sharing of Anxieties as a First Step in Communication (Ily the Fish, 57 Myrtledeane Rd., London SE2 0ET; 20p in stamps; A4 D; 12pp.) A collection of philosophical and psychoanalytical thoughts about ego, self-image, roles and interpersonal relationships, all presented in a McLuhanesque, nonlinear way. Thoughtprovoking if you're into self-analysis and theorizing about personal growth.

Sing me a Song 3 (Pete Presford, "Ty Gwyn", Maxwell Close, Buckley, Chwyd, North Wales; the usual; A4 D; 8pp.) Pleasant, chatty fanzine. Pete's writing flows a little more smoothly than last issue, and he at times waxes positively sentimental about fandom. He's certainly in a friendly mood, to all men even Joe Nicholas. Letters and fanzine comments take up most of the zine.

Supernova 2 (Simon Bostock, 18 Gallows Inn Close, Ikeston, Derbyshire DE7 4BW; the usual, or 40p for TAFF; A4 D; 20pp.) Crammed with SF and fanfannish news, an interview with Ian Watson, a Steve Green article expressing uncertainty about Project Starcast, letters, an article on the Dr. Who novels, and a news page. Still rather cramped in layout, but quite lively.

A Temporary Solution (write to 11 Ferrestone Rd., Hornsey, London N8; for show of interest or possibly around 20p; A5 D (handwritten and electrostencilled with artwork); 16pp.) Another McLuhanesque collection of philosophical bits like A Sharing of Anxieties... but with hints of fictionalisation and bits of dialogue here and there. A quote for the flavour: "They assume that adolescence should end at 20. Certain analyses cease. Emphasis of ideas shifts and... too many shut doors."

Time to Pick up a Gerbil 2 (Mike Scantlebury, 31 Bosworth St., Bewick, Manchester M11 3AD; the usual, I presume; A4D; 18pp.) Mainly editor-written fanzine. Articles about how much fun going to the cinema in the hope of seeing a good film is, about how wrong the Ku Klux Klan are and how right cooperation is, letters, and a short story about future unemployment.

P\* Twil-Dhu 19 (Dave Langford, address as for Anisble; editorial whim or 50p; A4 D; 20pp.) A slightly different issue this time including a Serious Bit about awful books on how to do illegal things published "for informational purposes only." Also Dave's TAFF trip report, amusing as usual, a Biblically written account of strange work in publishers' offices. The whole is a special Yorcon issue, as Dave was Fan GoH.

Waldo 6 (Eric Benticliffe, 17 Riverside Cres., Holmes Chapel, Cheshire CW4 7NR; editorial whim; A4 D; 28pp.) Pleasant, entertaining personalzine with one outside article. Eric and his family visited the northwest U.S. and Canada, and he reports on this; also reviews a few books and prints a few chatty letters.

#### United States and Canada

The Diagonal Relationship 16 (Arthur D. Hlavaty, 250 Coligny Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801, USA; the usual or \$1; USQ RL; 12pp.) More of a diary format than previous issues. Topics include a Spider Robinson book, a Pagan festival, The Illuminati Papers, selective reporting by the Press to stress deviancy among SF fans, feminists and others, and letters, plus the usual flashy epigrams: "If we are what we eat, only the cannibal is truly human."

Fanzine Directory 3 (Allan Beatty, PO Box 1906, Ames, IA 50010, USA; £1 airmail, or trade; USQ RL; 14pp.) A belated but still useful publication indexing all fanzines published in 1977 that the editor knows of. Also an alphabetical index of names and addresses. 496 fanzines are listed.

F\* Pong 6&7, 10, 11, 12 (Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, USA, & Dan Steffan, 823 N. Wakefield St., Arlington, VA 22203, USA; the usual (trades to both editors); 15¢ stamps, or \$5.00 cash; USQ X; 10, 6, 4, 12pp.) This fanzine still arouses lots of interest with pithy paragraphs written alter-

nately by both editors about all sorts of arcane fanfannish topics, both ancient and modern. The frequency of the zine ensures it builds up its own supply of arcane and in-references: so it's difficult to pick up on especially if you're not a bit of a fan-historian but well worth it if you are.

Raffles 4 (Stu Shiffman and Larry Carmody, c/o 19 Broadway Toe #1D, New York, NY 10040, USA; \$1 in aid of TAFF; USQ D; 28pp.) Imaginary Progress Report covers, programme book cover and contents, and reminiscences about the hoax Worldcon, LIECon (Long Island Expressway Con), including an appreciation of the GoH, Noah Ward. Some good art; contents variably funny.

The Rogue Raven 30 (Frank Denton, 14654 8th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98166, USA; editorial whim; USQ D; 20pp.) Another pleasant, chatty personalzine. He starts by quoting a Joe Nicholas review which describes Frank's writing as over-rehearsed till devoid of feeling, and replying that he writes straight onto stencil and that he takes things less seriously than Joe does. Also about Westerncon, the Benticliffes' visit, Montana, and letters.

#### Other Countries

G\* Chunder vol. 5 no. 1 (John Foyster, 21 Shakespeare Grove, St. Kilda, Vic. 3182, Australia; the usual or Aus\$1; A4 D; 42pp.) Formerly a newzine, now published slightly less frequently (but still often than most fanzines) as a gazette with occasional bits of news. The contents are very absorbing, including part two of John's GUFF trip report (which is a major work), a typically hard-hitting George Turner article, various reviews, news, and heartrending descriptions by John and his partner Jennifer Bryce of the very premature birth and death of their son.

A\* The Cygnus Chronicle 7 (The Eperex Press, ed. Neville J. Angove, PO Box 770, Canberra City, ACT 2601, Australia; Aus\$1.50 or Aus\$5 for 4; USQ RL; 24pp.) A very neatly produced typeset zine full of fiction which is goodish by amateur standards. Also reviews, news and letters. Goodish art. Fiction is by Paul Collins, Jack Wodhams, and "S.E.F."

A\* The Epsilon Eridani Express (Neville J. Angove, address above; the usual, Aus\$4 or US\$5 for 3, or Aus\$1.50 each; USQ RL; 32pp.) Rather more informal than the above, but still very neatly produced. More editorial chat, letters, film and book reviews; all quite literate. Topics include Allen, The Empire Strikes Back, and fringe books.

The Mentor 29 (Ron L. Clarke, 6 Bellevue Rd., Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia; the usual or \$1; Q D; 38pp.) The duplication and artwork has improved a great deal over the past few issues, which biases me in its favour for a start. Contents vary from fiction to 50s Aussie fanhistory. Reads OK.

A/S\* Noumenon 39/40 (Brian Thurogood, 40 Korora Rd., Oneroa, Waikato, Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand; some of the usual, or in UK send £4 seamount or £7.50 airmail to Keith Walker, 6 Vine St., Lancaster, Lancs; 98" x 74" RL; 28pp.) The same excellent, lively fanzine it was when I last reviewed it. Delayed this time because Brian was being re-elected as a local councillor, entertaining Anne McCaffrey and then getting laid low with glandular fever. News, reviews of books and films, a description of Anne's visit, and an article about utopias and dystopias with reference to Childhood's End, Stand on Zanzibar and The Dispossessed. The author of the longest review this issue, David Harvey, is revealed elsewhere to have won New Zealand TV's Mastermind.

S\* SF Commentary 60/61 (Bruce Gillespie, Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, Australia; some of the usual, Aus\$2 this issue, or Aus\$10 for 10; USQ RL; 32pp.) After a slowish period a year or two back, this is now as good as in a more relaxed way as when it got nominated for a Hugo 5 or more years ago. It still attracts the SF world's most truly worthwhile artists to participate, e.g. Aldiss, Le Guin. The reviews and letters constantly fly the flag for literacy, intelligence and critical values. Get this fanzine, especially if you think too much illiterate SF is being published nowadays or that SF is too unaware of the rest of the literary world. This fanzine proves the latter idea is at least partially untrue; and as my final fanzine reviewed in Matrix, it has thankfully let me finish on a high note.

— Rob Jackson, May/June '81.

*Competition M35:* Stripped of its camouflaging verbosity, this was a simple challenge to prove that for any whole number  $n$ ,  $n^6/9$  leaves remainder 0 or 1. Obviously if 3 divides  $n$  exactly, 9 divides  $n^6$  giving remainder 0; if 3 doesn't divide  $n$  then  $n = m \pm 1$  where  $m$  is some multiple of 3, and so  $n^6 = (m \pm 1)^6 = m^6 \pm 6m^5 + 15m^4 \pm 20m^3 + 15m^2 \pm 6m + 1$ .

(Cf. the Binomial Theorem, Pascal's Triangle and all that stuff.) Every term but the last has to be divisible by 9, giving remainder 1. This, as the Astral League likes to say, proves it.

Of our gallant entrants, JIM ENGLAND and PASCAL (no relation) THOMAS cunningly stated the problem without going so far as to solve it; IAN DAVIS wandered down strange erroneous paths of combinations and permutations untrod by anyone else; BOB ARDLER, P.D.FROST, MARK JEFFCOCK, DAVID J. LEWIS, TREVOR MENDHAM, A.W.ROBERTSON and MARTIN WARD came up with proofs of varying length and cogency. All got to the right place in the end, though Trevor Mendham cocked up his binomial coefficients en route and too many people went grinding through lists of numbers to the sixth power. The prize goes to Bob Ardler, the only entrant to fit a nifty proof onto a postcard by noticing that  $n^6 - 1 = (n^2 - 1)[(n^2 - 1)^2 + 3n^2]$ . Well, I mean, obvious innit, don't know why I didn't notice that myself... Congratulations to Bob; many thanks to all those who entered—also to Messrs Pascal and Fermat, who didn't.

*Competition M34 again:* This puzzle of the nonexistent books still causes me great embarrassment—various people have written in with guesses at one title or another (usually hedged with "This isn't a proper entry for the competition, but—"), mostly wildly wrong. The winner (at last!) is Keith Marsland, and I'll keep quiet about how few points he scored... Herewith the sources of the nonexistent works, written title/fictional author/title of source book/author of s.b.:

[1] BLOOD AND LOOT/Horace Hackett/TYPERWRITER IN THE SKY/L.Ron Hubbard [2] CONCERNING SPRING/Emperor Kong-Hi/KAI LUNG'S GOLDEN HOURS/Ernest Bramah [3] THE HIGHER COMMON SENSE/Abbé Fausse-Maigre/COLD COMFORT FARM/Stella Gibbons [4] THE HOLY METAMORPHOSIS/Harq al-Ada/CHILDREN OF DUNE/Frank Herbert [5] THE INEXORABILITY OF THE SPECIOUS/Zé Kraggash/MINDSWAP/Robert Sheckly [6] NEGATIONS/Enoch Soames/ENOCH SOAMES/Max Beer-bohm [7] PROBLEMS OF CREATIVENESS/Berthold Anthony Ludd/334/Thomas Disch [8] PROFILES IN STRING/X.Trappel/BOOKS DO FURNISH A ROOM/Anthony Powell [9] TENTATIVE RESTORATION OF THE LOST BOOKS OF ELEPHANTIS/Gerald Musgrave/SOMETHING ABOUT EVE/James Branch Cabell [10] THIS BEES SPEECH/Farthing (not Dyce-Farnsworth!)/BARRIER/Anthony Boucher. For the curious and ignorant: the non-sf/fantasy item included to make it harder was [8] and the borderline item was [3], which is indeed essential reading for all...

*Competition M36 and about time too:* 'Best excuse for nonpayment of BSFA competition prizes' is a suggestion I've had from several sources: this is no way to curry favour, dammit! I've arranged payment of fivers for competitions M31-33 as set by me (and the next two will be along shortly). Feel free to send in outstanding complaints and convincing excuses—I'll see what I can do.

The real competition M36, now... Famous Hugo-nominated fanwriter Arthur Hlavaty (but don't vote for him, vote for me) sent me this wondrous SF Book Club ad which goes 'He knew the Martian Love Secret and it spelled his doom!!! STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND by Robert A. Heinlein.' Your task is to invent a blurb like this for some reasonably well-known sf/fantasy book—a blurb which misses the point, is guaranteed to make the author cringe, and generally clubs the book to death. Anything from a single line to a 150-word gush is acceptable; marks will be awarded for wit and ingenuity, if any; a small subsidiary prize may be awarded for the most outstandingly racist genuine blurb submitted (however, anyone detected submitting a genuine blurb as their own invention will in some manner be Punished). Another sample to inspire you all: Panther used to run an ad for Disch's *Echo Round His Bones* which said, in full, 'A man on the moon meets his exact double who wishes to kill him.' Oh dear.

