

# MATRIX 54



**bfa**

SPECIAL CONVENTION ISSUE: Mexican report, The Future of Eastercon, Contravention poll results, Oxcon and Mythcon previews. Plus: reviews of *Indiana Jones*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Brainstorm*, *Twilight Zone*, *Metalstorm*, Comics survey, Fanzine reviews, Clubs update, Letters, News, Competitions and much more.

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HELLO, GOODBYE

## EDITORIAL

**Chris Hughes**

To tell the truth, I've never really liked *Matrix*. When I first discovered fandom back in 19(cough, cough) I signed up for the BSFA within a matter of weeks and eagerly awaited the arrival of my first mailing. But when that anonymous brown envelope finally dropped onto the doormat and I pulled out and read the prestigious newsletter I was disappointed. Those were the days when the Harveys produced it, and despite the lightness of their style and awesomeness of their editorial competence, I found it boring through and through. No! Wait, John and Eve! Let me explain...

You see, I just didn't understand it. Who were these people? Why did they pretend they went to conventions for the drink and not the programme? And why did they give up fanac and gafiate? Who was Arnold Akien? Why did he loc 10 fnzs a day? Why did people keep spelling Alan Dorey's name wrong? And what bloody relevance did any of this have to SF? *Matrix*, you see was just too fannish.

Then I got involved with conventions—not just going to them, but also running them—and within a matter of months I became an FNF—Fully Integrated

Fan—capable of playing an active and constructive role in fannish society and all these things became self evident. But I still didn't like *Matrix*—the damn thing wasn't fannish enough!

Yes, you are right—*Matrix* can't be all things to all people: whatever you do somewhere, someone will be dissatisfied. Yet I've always felt that it *could* satisfy the majority, that it *could* be a good convention guide, fanzine and review magazine as well as being a good newsletter.

And I used to say so.

Funnily enough, the last time I said so, someone came back with "Well why don't you do something about it then? The editorship's free for one issue." So here I am. Me and my big mouth.

It soon became apparent to me that the grandiose plans I had once formulated in idle moments were but mere fantasies. The *Matrix* I wanted to produce was not one magazine but three: a newsletter somewhat like *Locust* but not costing a small fortune, and a bit like *Anisble* with its mixture of Big News and Small Gossip; a truly fannish fanzine (if there is such a thing) which spurned SF as irrelevant and talked about important things like driving tests, seasickness, spots and sex and drugs and rock and roll, and *Life*; and a forum for fannish debates—has Eastercon gone down the tubes? Does fan fiction have a place in BSFA magazines? Are apas ideologically sound? Why did Arnold Akien stop loc'ing fnzs? Obviously, it would be impossible to produce three separate magazines in one mailing, they would have to be combined into one glorious magazine! But this new plan soon floundered on the rocks of BSFA conservatism ("Wraparound card jackets? Embossed logo? Full colour illustrations throughout?? 100 pages???" screamed our Chairman in response to what I thought were perfectly innocent questions) and my own inability to solicit and put together sufficient material to fill such a publishing landmark.

Eventually those grandiose plans were slimmed down to something of more manageable proportions. These, given substance, have resulted in that which you hold in your hands. It is, no more, no less, the type of publication I always wanted *Matrix* to be. I am pleased with it, but not completely satisfied—and that, after all, is how it should be: when an editor reaches

the point where he is just going through the motions and has nothing more to contribute then is the time for him to step down and let someone else take his place.

I would have liked to produce another issue, but life (in the form of employment) conspires against me and instead I must hand back the reins to those better able to cope with such complications. Now I know how much work they put in just to keep the BSFA running smoothly and I am filled with admiration for them.

#### A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE?

*Matrix* always seems to be where you put the leftovers in the BSFA after you have taken out the book reviews, serious critical articles, essays of how/what it is like to be a writer and, of course, the fan fiction. In spite of this, it doesn't disgrace itself but the reader is left with a feeling of ephemerality. I would like to see all the BSFA publications recombined into one magazine, with *Vector*, *Inferno* and *Focus* each having their own section—a magazine which looked good and felt substantial, and would be more likely to attract outside advertising and help finance itself; one to which members felt a stronger urge to contribute—a more prestigious publication, if you like.

It would save much of the time and energy now expended on producing four (five if you count the BSFA biographies) different magazines, getting them pasted-up, printed, collated and mailed, and we would save on postage too. It might be possible to sell the magazine through retail outlets, the extra income going towards a colour cover, or even paying the contributors.

Yes, there would also be drawbacks, I know. Would there be a supreme editor who passed judgement over the *Matrix*, *Vector* and *Focus* sub-editors, or would it work as a collective? How do you make sure everyone gets their copy in on time? Who, ultimately, is responsible for the mess the other guy has made on the page next to yours? And not least, suppose the membership thought the idea stank?

Nevertheless, this is something I think the BSFA should consider seriously, and by the BSFA I don't mean just the committee but also you, the members. This is your Association, after all, so send your comments.

#### CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

British SF fandom is noticeably lacking in charity. Sure, we have TAFF and GUFF, and even COFF, but the proceeds of these benefit only those already ensconced within fandom. Once we had Dupers for Poland, which was agreed to be a worthy cause if ever there was one, but that fizzled out almost as quickly as did the fashionable support for Solidarity. This is in marked contrast to Star Trek fandom where, I am told, the collection of funds for non-fannish causes like the RSPCC, OXFAM and Spina Bifida abound. Whether this reflects an inherent selfishness and uncaring attitude of SF fans, or is merely an extension of the "fandom is about SF and nothing else" argument I do not know, and in any case it is not an issue I wish to discuss here. Fandom has its own strict code of ethics which are rather paradoxical to say the least—to sell a raffle ticket to stop a convention going down the tubes and you will have a pack of howling fans at your throat, but auction a few books to send someone you know only by reputation across the Atlantic and all kinds of people will cough up £10 for an unopened parcel and its anonymous contents.

It comes as quite a breath of fresh air, then, to find that there are people in fandom willing to espouse an altruistic cause. I talk, of course, of the

Head Appeal and the splendid plans of Matt Sillars and Co. to raise £500 as a donation to the Talking Books for the Blind charity. I applaud this wholeheartedly—of all the faculties we possess, that of sight is the most important. Just *thinking* about what it would be like to suddenly go blind and never be able to read again is enough to plunge me into a fit of depression and I am sure that many of you feel the same way. This is a dumb question, but I shall ask it anyway: how many blind SF fans do you know? Not only do I think this is a good idea, I actively encourage every one of you out there to send them some cash straight away, if you have not already done so (Matt Sillars, 8 Beaverbank Place, Edinburgh). As I have already mentioned elsewhere, in a far more trivial publication than this esteemed journal, I think it rather odd that the impetus to start and continue such a charitable campaign has not come from the key fan organisation in Britain—the BSFA. Surely, this is the sort of thing we, with our extensive resources, could and should run. The BSFA coffers are not exactly empty and finance in any case would not be too great a burden for this fannish titan to bear. How many of you out there would be willing to give up a weekend to sit around a tape recorder and read out lines from your favourite novel? How many of you would be willing to act as technical advisors, sound dubbers, and production engineers? Authors: how many of you would let your work be transferred to a new medium and give pleasure to a sector of the public which would otherwise never know your creations? How many of you out there would be willing to coordinate the operation and make sure that it gets widely publicised, runs smoothly and does not die the death of indifference? And when we get down to it, how many BSFA members would be willing to do a good turn for non-fans?

#### WHO SAYS?

These are, of course, my own views.

Unlike the daily newspapers where everything said comes from within a narrow political and social viewpoint dictated from upon high, there are no constraints imposed by the BSFA Chairman or Committee on the editor of *Matrix* and similarly there are no editorial constraints imposed on the contributors about what they say (HOW they go about saying it is a slightly different matter). This is a point frequently missed by correspondents who often think that just because a reviewer slaps off their favourite book or TV show he is speaking the Party Line. Patently not true—disproving it is easy enough: just write a letter putting your point of view, or even better, send a review of the new *Asimov* saying what you think of it, you will be surprised at how often your piece gets published. Of course, if you just want to sit around moaning quietly to yourself that the BSFA is full of idiots who wouldn't recognise decent SF if it slapped them round the face with a wet kipper, then go ahead. But don't expect us to pay attention, we won't even hear you.