*The Usual Address* is (as it usually is): 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks., RG2 7PW, UK. Rush your thrilling entries, complaints, excuses and bribes to Dave Langford (the usual name) at the usual address before the usual deadline, one week after the *Matrix* copydate which ever-lovely Graham James will have put somewhere on the inside front cover. Vast prizes will be awarded, eventually. ☆



BESTSELLING PAPERBACKS IN THE U.K.: Rog Peyton  
 FILM & TV NEWS: Simon Bostock  
 BSFA AWARD - RESULTS & REPORT: Joseph Nicholas  
 FORTHCOMING BOOKS: The Editor  
 FROM THE BOOK WORLD: Joseph Nicholas  
 FURTHER AWARD NEWS: The Editor  
 OTHER NEWS ITEMS: The Editor  
 CONVENTION NEWS & LISTINGS: The Editor  
 NEWS SOURCE CREDITS: Locus, Nik Nicholson-Morton, Ken Mann, and other unrevealed sources

# BEST SELLING PAPERBACKS IN THE UK:

## MARCH TOP TEN

|                                                                     | LAST MONTH | MONTHS<br>IN CHART |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| 1 WHEELWORLD - Harry Harrison (Granada £1.25)                       | -          | 1                  |
| 2 DAGGER OF THE MIND - Bob Shaw (Pan £1.25)                         | -          | 1                  |
| 3 INCIDENT ON ATH - E C Tubb (Arrow £1.15)                          | -          | 1                  |
| 4= JUPITER LAUGHS - Edmund Cooper (Coronet £1.10)                   | -          | 1                  |
| 4= WIZARD - John Varley (Futura £1.75)                              | 1          | 2                  |
| 6 GOLEM 100 - Alfred Bester (Pan £1.75)                             | 3          | 2                  |
| 7 DINOSAUR PLANET - Anne McCaffrey (Futura £1.25)                   | -          | 1                  |
| 8 THE MAGIC LABYRINTH - Philip Jose Farmer (Granada £1.50)          | 7          | 3                  |
| 9 THE SUNSET WARRIOR - Eric van Lustbader (Star £1.75)              | -          | 1                  |
| 10= HOMEWORLD - Harry Harrison (Granada £1.25)                      | -          | 1                  |
| 10= RESTAURANT AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE - Douglas Adams (Pan 95p) | 2          | 4                  |

## APRIL TOP TEN

|                                                                |   |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST - Robert Heinlein (NEL £2.25)        | - | 1 |
| 2 MASTER OF THE FIVE MAGICS - Lyndon Hardy (Futura £1.50)      | - | 1 |
| 3 WAR IN 2080 - David Langford (Sohere £1.50)                  | - | 1 |
| 4 DR WHO & THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD - Ian Marter (Target 95p)    | - | 1 |
| 5 WIZARD - John Varley (Futura £1.75)                          | 4 | 3 |
| 6 THE PRISONER 2: A DAY IN THE LIFE - Hank Stine (NEL £1.25)   | - | 1 |
| 7 SOMEWHERE IN TIME - Richard Matheson (Sphere £1.25)          | - | 1 |
| 8 BLACK EASTER/DAY AFTER JUDGEMENT - James Blish (Arrow £1.50) | - | 1 |
| 9 SONGS OF STARS AND SHADOWS - George R R Martin (Coronet 95p) | - | 1 |
| 10 WHEELWORLD - Harry Harrison (Granada £1.25)                 | 1 | 2 |

Predictably, WHEELWORLD was runaway best-seller for March. Second in the 'To The Stars' trilogy, it also gave a push to the first in the series, HOMEWORLD, which just scraped in the Ten. DAGGER OF THE MIND made number 2 but with considerably fewer copies sold than previous Shaw books - obviously the 'horror' cover put many Shaw fans off buying this one. The 18th novel of the Duma-rest adventures, on the other hand, sold far better than the last few in the series - the new cover designs and the re-issue of Dumarest No 1 no doubt helping sales. The collection of the best short fiction of Edmund Cooper sold reasonably well considering 90% of the collection has been in at least one previous collection. WIZARD, GOLEM 100 and THE MAGIC LABYRINTH continued to sell well. The re-issue of DINOSAUR PLANET, with a bright green cover, sold well despite the fact that most people consider it her worst book. The oversized, overpriced SUNSET WARRIOR picked up sales due to a superb cover by Bruce Pennington. The 2nd & 3rd volumes in the trilogy only just missed out making the Top Ten. The national best-selling RESTAURANT still found enough people who hadn't previously purchased a copy, to enable it to stay in our charts for the 4th consecutive month.

April.....No bets were being taken as to which book would be number 1 this month - despite the fact that it's possibly the worst book ever given a major promotion. There were still enough readers who wanted to find out for themselves if it really could be that bad. One or two actually liked it! But the big surprise of the month was MASTER OF THE FIVE MAGICS only missing out on the number one position by 4 copies!! Rowena Morrill's magnificent cover must take much of the credit for the sales of this book. No 3 is proof that if you want to get sales, you arrange publication date near the time you are Guest of Honour at a convention. The latest DR WHO is only the second one not to make immediate No 1 - maybe all those young readers are at last growing up (starting to read Heinlein?). WIZARD sold well for the third month in a row, while the 2nd PRISONER book sold

only moderately well, nowhere near as well as the original Tom Disch novel. Matheson's *SOMEBODY IN TIME* went out of print after it appeared in the Top Ten in February - now reprinted, it reappears (as well it should) in the best sellers. An extremely good book (voted best novel of the year at the 1976 World Fantasy Convention) it is finally getting the sales it deserves. The two connected Blish novels make their first appearance in one volume and this has sold so well that it is already out of print! (As is *WAR IN 2080*, incidentally). George Martin's second collection makes an appearance at No 9 - how do Coronet manage to publish this so cheaply? It's cheaper than the American import copies four years ago! Last month's best-seller *WHEELWORLD* drops way down, although sales were still good.

May should be an interesting month with Niven's *THE RINGWORLD ENGINEERS*, Joan Vinge's magnificent *THE SNOW QUEEN*, a new Frank Herbert collection *THE PRIESTS OF PSI*, all competing for top honours. Not to mention the George Lucas/Spielberg *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*, the re-issue of Chris Priest's *THE SPACE MACHINE*, etc.

As stated last time, these top tens are compiled from sales at *ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP*, 57 Summer Row, Birmingham B3 1JJ. If any other shops would like to send their top ten in to me at that address, I can incorporate their figures.



#### FILM & TV NEWS:

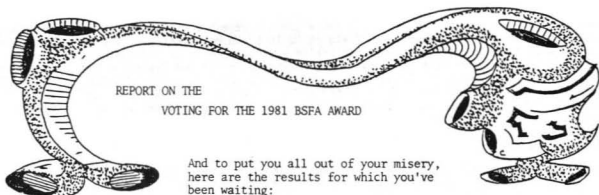
(Sources: *FANGORIA*, *STARLOG*, *STARBURST* and the deceased *FANTASY MEDIA* [still fresh info, though]).

*SUPERMAN II* is out, I see. I've seen it already, and, for the record, I'd just like to say it was marginally superior to its predecessor. This time the criminals are the three from the Phandom Zone (exiled from the planet Krypton at the beginning of the first film): Ursa (Sarah Douglas), Non and General Zod (Terence Stamp), who begin to cause havoc as soon as they are set free. But Superman reigns supreme, of course, even though he is crippled by the fact that they all possess the same abilities, if not more. No doubt, another film will soon be out along this line, though maybe the next will be released later than this one has been, due to the fact that shooting was commenced inbetween the production of the premier. The only downfall is the fact that the special effects left much to be desired, being inferior to those of *BUCK ROGERS*. (Why don't we get any good American SF? Why? Because they don't manufacture the stuff, that's it!) It's an 'A' Certificate, too, though by the contents it only merited a 'U'. As with *FLASH GORDON*, it's damn good entertainment, if nothing else.

Bits and Bobs department (aka as the monotonous files): *THE MONSTER CLUB* ('A'; some of the gory detail had to be cut out) is now on release, starring Vincent Price as Erasmus, an author of Horror Stories . . . *DUNE* is still waiting to be filmed: Dino De Laurentiis was to have produced, but god knows what other projects he's tied up in already . . . *ALIEN & SALEON'S LOT* are not not going to be converted into TV programmes,

more's the pity . . . *STARLOG* seems to think us Brittons aren't transmitting *BUCK ROGERS* any more, after continuous poor ratings . . . Noel Neill was the guest of honour at 'Fandom 4', a con held in the USA; Noel, you'll no doubt recall, was Lois Lane in the very first series of Superman ever broadcast . . . Rumour has it that the *CANON* films will total five at least . . . *THE TIME BANDITS* has Kenny Baker and a horde of midgets in the starring roles . . . *THE MONKEYS* is the title of a new horror movie.

To end, a bit of HHGTVU news: The USA are still waiting for the TV series, while the radio version is only just being broadcast (they started March 6th), and the book has been subsequently released by Harmony Books, though *THE RESTAURANT AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE* is still to be published over there.



REPORT ON THE  
VOTING FOR THE 1981 BSFA AWARD

And to put you all out of your misery,  
here are the results for which you've  
been waiting:

Best Novel - Gregory Benford's *TIMESCAPE* (Gollancz)  
Best Short Fiction - Thomas M. Disch's "The Brave Little Toaster: A Bed-Time Story For Small Appliances" (F & SF, August)  
Best Media Presentation - *THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*, 2nd series (BBC Radio 4)  
Best Artist - Peter Jones

Not many real surprises there, I'm afraid (well, you didn't think that *HITCH-HIKER'S* wouldn't win, did you?).

A total of 196 ballots in all were cast, 119 of them arriving before the 15 April 1981 deadline, and the remaining 77 (23 cast by BSFA members and 54 by *Yorcon* members), being collected at the convention itself. The size of this latter group, particularly in comparison with the former, is rather disappointing; I'd hoped to pick up at least half as many again, but in the event it seemed that not enough people were sufficiently aware of it, and both we and *Yorcon* must share the blame for not pushing it enough. (Now, next year.....)

The votes of the 196 people who participated broke down as follows: 161 for the novel; 157 for the short fiction; 188 for the media presentation; and 134 for the artist. The make-up of these categories, you may be fascinated to learn, was chosen from a total of only 36 nominating ballots - naming 28 novels, 27 pieces of short fiction, 18 media presentations and 14 artists - which is, I think you'll agree, staggeringly low. There are, after all, some 800-odd of you out there; how come more of you couldn't bestir yourselves?

One thing which was clear was that a few people hadn't followed, correctly, the voting instructions - these need to be made absolutely clear in future years. However, I owe all those who participated a vote of thanks for having done so; although, in terms of the BSFA's total membership, there may not have been all that many of you, the number represented a substantial increase over those who participated in the 1980 Award voting, and reflects my belief that, as a result of our not having an established system for its administration, the Award as a whole is beginning to regain the confidence of the membership at large. One of the things that has hamstrung it so severely in the past, I feel, is the way in which its mechanics have undergone so much (needless) change from year to year; a haphazard lurching from system to system that must have caused most people to dismiss it with the thought that, since the Council and Committee couldn't decide on the way it should be run, then there was no point in them bothering about it either.....but this is, of course, a personal belief, and I could be completely wrong. But, even if I'm not, don't get complacent! We must look forward to yet another substantial increase in the numbers of those participating next year; the plan must be massively overfulfilled, all production norms must be smashed, new target quotas must be established.....

In the meantime, though, mind how you go - a comment which applies equally to myself, since at the time you read this I'll likely be winging my way home from my *GUFF* trip to Australia. And I've lost my lucky rabbit's foot, too.....

FORTHCOMING BOOKS:

*SPHERE*: 25 June 1981 *THE AVATAR* - Poul Anderson (£1.95); and re-prints of the *ILLUMINATUS* Trilogy by Shea and Wilson. *THE EYE IN THE PYRAMID* and *THE GOLDEN APPLE* (£1.50); *LEVIATHAN* (£1.10). Also the *COSMIC TRIGGER* (£1.50 for the final secret.....!). 20 August 1981 *MASTERS OF EVERON* - Gordon R. Dickson (£1.50) plus reprints of the *DORSAI* Trilogy by the same author. 10 September 1981 *WHEN THE DREAM DIES* - A. Bertram Chandler (£1.75) the second volume in the *Rim World* Series. Apparently *Sphere* have also acquired volumes 3 and 4. Plus further goodies for the *Illuminati* fans - from Wilson (L-5 member et al.) - *THE MASKS OF THE ILLUMINATI* (£1.75) - billed as Fantasy this time.