One last thing before I sink back into the depths of fanish obscurity: Yes, this issue of *Matrix* does look rather pretty. It cost no more than a duplicated one for the simple reason that I have managed to attract some outside advertising. To produce something like this once is not difficult, but to do it twice would be a strain on the time, resources and enthusiasm of the editor concerned. To do it every time would be impossible without some fundamental changes in the way the BSFA is organised, the publications printed and the advertisements solicited.

Right, that's enough of apologising for a good-looking issue, let's make the most of it while we can...



## THOUGHTS OF THE CHAIRMAN NOW

**Alan  
Dorey**

As I've not yet seen the letters in this Matrix, I do not know what the reaction has been to last issue's re-design. Obviously, we still have some way to go, but I believe it's been a bold start and most of the people I have spoken to have been very happy with it.

The re-vitalization of Matrix is but the first stage of a renaissance which will affect all the BSFA publications over the next six months. Although still tentative, our plans include a complete re-launching of our mailings beginning February 1985. Many new ideas will be incorporated and, even at this early juncture, I can see exciting things ahead. Vector will be undergoing changes at the end of the year, while the new style Focus, edited by Dorothy Davies and Sue Thomas, is to be found in this very mailing. Joseph Nicholas has already introduced new features in Paperback Inferno, and these I have no doubt will be developed over the next few months. Despite certain difficulties, the production of the BSFA bibliographies is back on the road, and we shall also be seeing Roy Macinski's back numbers service taking on more importance. This, combined with the introduction of standing order payments for memberships (information on this available from Tom Taylor, or when you renew) and a determined effort to enroll new members at conventions, will help inject new enthusiasm into the BSFA.

A new Information Booklet is being produced, and as a bonus for new members, a completely re-drafted and far more relevant Introductory Package will be available. It will include much of the routine information and advice found at irregular intervals in Matrix.

The impetus behind the re-vitalized BSFA, and the visions it will have, will be far more relevant to today's world. The changes will be as the result of careful planning and, at the end of the day, you, the member, will be getting a better service and we shall be giving you more value for your money.

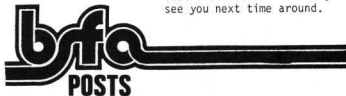
**MEMBERSHIPS:** One thing we've been considering of late is offering reduced rates to the unemployed. This would be a great help to the more impoverished members of the BSFA who continually struggle to scrape together the necessary £7 each renewal date. I will report back on this matter next issue but, obviously, if anyone has any thoughts on this matter in the meantime, I would welcome them.

**THE AGM:** Included in this mailing are the minutes of the 1984 AGM held at Seacon. Frankly, I was a little disappointed at the turnout this year. Perhaps

the members have lost interest in what we are doing, or perhaps they are so thrilled with the current state of affairs they've nothing to say, or perhaps there were fewer BSFA members at Seacon than at an average Eastercon. We've always held the AGM at the Eastercon because it provides us with free facilities at an event many of our members will be attending; it makes both practical and economic sense. But, with the increasing diversity of conventions these days, perhaps not everyone will feel Eastercon is a must in future, and we should be ready to adapt to new circumstances. I believe that the Easter AGM should continue for some years to come but, again, if you have any thoughts on this matter, let me know.

**FICTION MAGAZINE:** One question raised at the AGM was of the BSFA helping with the distribution of the fiction magazine Cassandra, edited by Bernard Smith. We agreed at the meeting to publish a letter presenting arguments in support of this enterprise. Due to the hiatus surrounding the production of the last Matrix, however, that letter never saw the light of day—for which I offer sincerest apologies. The letter would have appeared in this issue, but the Cassandra team now doubt our enthusiasm for their proposal and have withdrawn it. There has been much discussion within the pages of Matrix recently about the need for such a publication, and whilst we are not averse to such an enterprise, I and other members of the committee remain to be convinced of the necessity for a BSFA fiction magazine. The Focus team are endeavouring to include at least two good fiction items in each issue and I earnestly believe this is the best way to go about it at present. Apart from having the desire to run a fiction magazine we must also consider the cost in time and effort such a venture involves: extra printing, higher postage costs and 25% more work for the already hard-pressed mailing session attendees. At present the idea is a non-starter and we simply cannot risk the future balance and finance of the BSFA with such a venture. There are outlets for fan fiction in the UK. Indeed, in the last issue of Matrix, Dorothy Davies spoke up for the Orbiter service she runs for us. The BSFA exists primarily to further the name and reputation of SF in the UK. By providing informed news and reviews, opinion and comment on things science fictional, we support that aim. We support the written word but we must tread very carefully on the fine line that separates support for that ideal from (at the crudest level) some form of vanity press.