*PENGUIN*: 28 May 1981 *SEVEN STEPS TO THE SUN* from father and son combination Fred and Geoffrey Hoyle (£1.25). *Penguin* are launching a "major new publishing initiative" - *KING PENGUINS*. The emphasis will be on works of literary excellence which have "a unique modern voice" and will cover original fiction as well as reprints or neglected works. In fact, the name *King Penguin* is not

new - it was used in the '40s and '50s for a famous series of annual books - but the concept is new. The plans are to expand at the rate of 12-16 books each year over the next five years. The prices will be around £1.95. The first titles are launched on 28 May 1981 and it is good to see that included in their list of authors will be Angela Carter and Stanislaw Lem (in addition to obvious candidates such as Borges and Peake. 25 June sees THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES; and HEROES AND VILLAINS from Angela Carter and 30 July sees Lem's SOLARIS, CHAIN OF CHANCE, THE PERFECT VACUUM. Penguin also promise "carefully selected front cover art-work" - oh yeah - I'll believe that when I see it.

#### FROM THE BOOK WORLD:

##### DELL SF DEAD, BERKELEY-PUTNAM HARDBACKS AXED, TIMESCAPE THREATENED

As stated in the last MATRIX, times are hard in the SF book world - the recession seems to be hitting publishers in the US harder than in the UK; contrary to what I may say in my letter in VECTOR 102 (if Kev prints that parenthetical aside), Jim Frenkel has left Dell because they've decided to get out of SF altogether, honouring existing contracts and publishing what's in the pipeline, but otherwise dumping their involvement with it. The author this will hit hardest is Theodore Sturgeon, since they were in the process of re-issuing most of his stuff, and, having bought the rights to his material, it will be thus unavailable in the US for at least the next five years - you can bet they won't try to sell them back to him, because the accountants, being accountants, will want to show them on the books as an asset ..... Elsewhere, Berkeley-Putnam are to cease publishing hardcover SF on the grounds of profitability, or lack of it - a short-term and short-sighted move, because hardbacks sell mainly to libraries, thus having a shelf-life of several years and keeping the publisher's name permanently on display - but accountants, of course, go only for the short-term gains, money now rather than in the future .... And Timescape, the "brand name" set up to operate within the Simon & Schuster/Pocket Books organisation to co-ordinate their hardback and paperback SF, recently fought off an attempt by a faction within the company to close it down again .... well, it always seemed odd (not to say slightly crazy) that a publisher would want to set up such a "brand name" operation when the late seventies' boom in SF was not only dying but definitely stone dead, so it's possible that this might be the reason for the move against it, on the grounds of extra administrative cost and the additional advertising budget required - meaning, the accountants are again behind it .....

Well, I know that this fear, loathing, hatred and paranoia in respect of accountants is a bit unjustified (not least because Kev Smith is one), but the point is that publishers in the US aren't the more-or-less independent entities that they are in the UK, but small parts of vast entertainment conglomerates which are themselves part of larger industrial combines which, in the current economic climate, will be seeking to cut costs any way they can. In crude terms, this means that the accountants are sent in to look at the books, run down the lists, and throw out immediately anything that either isn't making a profit nor has strong prospects of making one in the very near future - which means, simply, that a great many good (but monetarily marginal) books fall by the wayside. And in these days of rapid inflation, the old argument that an SF book may not make an immediate profit but will eventually sell out all its 15-20,000 print-run over a period of 2-to-3 years no longer holds - they take up space in warehouses and will thus cost more to store than will be realised from their sales.....an argument that can be applied to books other than SF ones, which, if stretched to cover these others, in a few years' time we'll be down to nothing more than illustrated cookery and gardening books, and a few "Christmas specials", with nary a novel in sight. I fear that Ray Bradbury (FAHRENHEIT 451) could almost be right after all, even if for the wrong reasons.

You'll notice that the publishers under attack are the "quality" ones, and if Berkeley-Putnam and Pocket are forced out of SF altogether, then it will leave only the more conservative, less innovative ones, like Avon, Ace, Daw and Del Rey, to lead - and if that happens, then the prospects for any new writer ever reaching print, let alone anything new at all being introduced to SF, will become so slender as to become, for all practical purposes, nonexistent.

#### FURTHER AWARD NEWS:

As presented at Yorcon II. The Ken McIntyre Memorial Award (for art-work) was presented to Pete Lyon, for his cover for MATRIX 34. Well done, Pete - and well done MATRIX; Pete also won the prize for the best exhibit in the Yorcon art show. The 'Doc' Weir Award (for services to fandom) was presented to John Brunner - see his comments in the letter col on receiving this award. A deserved award, I feel - John is consistently active in fandom, particularly at cons and never fails to help out at the last minute when needed for a panel - he appeared on two consecutive panels at Yorcon (the second to fill the gap caused by the non-showing of GOLEM). The Yorcon Short Story Competition was won by Dave Swinden. Ian Williams won the GONAD writers competition run by John Collick in the fan-room.

The NEBULA Awards were announced on April 25 and were Best Novel - *TIMESCAPE* by Gregory Benford (Simon & Schuster); Best Novella - "Unicorn Tapestry" by Suzy McKee Charnas (NEW DIMENSIONS II); Best Novelette - "The Ugly Chickens" by Howard Waldrop (UNIVERSE 10); Best Short Story - "Grotto of the Dancing Deer" by Clifford D. Simak (ANALOG, April 1980); Grand Master Award - Fritz Leiber. Details of the HUGO nominations have also been revealed - no real surprises here; interesting features include Disch's nomination for Best Novella for "The Brave Little Toaster"; also nominated in that category were George Martin and Lisa Tuttle's *ONE WING*. Lisa has just gotten married to Chris Priest in England - congratulations to you both; congrats also to another forging of the link between US and British fans - Greg Pickersgill and Linda Kahn, who were married recently. Charles Platt gets a nomination in the Best Non-Fiction category for *DREAM MAKERS* (profiles of 29 leading SF writers). No British nominations in either the Best Fanzine category (hardly surprising) or that of Fan Artist (ditto), but when comparing the works of those nominated - Gilliland, Poyser, Rotsler and Shiffman, to the Brit ranks of West, Lyon, Barker, Bell, etc, it's clear that HUGO awards should be prefixed by AMERICAN Hugo Awards). Some consolation is Langford's nomination for Best Fan Writer. Jim Barker, at the Cartoonist Club of Great Britain Awards in London won the award for Best Unpublished Strip Cartoonist, for the *CAPTIVE* - Well done, Jim.

#### OTHER NEWS ITEMS:

Robert Silverberg has sold *MAJOPOOR CHRONICLES*, a companion volume to *LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE*, to Arbor House for a high five-figure advance. The new novel takes place in the same universe as *LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE* but has different characters and is set in another era. Silverberg left Harper in a disagreement over terms and says he is "very pleased" with Arbor House. ... Ace has bought the entire "Krishna" series from L. Sprague de Camp. A new novel in the series will also be published. *THE SEARCH FOR ZEI* and *THE HAND OF ZEI*, part of the series, will be published as one book in a limited hard-cover edition in the US. ... Charles Platt's Magazine (see *MATRIX* 35) is now out, called the *PATCHIN REVIEW*. The first few issues will contain "out-spoken" contributions from Bester, Budrys, Ellison, Malzberg, and, of course, Moorcock. I'm not sure what the distribution arrangements will be - but, you could try writing to Platt at 9 Patchin Place, New York, NY 10011, USA. This venture reminds me more and more of the real need in this country for a high-class SF magazine, with reviews, comment and fiction, run by fans.

Nik Nicholson-Morton writes and observes: "I was disappointed to receive a letter with my latest MS from Robert Hale, stating that for 1981 they are discontinuing new SF but hope to resume in 1982. Some budding SF writers might not fancy writing for the Paul Raymond publishing group, such as Men Only, but why not, other distinguished SF authors, Clarke and Aldiss have. But be warned! I 'sold' (sic - sick, really) two SF tales to them, 'payment on publication' in 1976 and am still awaiting publication and consequently payment! Taking into account inflation, they have got two stories on the cheap, when/if they eventually decide to publish. Advice, therefore, study contracts, and never enter into an open-ended contract with this firm; stipulate a deadline, after which the copyright reverts back to you (I wish I had!).

Further news on the Penthouse libel case, provided by Ken Mann. Damages, totaling more than £10 million were awarded against Penthouse Magazine and publisher Bob Guccione; the suit stemmed from a short story in the magazine in 1979 which recounted the sexual exploits of a baton-twirling Miss America contestant. Although it was fictional, the 25-year-old Kimerli Jayne Pring (a Miss America contestant) sued for libel, claiming 15 similarities between her and the fictional counterpart, including the fact that she was a baton-twirler! The damages amounted to more than the total 1979 pre-tax profits of not only Penthouse but also its sister magazines *ONNI* and *FORUM*. On appeal, the court reduced the damages to around £6 million.

#### CONVENTION NEWS:

YORCON II: Has available a few spare PRs (mainly Nos 2-4). Please send a large SAE if you would like any copies; they contain articles on Disch, Watson, Langford, plus contributions from Kincaid, Langford, and Nicholas. Also available for 25p in stamps is the 64-page Programme Book (members who didn't attend the con will be mailed the con-book without charge).

ALBACON has published a post-con report entitled "What went Right...and wrong...and why". Price 50p from Bob Shaw, although the accounts say that the con's surplus funds went into production of the booklet. The accounts show, in great detail, the expenditure (including £7.40 for Safety Pins ... did they have a punk programme item?), but include no real details of income. A fine idea to publish this, but, as usual, Shaw oversteps the mark and creates enemies by hitting out, and slaming Mal Edwards, Alan Dorey, Sandy Brown, and other fannish fans, with 'subtle' hints against Yorcon I's proprieties. Albacoon was a good convention on the whole - it had its failings like all cons - but Shaw's paranoid ravings and his bureaucratic pronouncements for an Eastercon charter serve to reinforce previously held (and perhaps biased) opinions about Albacoon and Shaw's role in it. Sorry Bob; I now know just how difficult running a con can be, and you have my sympathies - but you don't help yourself mate.

For a first-class insight into the Project Star-cast business, see a report by Steve Green in Simon Bostock's SUPERNOVA. CONVENTION LISTINGS are below. Should you want your con listed, please provide me with full details, including P.Rs.

**FANTASYCON 7:** 10-12 July 1981 at the Centre Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Peter Tremayne; Special Guest Alan Hunter. Supporting membership £1.00. This is The British Fantasy Society's Convention. Details from Mike Chinn, 1 Buttery Road Smethwick Warley West Midlands B67 7NS.

**FAIRCON '81:** 24-27 July 1981 at the Ingram Hotel, Glasgow. GoH John Brunner. Special Guest, Ken Slater. Membership: Supporting £5.00. Attending, £8.00, going up to £9.00, and then £10.00 on the day. Details from: 200 Woodlands Road Glasgow G3 6LN.

**BECCON 81:** 31 July-2 August 1981 at the Essex Centre Hotel, Basildon. Room rates £12 single, £20 double inc. VAT. GoH Barrington J. Bayley. Smallish Con - up to 200 members, but looking well organized. Supporting, £2.00; Attending £5.00. Details from: 191 The Heights, Northolt Mddx UB5 4BU. PR2 now available. Films include DEMON SEED and THE POWER. 116 members at last count.

**BABEL-CON:** 7-9 August at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. £2.50 Supporting membership, £6 Attending. Hotel rates are £9.50 + VAT per person (double), £11.50 + VAT (single). There has been considerable bad management with this con (various committee members having pulled out) but now Phil Probert has taken over the reins and seems to be doing a good job - I hope he can pull it off. Contact him at 26 Bilton Grange Road, South Yardley, Birmingham, or for Registrations - Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland Street, Harley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs (note change of address).

**STUCON '81:** 14-16 August 1981. Con members will live in Stuttgart (West Germany) and travel by bus to the nearby Kursaal Stuttgart (a palace!). GoH Marion Zimmer Bradley. Other writers attending include McCaffrey, Lundwall, Campbell (Ramsey!), Wilder. Membership: Attending DM20 (about £5), going up to DM 30. However, local fan custom allows a Genuine Fan (sic) to bring a non-fan partner free of charge. Cherry Wilder tells me that the definition of a 'Genuine' Fan includes a member of the BSFA (now you realise what benefits there are in the good 'ole Bosfa) and that 'non-fan partner' includes wife, husband, lover, etc. Details from Denis Scheck, Falkenstr. 25, 7061 Berglen 4, West Germany. (I suggest you enclose an International Reply Coupon.)

**BENELUXCON:** 28-30 August 1981: Atlanta Hotel, Rotterdam, Holland. GoH Jack Vance, Kate Wilhelm and Fred Pohl. Membership is around £7.00; Hotel Rates around £10.00 per person per night. Single ticket, London to Rotterdam by British Rail is £22. Further info Hans Van der Zee, Sneeuwgars 6, 3435 Dk Nieuwegein, Holland. This is a very popular convention, held alternately between Holland and Belgium. It usually has an international programme, fannish and serious, with items in English and other languages. The committee would very much like to welcome more English fans.

**AUCON '81:** DeVere Hotel, Coventry. Strictly "STAR-TREK" convention. Attending membership £12.50. Details from 54 Foxhunter Drive, Cadby, Leicester LE2 5FE.

**DEVENTION II:** 3-7 September 1981. The World SF Convention at the Denver Hilton, Denver Colorado. Membership \$35 Attending, \$15 Supporting, up to 31 March when the rates go up. GoH Clifford D. Simak and C L Moore. FGOH Rusty Hevelin. Info: Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211, USA.

**ANGLICON 81:** Informal minicon 4-6 September at the University of East Anglia. GoH: Ian Watson and John Sladek. Membership £24 including bed and breakfast. Contact Linda Campbell, 32 Gage Rd, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk.

**UNICON 2:** 11-14 September 1981 at Keele University. GoH John Sladek, FGOH Alan Dorey. Memberships £5.50 Attending, £3.00 Supporting. Contact Chris Davenport, 'Bridge End' Shawbury, Shrewsbury Salop. (A good bunch these Keele people.)

**NOVACON 11:** 30 Oct-1 Nov at the Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Bob Shaw (the real one). Supporting £2.50, Full £5.50. PR1 now available; Room rates pretty good £10.50 (sharing), £13.50 (single), including VAT and Breaky. Chairman is Paul Oldroyd. PR 2 should now be out.

**CYMRUCON:** 14-15 November 1981. Central Hotel, Cardiff. Organised by Cardiff SF Group. Membership £2.00 Supporting, £5.00 Attending (£7.00 on the door). Usual Recipe con - films, debates, fancy dress, talks, etc; speakers include: Mike Ashley (The Elder), Lionel Fanthorpe, Chris Morgan, Stableford, Watson. Details (SAE) Naveed Khan, Room 16, Traherne Hall, Llwyn-y-Grant Rd. Penylan, Cardiff CF3 7UX.

**FILMCON 81:** 27-29 November 1981 at the Grand Hotel, Brum. Memberships Supporting £6.00, Full £13.00, at the door £14.00. Organised by the Birmingham Science Fiction Film Society. Room rates are £10 per person (sharing), £12 (single), inc. VAT and Breaky. PR1 available. Further details 49 Humber Tower, Francis Street, Birmingham, West Midlands B7 4JX.





# Reviews

OF FILM AND RADIO SF

SCANNERS by Martyn Taylor

KING OF THE ROCKET MEN by Mark Gorton

SUPERMAN II by Kate Jeary

BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS by Martyn Taylor

THE CHRYSALIDS by Andy Sawyer

SCANNERS DIRECTOR DAVID CRONENBURG 103 MINUTES

Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

David Cronenberg is a young Canadian director whose 'reputation' is founded on a series of low-budget horror movies of quite remarkable unpleasantness - RABID, SHIVERS, THE BROOD. Past evidence tends to indicate that he would not know a decent script if it was personally delivered by William Shakespeare, and that he would not recognise good taste if it stood up and bopped him on the nose. SCANNERS runs true to type.

The theme of the film is straight out of James Herbert, a scientific accident that has created freak telepaths who can, by the power of their twitter and bisted little brains, do spectacular things to anyone they dislike - Fling them through the windows, for instance, set fire to them, make their . . . ah, but that would be telling, wouldn't it? Naturally, there are good guys and bad guys. Where would the dramatic conflict be without the good guys and the bad guys? There is one extra bad guy. You can tell he's a bad guy because he drills holes in his head and then throws things at the nice young lady doctor who asks him why. The relationship between the extra bad guy and the almost too-good-to-be-true good guy seems quite simple, but becomes complex in a denouement so obviously telegraphed, I half expected it to be delivered by a boy on a bike. Along the way there is an amount of skull-duggery with shotguns, bad guys zapping the pretty ineffectual good guys, some paranoid sculpture that might be the latest thing in Toronto but looks like street furniture to me, and some pleasant shots of urban scenery that made me wonder whether architects are not, after all, extinct.

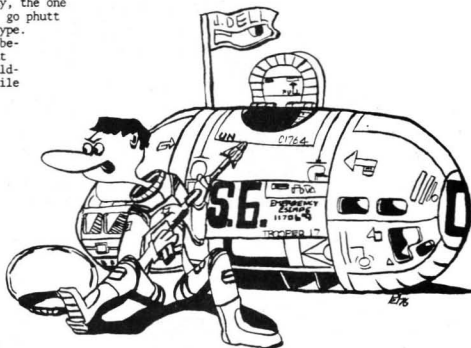
The really bad guy, the one who makes people's . . . go phutt is a really mixed up type.

Sometimes he is angry because his wife does not understand him (or wouldn't, if he had one) while

other times he just wants to rule the world (don't they all?). Among his many powers appears the ability to raise the dead. At least two of his heavies - whom we have just seen the good guy turn into something having the consistency of a half-set Rowntree's raspberry jelly - turn up to do their shotgun act again, only to get turned into baconburgers for their trouble this time. This little inconsistency could be just another foul-up in the script department, but Mr Cronenberg wrote the script, so we have to assume he really did know what he was doing. What the hell, Hitchcock's films are shot through with inconsistencies, but that never stopped him from scaring the enamel off your teeth.

Don't run away with the idea that Mr Cronenberg is another Hitchcock. We don't have luck like that any more.

SCANNERS is billed as an SF film. It is even distributed by SF Distributors! Is it SF? It is about the exploitation of the unexpected side effects of a new drug by first



commercial and then quasi-governmental interests. This puts us firmly in Brunner country, where the angst of an old-fashioned Robert Owen non-Marxist liberal democratic socialist can gambol happily squawking, 'A plague on both your houses!' Would that the film had the quality of Brunner's writing, his compassion, his sincerity. If it did, though, we wouldn't see people having their ... ah, I promised not to tell ... and the film would not make lots of lovely money. There is a central interlude concerning a man/machine interface that was the best sequence in the film until Mr Cronenberg blew it by a string of hackneyed shots showing computers exploding. This may, of course, be a complex metaphor, a cybernetic reference to that scene of human gore I will not describe, but if it is, then it is the only complex feature of the entire film.

The energy of the film has been directed into the special effects. Fans of blood and offal will be well satisfied, and therein lies the root of my dissatisfaction. This is a well-executed piece, but Mr Cronenberg never tries anything new when there is a cliché to hand, never attempts an insight when a banality will do, never creates a frisson of real suspense when the opportunity arises for more blood and gore. The plot is pedestrian, predictable, and tedious. From the very beginning there is never any doubt that they are all going to die, as like as not before your very eyes. Boring.

There are actors appearing in the film. Patrick McGeehan gives an inconsistent performance, seemingly wishing that he were Patrick McGee (and therefore almost certain to have a decent script!). Jennifer O'Neill flutters her panic-stricken eyelids quite nicely, and speaks from time to time. Stephen Lack, as the jeune premiere, stares and rolls his eyes like a mad thing, and dies spectacularly (I hope he was paid danger money for that!). Michael Ironside - he of the hole in the head - snarls and twists and mugs like a man who just knows he will win in the end. You've seen his performance hundreds of times before from villains destined to cop their whack at the hands of Starstruck and Crutch or Rockford. The whole cast does everything Mr Cronenberg asks of them with that smooth, lifeless competence of the American television actor, but he does not ask much.

The values of this film are garbage. It is as nasty a piece as any of Mr Cronenberg's other films, cheapening and demeaning every theme and character. It celebrates nothing, exploits everything. Yet it has been made with verve and enthusiasm. The man is obviously trying to give us what he thinks we want. Some scenes are as startlingly, bloodily effective as any in cinema, leading to a climactic scanning contest that is a dirty little masterpiece of gory effects.

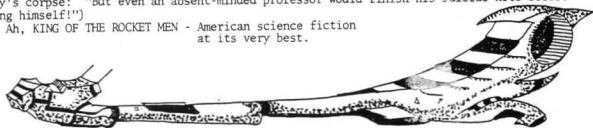
This is a whore of a film, but at least its an honest whore, trying to give value for money.

## KING OF THE ROCKET MEN Reviewed by Mark Gorton

If Melvyn Bragg and a film-crew from THE SOUTH BANK SHOW had peered through my living-room window and caught me watching KING OF THE ROCKET MEN, I might have felt obliged to claim that I was interested in the lurid serial only because the guise of Rocket Man is at one point adopted by Lieut. Tyrone Slothrop, the paranoid hero of Thomas Pynchon's GRAVITY'S RAINBOW - "a novel, Melvyn, of Antarctic brilliance, in which the ballistic (that is to say, parabolic) trajectory of the V-2 missile represents the rise and inevitable entropic decline of latter-day industrial civilisation." Perhaps Melvyn and I would have gone on to discuss how Pynchon uses the comic-strip form in his remarkable metafictional .....

But it would all be a hollow sham! I really watched KING OF THE ROCKET MEN because, no matter how badly Jeff King (a.k.a. Rocket Man) was duffed up by the turgid cronies of shadowy Dr Vulcan, his hat never fell off; because I had a certain amount of sympathy with the people who, as Jeff reminded the brilliant (though you'd never have guessed it) Prof Millard, "thought you were crazy trying to build a sonic-powered rocket suit;" because Rocket Man insisted on flying through balsa and sugar windows and into the backs of trucks; because when one character was filled with a potent 'hypnotic sedative' by Dr Vulcan it proved difficult to distinguish the victim's performance from the rest; and because when poor Prof Conway was found with a knife in his back the police concluded that he'd taken his own life. (At least Glenda cottoned on that there'd been some foul play - but not because of the knife's suspicious location. Instead, she remarked on the half-written 'confession' found with Conway's corpse: "But even an absent-minded professor would finish his suicide note before killing himself!")

Ah, KING OF THE ROCKET MEN - American science fiction at its very best.



## SUPERMAN II

Reviewed by  
Kate Jeary



Last week I queued up - breathlessly agog - behind what seemed to be the whole population of West Yorkshire to get into SUPERMAN II. Three hours later, breathless, thirsty, and emotionally exhausted, we made a pub in time for the mandatory last pint - in my case, barley wine - of the evening. So -

'What did you think of it, then?' I asked my stubbornly silent escort.

'Too long,' Simon said, succinctly, and relapsed into his beer.

'Oh.....' I shut up.

I've been thinking about it at greater length over the past few days and the following is the result. It's not so much a considered verdict as a series of observations. Hence the style.

It was too long: 2 hours and 8 minutes, according to the publicity, and, by God, towards the end you were aware of every minute. More authoritative editing would have done much to improve the overall quality of the film. (Perhaps the makers were too deeply in love with their own creation?)

Characters in themselves amusing, but incidental to the film, were packed into the crevices of a mountainous plot which already looked set to avalanche. The result was a series of episodes - like the encounter between the newly-vulnerable Superman and a red-necked trucker or the disintegration of the well-observed street-scene in Metropolis - superb in themselves but finally distracting.

The appearance of the super-villain, Voltan, and his minions was delayed until well into the second half of the film, and somehow the comic-book villain from SUPERMAN I, Lex Luthor, crept in without contributing too much either to the believability of the plot or the 'feel' of the film.

There was an unexpectedly impressive performance from the supervillain trio, particularly the woman, who managed to combine the feel of a femme fatale with a believable machismo, cupping it with the positively demoniac presence of the witchqueen from SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS. This was counterbalanced by the gaping holes in the plot.