That's all for this issue,  
see you next time around.



**BSFA INFORMATION OFFICER:** This prestigious post was quickly snapped up by Mike Moir, 7 The Thicket, Five Elms, Whitenap, Romsey, Hants. Mike eagerly awaits the arrival of difficult questions on and all aspects of SF. Want to know all the pseudonyms of Philip Jose Farmer? The maiden name of James Tiptree? Ask Mike—he has the answers.

**ADVERTISING & PUBLICITY OFFICER:** The BSFA desperately needs an efficient and hard working fan to fill this post. It's one of the most unrewarding of jobs, but if you are currently unemployed it looks great on CVs! Contact Geoff Rippington % 128 Whitley Wood Rd, Reading RG2 8JG, for further details.

**CLUB COLUMN EDITOR FOR MATRIX:** This post is also vacant. Matrix is possibly the only British fan publication which gives details of UK clubs. It is impor-

tant, therefore, that we keep this feature going and do it well. If you would like to take on this post write to Alan Dorey, 22 Summerfield Drive, Middleton, Gtr Manchester M24 2W, who will drop/dead/in/answer-~~write~~ send you more details.

**MATRIX EDITOR:** Surprisingly, this post also remains unfilled. As Alan said last time a Matrix editor must have certain qualities: the ability to work to a regular deadline, the ability to liaise effectively with correspondents and contributors, some previous editing and fanzine production experience, access to a decent typewriter, and the determination to make Matrix succeed. A Matrix editor must also have a plentiful supply of Tippex, the ability to letraset straight, a brain which functions normally at 2 in the morning, and understanding co-habitees. If you have these qualities, stop reading right now and go and write your application. Send it to Alan at the above address.

#### BSFA MAILING SESSIONS

The BSFA mailing sessions take place once every two months in the Applied Statistics building, Reading University (1½ miles SE of the station: take a no. 20, 21, 7 or 8 bus to Whiteknights Park, stay on campus road, look for old, grey building on your left). The morning session begins 11pm Saturday with the collation of all the publications. About 1pm everyone goes down the local. In the afternoon coffee and biscuits are circulated and everyone sits around talking to the many famous authors who turn up, or watches the latest video releases on the broad-screen TV. At 5pm Dave Langford arrives and everyone goes home. Sunday is a more relaxed affair with the stuffing of envelopes done in the first half hour. Once this is out of the way the free bar opens and the disco begins. The heated open-air swimming pool is available for use all afternoon. At around 5pm Dave Langford turns up and everyone goes home again. All in all, one of the better social events in the BSFA calendar. The next mailing session will be in early October. Contact Keith 'Swinger' Freeman at 269 Wykeham Road, Reading RG6 1PL or phone him on Reading 666142 for more details.

## MEMBERS NOTICEBOARD

\*\*\*\*The MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD is a free advertising service for all BSFA members who wish to exchange items or information, make contacts, publicize Finnish ventures, etc.

**WANTED!** People to help a craft firm survive. No commitment! Just send SAE to F.Gordon, Lisgorman, Bohola, Co Mayo, Eire. Please help!

**THE UNINVITED:** If anyone has this old Ray Milland movie in VHS I would dearly love to borrow it for a little while. Suitable bribes offered! Bob Shaw, 66 Knutsford Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 2PB.

**KETTLE, BROSNAN, EDWARDS, Holdstock, Evans**—which ever of you swine currently possesses my copy of *Gorky Park*, give it back! Editor.

**ORBITER:** I'm all out of ideas for Orbiter ads—so you'll just have to settle for the fax sheet. SAE to Dorothy Davies, 3 Cadelis Row, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 7AX.

I'm looking for someone with the HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE and SPACE 1999 on video. Also, has anyone got the GUIDE radio series taped and has anyone heard of the films THE BOAT and THE UNENDING STORY? A friend of mine seeks them. Contact T.Broome, 45 Hykeham Rd, Lincoln LN6 8AA.