We are told that Superman, once he has denuded himself of his powers in order to settle down with Lois Lane, cannot have them returned to him. Yet, twenty minutes after withdrawing to the North Pole in despair, he launches himself into battle crammed to the neck with the powers he's no longer supposed to possess. We are, at no time, ever given an explanation for this miracle.

Other scenes, good in themselves, are imagined and executed in too much detail. The obvious climax of the film - the battle between Superman and the trio of super villains in Metropolis - whilst including some very good action sequences, loses much of its force by over-extension. Dramatically, it is further weakened by the fact that the conflict is not resolved there: it takes a further removal of the main characters to Superman's arctic ice palace and the unexpected intrusion of Lex Luthor into an already shambling plot to sort out the confusion.

This picture, nevertheless, has moments of great visual beauty and unexpected emotional impact. Superman's appalled reaction to his own sudden vulnerability, i.e., a bloody nose, and his incompetence in a brawl, give a touch of realism to the fantastic plot. The bed in the 'Honeymoon Motel', which starts to vibrate as soon as Clark Kent sits down on it - to his discomfiture - is as honest an exhibition of peculiarly bad taste that I've yet met.

As a film it has considerably more pretensions than SUPERMAN I; whilst begging certain important questions. Superman is never specifically told that the world, or these super villains are his responsibility. Yet he, and the American nation, appear to believe that they are; that he is morally bound to do something about them, even that he is wrong to have bartered his powers for love when he had no knowledge of what was going to happen. These are dubious assumptions morally. Similarly, Clark Kent makes Lois Lane 'forget' that he is Superman. Is this morally defensible? Sure, it's a kid's movie, but since it makes these sweeping assumptions, is it not up to the adult audience to question them?

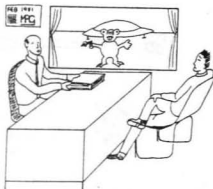
Sadly, I find myself unable to report on the child's point of view since the child I had in mind was unable to obtain entrance to the film? they would not let her mother and her baby sister (a lot less distracting than the couple sitting in front of us) in, quoting regulations. This, at a matinee. The said family party removed themselves to another cinema where they, and the audience, enjoyed POPEYE in peace.

On the whole, then, a good movie with a hell of a lot of holes in it. I'll probably be going to SUPERMAN III - partially a question of brand loyalty, I suppose.

# BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS DIRECTOR JIMMY T MURAKAMI 102 MINUTES

Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

The legend of THE SEVEN SAMURAI has suffered many indignities since it was kidnapped from Japan and held for ransom in Hollywood, California. Relatives and friends will be pleased to know that this lovely legend will suffer no more. Nothing in the future could possibly be worse than BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS. Kurosawa's THE SEVEN SAMURAI is an acknowledged masterpiece. THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN - possibly the most lucrative 'theft' of all time - almost single-handedly resurrected the western, spawning a host of imitators, some acknowledging their debt - THE RETURN OF THE SEVEN etc - others crawling off like thieves in the night - the spaghetti westerns. Yul Brynner has given several repeat performances of his character, Chris, most notably in WESTWORLD. Sadly BBTS not only uses the plot outline of TM7, but also has Robert Vaughn give an empty reprise of his part. There should be a law against such cruelty. Unfortunately, for us, the film does not take its spirit and outlook from either of the originals, but from the later attempts to cash in on the efforts of other, better artists.



"No one believes all this BEM crap anymore.  
Now we want inner space"

Not exactly an unknown phenomenon in SF either!

There is a fashionable movement that has created the bogus 'B movie chic', that condescending secret circle of 'appreciation' for films so bad that they are deemed to become marvelous, by some unknown alchemy. Roger Corman, the producer of BBTS, is the prophet of this cult. He makes no bones about being a ripoff artist. Money is his only rationale in the making of a film. BBTS is typical of a 'Corman film'. While it is not his cheapest film - quite - it suffers from the obligatory continuity blunders and downright lazy shooting, in this case an obtrusively wandering boom mike (amongst others). Advocates of 'B movie chic' say that all this is part of the charm. Another interpretation is that it demonstrates a contempt on the part of the film maker for his audience - the people who pay his coke bills with their hard-earned cash. Only the very greatest artists can dare to have contempt for their audience.

Needless to say, such artists don't make films for Corman.

Any work created within a genre borrows from earlier works, and this is definitely intended as a genre piece. Anyone watching can pick out the scenes/effects lifted from CLOSE ENCOUNTERS and STAR WARS and SUPERMAN and STAR TREK and ... and the list goes on forever. Ordinarily this is quite acceptable. Well-known motifs can be convenient shortcuts used to move the plot along and permit the creator the freedom to express his own ideas. This implies an understanding, respect, and affection by the borrower for his predecessors. BBTS does not borrow, it steals. There is no more respect for Lukas, Scott, and the rest than there is for the audience. This private joke holds everyone outside its charmed circle in contempt.

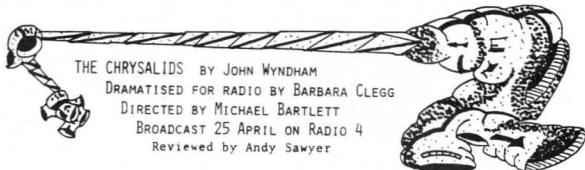
Which is what you would expect from spoiled would-be movie brats, the sort of people responsible for this film.

Is there anything good to say about this film? Not a lot. Richard Thomas yet again tries to hide that he is really a good actor with a characterisation that anyone who remembers him from THE WALTONS will recognise. George Peppard stumbles through as a drunken cowboy with a bar in his belt - the only novel, amusing effect in the film. Darlaine Fluegel is marginally more convincing than Carrie Fisher in STAR WARS, but so is a tailor's dummy. John Saxon tries to lift Max von Sydow's character of Ming from FLASH GORDON, but cannot look as though he even convinces himself. A Corman 'starlet' pouts and thrusts her considerable breasts at the camera as a 'Valkyrie' - a crude reference to Jane Fonda in BARBARELLA - succeeding only in making herself appear utterly ludicrous. The rest of the cast - mutants all - look as though they have absconded from various Californian institutions of learning, and correction. Whatever they are taught in these establishments, acting is definitely not on the syllabus!

This is a tired film. It begins with titles so ineptly executed that they hurt the eye as well as being only marginally legible. It then proceeds to shuffle through to its end, a ragbag of effects and shots lifted from other films. It is a cheap film, cheap in its attitudes. SF films tend to be expensive to make, but John Carpenter's DARK STAR proves that it is how the money is spent that counts. It is a film that attempts to parody a genre but lacks the least suggestion of the understanding and affection that is central to any successful parody. Putting a cat-suited man into an 'Airfix kid meets heat gun' space ship and sending him off through a fibre optics universe to shoot it out with the baddies using accelerated particle weapons is no more making an SF film than putting a man in jeans and a ten-gallon hat onto a horse in Mission Valley is making a western. Any film needs at least a plot, a script, and some believable characters. BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS has none of these. It is a weak, mere-

tricious, miscegenation of a film that stinks to high heaven. It attempts to cash in on the juvenile film audience created by STAR WARS, and as such it is stealing candy from babies.

Beside this film, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA is a piece of massively original inventive entertainment. Avoid it at all costs.



THE CHRYSALIDS BY JOHN WYNDHAM

DRAMATISED FOR RADIO BY BARBARA CLEGG

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL BARTLETT

BROADCAST 25 APRIL ON RADIO 4

Reviewed by Andy Sawyer

It is the post-Holocaust World, "civilization" a terrified God-ridden community in what was once Labrador. Only a rigid operation of the "Purity Laws" saves the land from the chaos of the Fringes, where mutation is the norm: each mutation is an "offence" (if human, a "blasphemy" and mercilessly rooted out). "Accursed is the Mutant." To be different is dangerous.

Then a child, David Storm, befriends Sophie, a perfectly "normal" girl who happens to have six toes and thus qualifies as being a "blasphemy". This is discovered; Sophie and her family are removed and David punished. As he grows up, he begins to question the morality imposed upon him, all the more confused because of his growing realisation that his gift of thought-sharing with a group of friends means that he, too, is a mutant, even if in a non-physical way.

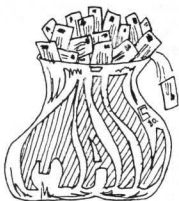
The telepaths find it increasingly difficult to live normally. Inevitably, suspicion arises. One commits suicide; another is arrested and under torture betrays David, his girlfriend Rosalind, and his sister Petra, whose receptivity is so great she can pick up thoughts from what turns out to be a civilization of mindsharers in New Zealand. They face pursuit, and capture by a group of mutants in the Fringes - among whom is David's childhood friend Sophie - before rescue by the New People.

THE CHRYSALIDS did not come over as wholly successful, but it's difficult to sort out how much this lack of success is due to the basic structure of the novel, or to the nature of the radio adaptation. (I admit to a great affection for the novel - which, however, I had not re-read for fourteen years before skimming through it now.) The storyline is fairly straightforward - a mixture of narrative (by Davy) and direct action which follows faithfully the path of Wyndham's novel, but the most engrossing parts seemed to be the early ones, as David's realisation of his own position with respect to his society becomes clearer. Even here, we miss some of the novel's touches of irony, i.e., "there are even said to be some islands where both the men and women would be passed as true images if it weren't that some strange deviation has turned them all completely black - though even that's easier to believe than the one about a race of Deviations that has dwindled to two feet high, grown fur and a tail, and taken to living in trees." (Penguin edition, p. 62)

Barbara Clegg's dramatisation seemed to stick quite closely to the temper of the novel, but seemed to highlight some disquieting traits in it. The "New People" were an appalling bunch of prigs: "We can make a better world than the old people did . . . they hold shut off from each other." Humanity as it is today is "a mere sublime animal . . . an inadequate species." If the holocaust had not come, we are told, starvation and barbarism would have brought about much the same effect.

Well - to quote James Branch Cabelli Jurgen - that may be right and certainly I cannot go so far as to say it would be wrong, but I don't hold much of a torch for the New People. Perhaps it's the clear grammatical diction they were given - always distrust people in SF plays who speak slowly, properly, avoiding ellipses and idioms. It's a clear sign of their Moral Superiority! Perhaps it's the thought that in a society where mind is open to mind there's even less room to be different than in post-holocaust Labrador. Whatever - the Social Darwinist philosophy of the New Race seemed far less pleasant hearing it over the radio than from what I remember of the book. From one point of view it's mind-enhancing; a species becoming aware of its destiny as individuals and as part of the cosmos; from another, it's a ready-made hole in the sand and a convenient way of producing a Happy Ending.

Which is the 'right' reading? Well, here I cop out; I'm not here to criticise Wyndham's THE CHRYSALIDS but the BBC's. It was not unenjoyable, but I began to have doubts about where it was heading and to meditate on the difference between complacency and irony and how far they can fuse. Or, in other words, THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON was better, not the least because it didn't leave room for these quibbles. One pioneer, one 'standard' - with the excellences and faults of the genre highlighted. Can we have something different next time?



# Letters

The response rate was markedly down this time and this appears to be due to the fact that a large number of mailings were not sent out until one week before the deadline; I don't know who I have to blame for this, but I think the reason was that many mailings were taken to Vorcon for distribution there and somehow were not posted to those members who didn't attend the convention until sometime after Vorcon - apologies on behalf of the BSFA.....

With 48 pages in the last issue (much to the chagrin of the mailing crew) and only 5 devoted to the Mike Dickinson interview I found it somewhat surprising that that article produced around 60% of the response. Should I say "surprised"? - Perhaps not. I

expected some controversy but the anti-stance seemed to be based on MATRIX not covering 'political' issues. Hmm, firstly, I didn't consider that the article was political (certainly not party political) and secondly, no-one really advanced constructive reasons as to why the article shouldn't have been included - they just said it shouldn't! On the other hand, about half of the letters on the subject welcomed the subject matter being included - so, overall, I think I can conclude that, at the very least, the article was good for a bit of controversy. Andy Hobbs seems to have got really worked up - excuse me though, if I exclude from his letter the more offensive expletives:-

ANDY HOBBS  
Riverlyn House  
Hoveringham  
Notts NG14 7JH

What the hell do you think you are playing at? Devoting all that space to an interview with one of the (unfortunate) unemployed is not your function! Now, my personal reactions to the views expressed in the interview are immaterial (as is my spelling!), although if I calm down enough I might write you a letter about them. Aah! I hear you

say.....it must have been a success because it provoked a response! Not so. My normal habit is to read the Lettercol first - more interesting, donchaknow, - and I was going to write a pithy LoC about a few comments made by some of the less well 'informed' correspondents to this worthwhile exercise. (Actually, some of them must have bricks in their heads.....my God! Hardly a rational thought in some of the letters!)

So, the hoped for response to M35 was already guaranteed - and then, in a fit of pique, I suppose, I decided to peruse the rest of MATRIX. And, what do I find? That the editor is using MATRIX as a springboard to the editor's job at 'New Society' or something (certainly not the Economist.)

I view your position as one of responsibility. Responsibility to the members, who are all commonly linked by the Love/Hate syndrome of SF with itself. (This, of course, is best demonstrated by Mr Nicholas - he loves the genre, or seems to, and hates just about everything that is currently being produced within it! Pardon the interlude.) The membership became members for their own individual reasons, but they all stem from the desire to be in some way involved in the SF environment. MATRIX has an ill-defined role in the way that the BSFA brings these people together - sercon?, fannish?, news?, a difficult one to balance - but its role is limited by certain well-defined parameters. These must surely ('no backing down now, Andy,') preclude the devotion of nearly five pages, especially the prime spot, to an interview totally unrelated to SF.

I expect criticism for that last statement. Somebody will find a reason for trying to shoot me down in flames. Let me say this first, though. SF as a genre is totally dependent on an extrapolation of today's society into the future, or sideways into space and time. It is all based and criticised on today's values. Therefore the events and social changes that are moulding the future at the present have an influence, on what is written and how it is judged. (Go on, hit me with the Classics.....always readable, much-loved books. Shelley, Wells, Verne, etc...Still the same society, although in a more embryonic state.) The tone of M54 was ideal to convey this to the SF readership (nearly). Sure, politics, the space race, famine, war, destruction of the ecology, the NF (very unfortunate choice of initials, that, especially if one is a Forest fan!) all have a part to play in what has been written, and what will be written. Christ, Brunner has made a fortune at it!

Another point. MATRIX interviews ..... Christ Priest in M33, er, um.....I only go back as far as 22; were there any before that??? Now, if you, therefore, subtract one from the myriad interesting people left to interview, you arrive at one hell of a lot! Even Mike Dickinson. Where were his views on SF, Vector, fandom, eh? Surely they are more important - (a) to the SF-oriented membership, and (b) to fulfill the demands of the 'zine within its obvious parameters.

So, kiddo, you bummed out. That interview was not required within the context of the BSFA. Fuck the response rate, the facility of the views, the fact that you may have been a few pages

short - it would have been better read in a political journal. Should never have been read in MATRIX.....Geddit?

Anyway, while I seethe into another tin of typo-maker (Mansfield Bitter), let me congratulate you on a 'fresh' approach to your issues of MATRIX. I have quite enjoyed them, and apologise for the lack of response from me and this infernal machine. (Bit of gafia, donchathing?)

Like to keep my politics outside the BSFA, see. Imagine the Biggleswade Origami Society becoming 'POLITICAL', let alone the BSFA!

Yours, (signed) Chairman, Hoveringham Bass Appreciation Society.

Am I that bad an editor? - So it seems.....

PHIL ROSENBLUM  
16 WOODSFORD SQUARE  
LONDON W14 8DP

Whilst I appreciate that your intentions are honourable, I can only lament the changes that have been worked upon MATRIX.

I cannot believe an editor possessing an ounce of discrimination could print James Parker's letter (MATRIX 35). Quote: "SF has been betrayed by a grubby Capitalistic infiltration" "(SF is) a literature that can undermine the cynicism of our sad age and replace with...something that is truly Socialist."

Or Phil Greenaway: "A more socially aware editorial content in an influential magazine, like MATRIX, is something that you've got my admiration for."

What on Earth is "Life On The Dole" doing in MATRIX? How much longer do we have to tolerate the pompous, gratuitously insulting sneers of Joe Nicholas? (e.g., "Isaac Asimov's so-called 'classic' story NIGHTFALL", or the remarks appended to Heinlein's NUMBER OF THE BEAST). Joe Nicholas is not presenting news. He is simply venting his unsubstantiated opinions. By all means write a criticism of these works, but invective is a futile, hollow occupation.

Well, I could go on. If this kind of malarky is what the BSFA wants, then so be it. I, for one, will not continue to subscribe to a propaganda outfit. Thus, after six years with the BSFA, I promise I won't renew my membership.

Belt up or it's good-bye.

According to Pete Lyon, maybe I'm not that bad an editor.....

PETE LYON  
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OLD MICKLEFIELD  
LEEDS LS25 4AJ

Hi Graham ..... sodding ex-hippie filmstar here! I can't go to the "Northern Tun" tonight, 'tis a veritable blizzard without, so I sit here and scrawl.

MATRIX is shaping up, I prefer the juxtaposition of opinionated articles, fannish news, and hard snippets of info...some of us can't afford to buy STARLOG, OMNI et al. merely to glean these nuggets of high-grade data; keep up the good work. And speaking of poverty, I neatly segue into Mike Dickinson's S.S. piece. This is the stuff (INSERT: "Boss"). Inevitably there will be a chorus of "Not SF! Not SF!" ... "So what!" say I. It is pertinent, however. As one who draws I came, long ago, to the realization that imagination is connected by indissoluble links with obdurate facts (of life or whatever). The effective depiction of (say) an alien lifeform is aided and abetted by an at least passing acquaintance with familiar biology. Social speculation (a function of the genre) is substantiated by the hard realities of Monetarism, Fascism or even Utopianism. The "ghetto mentality" would shut out intrusive realities; the reality of inequality and penuriousness, yet this is futile.

Yorcon II brought home to me just what an exclusive and "privileged" group fandom is. Affluent and educated, we are equipped to cope with recession and repression. A new technocratic elite did I hear someone say? I am soon to be rendered unemployed yet again, and this brutal fact accentuated the precariousness of the easy lifestyle that many are just too complacent about. The Bar prices made me shudder, I restrained myself from visiting the bookroom, and I certainly couldn't have afforded to buy one of my paintings! These people are insensitive to the awkwardness one feels not really being able to buy a round, or jealousy pangs on viewing their desirable purchases. Thus these social pressures, leading to explosive resentment, exist even in our 'enlightened' community. And things are getting worse, soon only a privileged few will be able to afford to be fans.

I suppose it's my own fault tho'; a chronic shirker and ne'er-do-well, I have been unable to compromise my Ideals sufficiently to become; a Programmer for Big Brother, or Capitalist Behemoth, a Death Machine Researcher, Humble Scrivener or Bank Clerke, Mammon Accountant or lackey for a





major Nationalized Pollutant Generator.

Yes, it's my own fault, I'm a work phobic and the monied are self-evidently a better class of person, deserving every penny they condescend to earn. I would be a lot happier if I, too, were affluent and ignorant.... I'd certainly want to stay in that holy state of grace and be keen to banish heretical thoughts.

Right, I'm off to bomb something....

*To make sure of a balanced presentation, I'll now include a second letter which examines the matter in depth:-*

MARTYN TAYLOR  
5 KIMPTON ROAD  
CAMBERWELL  
LONDON SE5 7EA

I am sure there must have been a good number of readers who wondered what the hell the interview with Mike Dickinson was doing in MATRIX. For a time I must admit that I did. Then I had a think, read it again, and then had another think. After that my brain hurt. Abusive stuff, thought. By no definition could it be described as fiction - would that it could - but if SF is about helping us to cope with the demands of today and tomorrow, then the piece had a place in MATRIX.

SF is largely about alternative realities. The dole queue and the DHSS offices are not, unfortunately, some alternative reality. They exist in this one. Some years ago I got to know the inside of both establishments far too well for my liking. Fortunately, I was able to take the cure (university) and find myself a steady job (investment analysis). My father spent a long working life working with the Dept of Employment in the North East, so I think I am familiar with dole queue apathy, and working in 'The City' as I do, I know what are the unemployment prospects. Even allowing for the fact that we can no longer trust Govt figures, a prediction of 3m + by year end is not alarmist. A good (bad) million of these will be school leavers. Of the other couple of million, a significant percentage will be young. Now, most SFers tend to be young, so it does not need a computer to work out that there will be a good number of us in those queues. This will be more especially the case if we come from outside the South East, most particularly if we live in the traditional, 'dirty hands' industrial areas - where SF landscapes exist on our door steps as well as in books. What is worse, as Mike Dickinson inferred, is that the Southern establishment doesn't really give a damn, seeming quite happy to write-off millions of other people's children. This is not the forum for a discussion of the reasons for our economic decline, but your decision to publish the interview was brave, coming at the time of the latest US space extravaganza.

Most SF is American, and much of that SF takes its mood from the escapists, like Scithers et al. Anyone who reads OMNI (I really should know better, shouldn't I) will be familiar with the hysteria, the 'Mars today and zap the reds tomorrow' gung ho politics (the writers must love the smell of napalm in the morning) and the sheer technological fix inhumanity of it all. Living in an older, more mature civilization, we Europeans should know better than that, but do we? The contrast between the sight of Columbia landing and what I had the misfortune to experience in Brixton just a few days before makes my stomach churn. Science, it seems, has taken the place of religion as the wide screen, stereophonic opium of us, the people. Of course, we all want to know what's going on up there in the stars, we all want to go there, but it's been there a long, long time. It will not go away if we take some time to sort out ourselves on this crowded little planet first. It will wait. Will the poor, the dispossessed, the oppressed, the old, the young, the sick etc wait while we, as a race, spill our seed on the ground on such magnificent sacrificial gestures to our new rationalist deity as Columbia and Concorde? Or will they burn down our palace walls?

The object of science is not machines. It is about the better understanding of our universe and allowing our people to live healthier, happier, longer, more fulfilling lives. Science fiction is too often about machines to the exclusion of people. It can make our little stay here less of a burden, and sometimes it can help us cope with the novel demands of tomorrow. Anyone who believes that we do not need every bit of help we can get if we are to survive as a species must have spent the last few years with their heads in the sand, or up Larry Niven's anus. In our society today the means by which scientific information necessary to our survival is made available and comprehensible to any but a small, select, 'safe' few is under attack. We may like to pretend that we, in the SF community, will be among that few, but I have no confidence in that possibility.

*Some further comments mixed in with views on a variety of topics, before turning to less controversial matters such as Joseph Nicholas....*

ALAN FERGUSON  
26 HOECROFT COURT  
HOE LANE  
ENFIELD MIDDOX EN3

I read "Life on the Dole" and agreed with the points of view. This type of coverage being the subject matter of many current affairs programmes I was a bit saddened to see it filling the pages of MATRIX also. As Alan Dorey said at the last mailing session, "What's he trying to do? Become LEEDS OTHER PAPER?" That's pretty much how I felt

too. Very relevant, but not what I want to read in the BSFA newsletter.

Still like the media news section, being a movie fan this column tends to give me much to look forward to (or dread!)

Sad to see that Rob is giving up fanzine reviewing, I suspect the BSFA will now spend a fortune in postage redirecting all these zines to Simon Ounsley. I hope he knows what he's taking on. Anyway...keep getting better.

ANDY SAWYER  
59 MALLORY ROAD  
BIRKENHEAD  
MERSEYSIDE L42 6QR

A good MATRIX, and an excellent interview with Mike Dickinson on a very depressing and worrying topic. Too many people take unemployment to be something that will "never happen to them..." We had a beauty when canvassing for the county elections: a woman condemning all those "social security scrounges" - "The dole ought to be cut; they are getting far too much." Turned out her husband was on the dole - "But he's looking for a job." I felt very, very sad when told about it. What do you say?

Talking of elections, is the science-fiction world really infiltrating the Labour Party? Douglas R Mason (author of 40-odd SF novels under various pseudonyms) was last Thursday elected to the Merseyside County Council; your humble correspondent was Agent for another successful snatch of a Tory seat and I seem to remember reading that Ian Watson was standing for the Oxfordshire County Council - anyone know how he got on? (Ed. - I think he lost)

KEITH FREEMAN  
269 WYKEHAM ROAD  
READING RG6 1PL

A long time since I've looked MATRIX - and I confess I might not have managed to get up enough energy to do so this time except I received a loc from David Taylor to pass on.

Though it seems a pity to be negative, I find I've got to be about MATRIX 35. What the hell, for a start, are five pages wasted for with Mike Dickinson talking about being on the dole. What has this got to do with either fandom or the BSFA? Oh, yes, I know unemployment etc affects us all, fans and mundanes alike - but if I want to read this kind of thing I can buy New Society every week (and, doubtless, other magazines) - I don't want this kind of thing in MATRIX. Pete Lyon's illos were good and even managed (page 7) to bring fandom into the arena - which was more than the article did. I'd like to know, as well, whether page 8's illo, showing the devils on the right and angels on the left, was deliberate or Freudian?

Joe Nicholas, as usual, mixes facts (acceptable) with his opinions - and look who's being pompous and lecturing to great length. To say THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST is one of the worst SF novels the world (well, Joe anyway) has ever known is OK - to dismiss Heinlein's many much better SF novels so disdainfully is ridiculous. I doubt whether Joe's 'style' (for want of a better word) can be changed - but as editor you are responsible for EDITING such verbose and impertinent statements.

Oh Ghod, Alan Dorey's mounting another recruiting campaign. Sorry, that's a purely personal aside and nothing to do with MATRIX! The Collating Crowd (or Mailing Mob, if you prefer it) will doubtless know what to do with Alan if the amount of work increases - and doubtless Mike Gould will record it for posterity (see illo, page 30). Anyone getting copies of BSFA publications in future printed in red ink should be warned - it could well be Alan's bl\*td....(and, it goes without saying, everybody else's sweat....).

To sum up, I'm sorry to say, with VECTOR (fair), Paperback Infatuated (with Joe Nicholas) too wordy, too self-opinionated, and this MATRIX (see above for specific dislikes), I'd find it a hard decision to make - should I renew my membership or not?.... Perhaps it's lucky I don't face that decision.

IAN WRIGHT  
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WEDNESFIELD  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
WEST MIDLANDS WV11 1QN

I decided to write this letter after reading Joseph Nicholas's article "The Shape of Things to Come" in Vector (having previously read all of MATRIX).

Firstly, I can only praise your decision to use non-SF articles. Your "talk" with Mike Dickinson about life on the dole was enlighten-



ing. I also am unemployed (although I guiltily admit I left of my own accord - for good reason, I hasten to add), and find the attitude of the counter clerks, who nearly all seem younger than me (I'm twenty-four) downright disgusting to jobless people nearly twice their age. Also, as in Brixton, there is here a high proportion of young coloureds unemployed, and I think it can only be a matter of time before the riotings start again, either in Birmingham or Wolverhampton. I especially dread it happening in Wolverhampton because unfortunately what I'm hearing in public houses at the moment seems to be a building up of the racial hatred we experienced here a couple of years ago and, if the coloureds do riot, things won't blow over in a couple of days, and people won't just suffer minor injuries. You may think I've got a very vivid imagination and I can only hope you're right.

Next, I'd like to join the bandwagon and have my say about the 'popular' Joe Nicholas. Unfortunately, apart from saying he seems to have a callous attitude towards recently-dead authors (I hope none of their relatives read his forthcoming books review in MATRIX 35), I can only praise the man. He appears to put a lot of time and effort into his articles, and in this mailing alone appears in VECTOR, MATRIX and PAPERBACK INFERNO. I do not agree with everything he says and he can sometimes be unnecessarily nasty, but, as your letters pages prove, his controversial articles at least get people thinking and writing (like wot I'm doing!). He doesn't write for the New Musical Express under the alias of Paul Morley, does he? I also wait with baited breath to see what the Australians make of him at ADVENTION, and can only wish him luck.

Finally, as a third-rate cartoonist (delighted with Geoff Boswell for having the faith and guts to print my work in Evenstar), I will not comment on any bad cartoons you have printed, but will praise the unnamed artist of the Jewish fantasy sketches for originality, and D West's sarcastic wit (but didn't he leave a while back during a fit of disgust at the BSFA?).

*I leave in disgust? That was in the deep distant past, before he saw the light and began contributing to this truly wonderful journal.*

*David Taylor hit out strongly at Joseph and was "utterly pissed off at the so-called fans who go around saying that the Space Age is dead." He continued:*



Who has just celebrated his brain transplant by finishing a new 'novel' Time Enough for Telephone Number of the Beastly which with any luck no sane person (thus by definition excluding all the crass morons who raved over his last pathetic effort) will ever buy, read, see or nominate for a Hugo, the title being an adequate reflection of the contents (which I haven't read and don't intend to) and indicating the depths to

DAVID TAYLOR  
70 PORTLAND ROAD  
EDGBASTON  
BIRMINGHAM B6

Thank God there are plenty of immature non-intellectuals about! I was in a TV showroom during the first abortive Shuttle launch, and there were crowds three deep in front of each set. These people know something our 'intellectuals' don't, that the Space Age is now, and it's here to stay. So, why shouldn't the BSFA have a go at recruiting them? It's people like that we need in fandom, not the tatty leftovers of the sixties pop/protest scene. Let those middle-aged hippies moan about how great John Lennon was, - let's get British SF back on the space bandwagon where it belongs!

Richard Philpott wrote in favour of Joseph's reviews and added that "William Bains should know that buying 22, 30 or 50 tonnes of concrete won't help him one damn bit if there is a war." The Space Shuttle also enticed the following to write:

TREVOR MENDHAM  
53 TOWNCOURT CRESCENT  
PETTS WOOD KENT BR5 1PH

terms of commercial viability, practicality, political necessity, etc. If so, can I recommend he read George R R Martin's WITH MORNING COMES MISTFALL?

MARY GENTLE  
FLAT 7  
11 ALUMHURST RD  
WESTBOURNE BORNEMOUTH  
DORSET

I'm writing this about half an hour after the launch of the American Space Shuttle. I would like to know if seeing this has changed Joseph Nicholas's anti-space program attitude? If not, I can only hope he got a good price for his soul. I expect Jo'll answer this in when the shuttle went up, and (more to the point) came down in one bit? World-weary as they are, probably very few...

Would Andy Sawyer mind not referring to the radio LOTR as a treat

for more 'geriatric' fans? This excellent series, by dramatising some events that were only narrated in the original book, forces the listener to reconsider the story - a good thing, and why else transport it to another medium?

GWYNFOR JONES  
34 BRYN GWYNT  
AMLWCH PORT  
ANGLESEY GWYNEDD  
NORTH WALES



Andy Sawyer's letter in the last issue of MATRIX failed to make the point, that: good as the BBC radio

plays are, science fiction was being written long before Wells came on the scene. I am of the opinion that the scope of the series should have been considerably broader. Nineteenth century writers, such as Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe, both of whom contributed richly to the state of the art, will be ignored due to the narrow-minded policy of some radio producer.

I have my doubts whether the broadcasting of "Journey into Space" bears any relationship to the linear development of SF. In fact, I thought it was rather a retrogressive step to take. I didn't find it as engrossing or entertaining as "First Men on the Moon" - thought it rather dull in comparison, to be quite honest - despite having thrilled to the series on the radio as a kid. That makes two of us who are geriatrics, Andy!

And now, Joseph Nicholas exercises his right of reply:-

JOSEPH NICHOLAS  
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To judge by the letters you've printed, no-one liked my review of FLASH GORDON at all - which isn't the case, since a number of people who did like it have said as much to my face. But, I'm nevertheless at a loss to understand Martyn Taylor's objections to my approach, not least because of the vast contradictions inherent in what he has to

say: having stated that "everything (I) wrote was true" and thus agreed with me, he then goes on to discount it all (without bothering to give his reasons, which, as an act of intended criticism is simply reprehensible) by remarking that "it must be awfully dull and serious inside (my) head" (thus indicating that he actually knows what goes on inside my head - all right then, clown, what am I thinking now? - which is clearly too silly for words) and warning me to "watch out" lest I one day "wake up and find (I've) turned into a dung beetle", which, coupled with his obvious contempt for higher learning ("I'll bet you not only know what 'semiotic' means, you also employ it") serves only to drag the whole thing down to the philistine anti-intellectual level of Spider Robinson's near-hysterical anti-critical prejudices, leaving him cast in a not particularly edifying light. As the crowing glory of this imperfectly-constructed, feebly-expressed and generally muddle-headed exercise, he then manages to write a thoughtful, introspective and fairly penetrating review of Tarkovsky's STALKER (which contains in its opening paragraph a comment about Coppola's APOCALYPSE NOW, totally contradictory to the one he makes about the same in his letter; another minor miracle of what I presume passes for thoughts as far as he's concerned), which evinces similar aesthetic considerations to those expressed in my review of FLASH GORDON.

By all means dispute my critical methods and approaches, but, if those who do so wish their arguments to be taken more seriously than they have to date, they'll have to put a great deal more thought and effort into their structure and presentation than hitherto.

Andrew Sutherland's remark, anent INFERNO, that "a greater number of shorter reviews would be more palatable" is a familiar complaint, one that surfaces every six months or so, and one that always receives much the same answer: thought such would undeniably increase the magazine's coverage, who the hell is actually going to read all these damn books? I and my "staff"? I'm always on the look-out for good reviewers, but they seem to be few and far between. As I've pointed out before, to review everything that's published simply because we happened to receive a review copy of it is a ridiculous exercise, since we'd end up devoting as much space to the trash as we do to the good stuff, thus robbing ourselves of the space that we could (and should) devote to the latter. In any case, as Kev Smith points out in his response to David Lewis in the letter column of VECTOR 101, you just can't say enough about a good new book in a short review of it. As Simon Bostock obliquely points out, we're not in the game just to provide witless little capitalised plot summaries, since a listing of what actually happens in the book is not at all what it's actually about.

Sutherland is factually incorrect anyway, since, although we didn't review the recent Sphere edition of Benford's and Rotsler's SHIVA DESCENDING, we did review the early Avon edition; and there was, hence, no point in repeating ourselves. However, it occurs to me to wonder how many members have either recently joined or rejoined and thus missed the reviews in earlier issues. Back issues are, of course, available, but, in ordering them, you'd naturally have to know which ones to order; so, would anyone be interested in an annual, volume-by-volume index to the previous issues? If demand warrants it, and the space is available, I could perhaps set aside a few pages of the next issue in order to "catch up" on Volumes 3 and 4; so let me know, people...

*A change of subject, now - the policies of the BSFA:-*

STEVE INCE  
26 HIGH STREET  
CHELTENHAM  
GLOS.

It was with interest that I read of Rob Jackson's announcement to step down from his task of reviewing fanzines for MATRIX. But then there was the bit that said someone else was taking over from him. Now, even I have got used to Rob and, although I

have shoved out my share of abuse, it's a case of better the devil, you know. But, on the other hand, a fresh viewpoint might be what's needed for MATRIX. However (and this is where the gripe comes), I dislike the way the successor has been chosen. What the hell happened to democracy? Was it just a daydream I once had whilst on my way to work one morning? Why doesn't anyone else get the chance to offer themselves up for the post of fanzine reviewer? And then, why can't the membership in general vote for whom they want in that post? It might seem that it's a bit of a complicated business just for a reviewer, but this is only the thin end of the wedge. When was the last time that an editor (of any BSFA magazine) was actually elected to the post? Personally I think the current policy of handing over to someone in this way smacks of "jobs for the boys" and is done solely to keep all of the official positions within a certain group of people. This is probably because you're so afraid of any change within the BSFA.

You're wrong on several counts, Steve; the overall point is that the entire BSFA Committee is the subject of election by the membership at the AGM of the BSFA held at the Easter Conventions - therefore, their policies and actions are subject to the wishes of the membership. Whilst this is not an invitation, any committee member could be voted off (and replaced) when they come up for election. The post of the Editorship of MATRIX fell vacant during last year; applications for the post were invited through the columns of MATRIX and there were only two applications - I was "lucky" enough to be appointed and, at the AGM of the BSFA at Vorcon, I was elected to the committee, having been co-opted during the year. As to the suggestion for people who write articles for the BSFA's magazines to be subject to election is, quite frankly, ludicrous. An editor must have the freedom to decide who should contribute to the magazine and what should be included, albeit the contents of the 'zine reflecting the subject matter which members wish to see. However, your suggestion is open for comment by the membership.



JOHN BRUNNER  
THE SQUARE HOUSE  
PALMER STREET  
SOUTH PETHERTON  
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I write in haste on returning to a monstrous mound of correspondence (why is it that whenever one goes away, be it for a single week-end, the pile of letters and bills seems to have bred a whole new generation in the interim?).

I would like to express my thanks to the fans who voted to me for the Doc Weir award at Yorcon. I was absolutely delighted. Little by little, over the years, owing to pressure of professional obligations, I've felt myself less and less able to partake in fandom *que* fandom; the far-off days when I was able to publish my own fmz seem incredibly remote when my chief contact consists in a single column (at irregular intervals, and moreover in SFA rather than a UK mag) and the right to reprint my various convention speeches... However, one thing I can safely claim: I have always maintained that I owe a permanent obligation to fandom, because without the people - of whom the actfans represent a small but generous and very vocal minority - who actually buy my books I could never have become a pro in the field I dreamed of as a kid; I'd be stuck in some mundane, boring occupation and forever prevented from achieving my chief ambition. I'm obviously overjoyed that by indulging in the pleasure of turning up at conventions for lo! these many years I have somehow earned the respect of those who voted for me. I want this to be noised abroad: it's a tremendous benefit for a writer to find so many readers willing to talk back at him, because most authors never get any direct contact with the readership, and in that respect above all I'm obliged to the people who organise conventions and create an ambience totally different (and in my view preferable) from the cocktail-party circuit where most of my non-SF colleagues seem to get their only feedback from people who are all too often jealous, or envious, or competitive. Fans are more fun!

DAVE LANGFORD  
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READING  
BERKS RG2 7PW

About the last MATRIX... Possibly I've irritated Ken Mann over something, or at least given cause for misunderstanding. He seems to think I'm 'het up' about the famous Poetry & Fiction Magazine Association: actually I was only boggled by the pompous tone of his pronouncements at the time (they appear to have worried some PRMA members, too):

I think that since the official Terms of Peace were outlined in the last MATRIX, we can forget about all that. Also, Ken worries that I've got it in for the PRMA thanks to 'ANSIBLE being slated rather heavily in a couple of non-SF magazines' - gosh, Ken, thanks for that tribute to my critical integrity. After some research, with help from kindly Chuck Connor, I found this referred to one note in our local Reading arts mag SYZYGY early last year: I sent them an ANSIBLE as a joke and they were a mite baffled, the full text of the review being 'Looks like a secret ballot without the pay offer to me'. Ken is also worried that I may loathe all media fans: this seems to stem from my own bewilderment at Ken's statement in M53 that media fans had forced Project Starcast to 'move from its original site at Harrogate to a much smaller venue'. I was bewildered because none of the media fans of my acquaintance seemed to know anything about this; Starcast too were bewildered, and indeed rang me up to say very emphatically that they were not shifting their venue. Possibly Ken's arcane ability to amplify eleven words of mild bafflement into a couple of full-scale killer reviews has something to do with this communication gap, too?

Actually I hope we'll hear less in MATRIX about 'SF fandom' as a vast monolithic organization implacably opposed to Ken Mann: it's a ridiculously diverse collection of individuals, and so (I find) is the PRMA. What makes dispute particularly silly is that quite a few of these individuals are resident in both 'camps'. End of sermon. Yours for sweetness and light.

*We Are Also Really Pleased To Hear from the following: though your letter may not have been included, it did provide us with welcome feedback; STEPHEN GOOCH, GEOFF BOSWELL (many thanks for your kind remarks); CHUCK CONNER (who didn't like anything at all in MATRIX); CHUCK CONNER, again, this time a post-card "on royal escort duties in Norway"; VIVES VANDERZADE (who also provided an article); PHILL PROBERT (who provided news and artwork); RICHARD PHILPOTT; NIK NICHOLSON-MORTON (who also submitted an article); JAMES PARKER ("Chuck obviously regards the word 'entertainment' as being something holy, beyond all intellectual, political and artistic criticism"); K. BUSBY (who sent some news which I'll include next time); and JON WALLACE.*

## ALL CHANGE ON THE NORTHERN LINE by Alan Dorey

And so the BSFA recovers from yet another convention and survives to battle ever onward in its plans for total world domination. Well, to put it more accurately, we were joined by a few more members and thus have a mere 3,999,999,999,186 other world inhabitants who haven't seen the light and signed up yet. It is a delicate, thorny subject, this question of expansion. Almost as many people are for it as against it, and sometimes I feel the best path to pursue is to throw all the various factions into the arena and let gladiatorial ability take its course!

There are many valid arguments for and against the proposition of expansion. Most members know my position in this respect and I'm not likely to hold my cards under the table. My view is simply that, to survive (instead of stagnate), we should move towards limited expansion. I don't for one second advocate wholesale rank-swelling; we can't cope as an effective administrative unit

if that does happen. The whole feeling and function of the BSFA would alter too much for that to be a wise or sensible move. However, by always being "wise and sensible", we may never take advantage of that certain spark which often ignites the desire that creates a challenge. Thus, by increasing in size very slowly, we achieve several things:

(1) Psychologically, 1000+ members sounds a lot more ambitious and determined to would-be advertisers than does 800+. It's the reverse of the price principle. £3.99 is far more attractive to Summer Sales printers than £4. We need advertising to generate income above and beyond membership contributions; this helps us maintain membership rates and allows us to produce occasional special publications.

(2) No matter how the BSFA is run or organised, we will always lose members each year. Maybe they find us too alienating, or too conservative; or perhaps the sheer effort of sending a renewal in is too much, or simply £6 is too costly. Whatever the reason, we lose members. In order to maintain cashflow and current levels of service we must gain new, replacement members. And to do this, we need a steady recruitment campaign. But, as many marketing personnel know, occasional bursts of activity are usually more cost-effective than a sustained programme of events. This is why we print posters, place adverts, trade publications and publish sporadic press-releases.

(3) Finally, as I've mentioned before, to provide better value for your £6 membership, every extra new member (up to a certain unspecified critical threshold) provides money, an increasingly greater proportion of which can cover new and different expenditures. And, since we as a committee and council try to keep admin costs to a minimum (in real terms, costs are less now than a couple of years ago), that means more money can go towards new projects.

So, those are my basic feelings for slow expansion. Perhaps you have other views; if you agree, or feel these thoughts ought to be amplified, why not write to MATRIX?

**HAMMERSMITH MEETINGS:** In the words of Kevin Smith, venerable VECTOR editor, attendance dropping off, "must do better". Those meetings were started in response to membership encouragement and have been running on the third Friday of each month at the Rutland Hotel, Hammersmith. If they are to be continued, we must have more people attending. A guest speaker with an audience of less than 20 (albeit, an enthusiastic 20) is hardly likely to make a return visit. Following much discussion at the 1981 AGM, we will commence charging 30p per person as an entrance fee; this will help to defray the cost of hiring our meeting room and any necessary speaker expenses. Obviously we have to do this since it isn't equitable to use general funds for the benefit of the few members who can make it along.

The next meeting will be on Friday June 19th at around half-past seven. For those unfamiliar with navigating their way to the Rutland, get yourself to Hammersmith Centre, follow the one-way system around past the Odeon cinema and take the dual carriageway out towards Chiswick. The British Oxygen Company's HQ should be on your right-hand side. When you approach the roundabout adjacent to B.O.C., take the first exit down to Hammersmith Bridge. Just before the bridge, take the right-hand road and follow it for about a hundred yards. You'll then approach a 'T' junction. Turn left and the Rutland Hotel will be on your left-hand side on the Thames Embankment. For pedestrians, the Rutland is on the upstream, Hammersmith side of the Bridge.

My good lady, Rochelle, has been charged at the AGM with the task of organising these meetings in the future (beating me in the vote!), so why not turn out and have her first event go successfully.

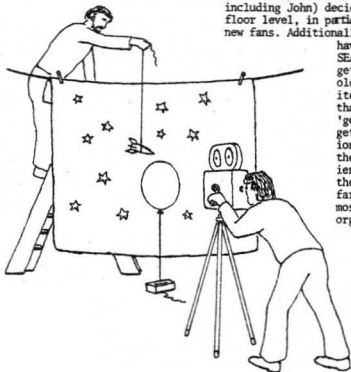
**THE 1981 AGM:** I don't propose to go into too much detail here, except that Ken Eadie was elected as the new Business Manager and the rest of the council and committee remains unchanged. The minutes will be published in the next mailing and will give a reasonably accurate picture of what went on, subject to the sobriety of K. Smith during the AGM. It was quite an interesting event and generated some response to me after it was completed. If I've space, I might comment on this in the next mailing. I would like to extend my heart-felt thanks to all those who assisted us in running the BSFA last year, and I extend very special thanks to Rob Holdstock and Chris Evans, former FOCUS editors. I'm afraid I neglected to applaud their services in public at the AGM and I only hope that they'll accept this belated mention. Thanks very much.

**THE QUESTION OF FOCUS:** And finally, FOCUS. As you may know, this publication is now in temporary suspension. This fact incited considerable comment at the AGM and I have received several letters on the subject. Basically my concern is: "Should FOCUS be continued, and if so, on what basis, and what should its content be?" Take this as your homework over the next eight weeks; there'll be a year's free membership on me for the most interesting and best-argued for or against letter, so "get your thinking caps on", "put pen to paper" and "drop a line to me today!" (Sounds exciting, doesn't it?)

Right, a little over-serious this month, and don't forget, if you have any general remarks to make that you think might improve the BSFA's services, drop a line to MATRIX and we'll get a discussion going.

Thanks for persevering - see you all next issue. 28-5-81

And, of course, in addition to the main programme, John Collicott ran the Fan Room; the committee (all of them including John) decided to run the fan room on the main floor level, in particular, so that it was accessible to new fans. Additionally, the room had a bar and it was to



have run along the same lines as the SEACON fan room - a place to hang out, get drunk, and meet new fans (or avoid old fans....). Most of the programme items were full - far better attended than the usual fan programmes where 'geriatric' fans ramble on about how to get into fandom and build your reputation. The Charnox were bloody superb with their Astral League Songs and the audience reveled in seeing D West perform the Astral League Initiation Test - a far cry from when D was number one on most fans 'hit list'. Greg Pickersgill organised two superb fan room parties complete with ace music, but I'm still not sure what 'British Bull dog' is....

Now, all committees make their mistakes, and so it was with the bar open when soft-talking Fan GoH Dave Langford gave one of his talks. Nevertheless, Dave did a first-class job as Fan GoH, fully justifying the committee's choice. (And he did a first-class job trying to proposition me in the lift!)

You overhear a lot of strange things in lifts and throughout the convention; I remember Kate Jeary telling me that she bumped into this guy who said "Are all the people at this convention raving lefties?" She later found out that he was a member of the National Front; later still he bought her a drink and it turned out that the raving lefties were none other than Ian and Judy Watson! Much later, he was found playing with their daughter, Jessica, and still later he was discovered being undressed by said 8-year-old girl - strange things that these SF authors induce in their children..... And then, propped up against the bar, I heard Antie Burland (of OMNI fame) say ... "Don't worry, it cost so much it's bound to go back into shape again." Apparently Paul Oldroyd had sat on her hat.

Even though I had not yet officially joined the BSFA, I attended the AGM with my American companion Rochelle Reynolds. There I was gratified to see Graham re-seated, unanimously, as MATRIX editor (where was Ken Mann?). Rochelle achieved something of a coup when there was a vote between her and Alan as to who should organise the London BSFA meetings. Needless to say, and much to his relief, Rochelle won. Alan was re-elected Chairman - who dares to oppose him? - and the members decided, just, to retain Arthur C. Clarke as President ("We did get a letter from him a few weeks back --- and his name is a big attraction ---"). This was one of the most organised and quickly dispensed meetings I've ever attended, agreements being quickly reached on elections to various positions in the BSFA and other business being dealt with, with a minimum of argument. Perhaps all the letter-writers to MATRIX don't attend conventions?!

No doubt committee members clamour to spread their fame with TV appearances, newspaper articles, etc., and although they didn't quite manage Nationwide, Radio Leeds did come down for an interview. Kate, Graham, Arnold Aiken and Airas were interviewed for a live morning show for about 15 minutes. They all spoke amazingly coherently considering the early hour, answering questions on conventions, fandom, SF books, authors and the BSFA. Airas was interviewed last. Having attended at least a dozen US cons, she was an excellent choice -

"How old are you?" "Five"  
 "Are you having a good time?" "Yes"  
 "Do you read Science Fiction?" "No"

---Answers which many of the fans would have given, I guess!

Right now, Graham and I feel we need a long rest - maybe a quiet weekend in Birmingham... in November...when other people are doing the organisation.

As MATRIX 36 reaches the bottom of the page, we've just enough space to thank Rob Jackson for his past contributions and wish him a well-earned rest.

See you next issue.

Graham and Linda