## Membership Update

#### NEW AND REJOINED MEMBERS

ANDREWS, Gary D.  
ARMSTRONG, Alex. Flat 1, 23 Upper Grosvenor Rd, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.  
AUSTEN, A.R.N.  
BIRKETT, R.F.  
BOWERS, P.  
BRISTOL UNIVERSITY SF Society, Students' Union, Queens Rd, Bristol BS8 1LN.  
CHARLESWORTH, Kevin. 5 Coggeshall Close, Fen Ditton, Cambridge CB5 8TZ.  
CLARKE, Philip A. 68 Ridgeway Walk, Top Valley Estate, Nottingham NG5 9DS.  
CONDOVER, C.A.  
CRANGLE, R. 42 Desert Lane, Armagh, BT61 8AR, N.I.  
CROGHAN, Antony. 91 Cranwich Rd, London N16 5JA.  
EDWARDS, Malcolm. Victor Gollancz Ltd, 14 Henrietta St, London WC2E 8JQ.  
GARVEY, Mike. 70 Parkstone Rd, Poole, Dorset BH15 2QE.  
GEORGIOU, S. 306 Ombersley Rd, Claines, Worcester.  
GITTINS, Mark.  
HAYNES, J. 22 Grove Cres, Brierley Hill, W.Midlands.  
HEWITSON, Martin. 16 Ayresome Park Rd, Middlesbrough, Cleveland.  
HINKKANEN, J. Ojoistenkatu 9 D 25, 13600 Hämeenlinna 60, Finland.  
HODKIN, Malcolm.  
HUNT, Richmond M. 51 Danes Rd, Exeter, Devon EX4 4LS.  
JONES, Antony. 22 Beechhill Rd, Eltham, London SE9 1HH.  
LEWIS, Richard. (6322) Geosource UK Ltd, 3-5 The Grove Slough, Bucks.  
LOOSE, Hans K. Herengracht 102A, Leiden, Netherlands.  
LOOSLI, Max. 34 Chiltern Close, Wamley, Bristol BS15 5UL.  
MENDHAM, Mark A.  
ROBINSON, T.J.  
SAUNDERS, Clifford. 17 Hewett House, Ranelagh Estate, Putney, London SW15 1JE.  
SHERRIFFS, Vivian.  
WATSON, Jerry. 51 Shepherds Way, Liphook, Hants GU30 7HH.  
WEX, Thomas.  
WOODALL, Keith.

#### CHANGES OF ADDRESS

ANDERTON, Cyril. 4 Nash Cox Caravan Site, Station Rd, Milkwall, Coleford, Glos. GL16 7LL.  
BEAN, Richard T. 69 Ruddington Lane, Wilford, Nottingham NG11 7BG.  
COLECLOUGH, Jonathan. 13 Queens Cottages, Reading, Berks RG1 4BE.  
DAVIS, Ian. 38 Wheatheaf Gdns, Sheerness, Kent ME12 1YJ.  
DAWSON, Philip H. 25 Pevensey Gdns, Hockley, Essex.  
FAGLIN, Roger. 11 Blvd de Precies, Apt 197, 02200 Soissons, France.  
HAMMOND, I.D. 35 St Neots Rd, Hardwick, Cambs TE19 3HS.  
KENTISH, S/Sgt Paul T. % Path.Lab., BMH Munster, BFPO 17.  
LAKE, Christina. 235 11ffley Rd, Oxford, Oxon.  
LEWIS, David J. 17 Henley Close, Cove, Fanborough, Hants GU14 9HE.  
MITCHELL, Keith. 19 Meadowplace Rd, Edinburgh EH12 7UJ.  
OGIER, Mark. Verchut Farm Cottage, Rue de Hisquet, St Martins, Jersey. Channel Islands.

#### GONE MISSING

DOCHTERY, David E.  
HENLEY, T.J. Last known address: 8 The Quadrilles, Ableton Lane, Severn Beach, Bristol BS17 3QE.



## CONREP? WE DON' NEED NO STEENKIN' CONREP!

### A Mexican report Alex Stewart

Beyond a few kaleidoscopic fragments of memory, I have little idea of what went on at Mexican. The only thing I'm sure of is that it was really terrific. But why it was so good I really can't tell you.

I suppose the programme had something to do with it. I must have gone to four or five items over the weekend, a record unequalled since the far-off days of my neohood. Here was a programme about books, and writers, and fanzines, something to stimulate the brain and generate discussion. There were none of the fringe events that have forced their way into conventions in the last few years, bringing hordes of fringe fen in their wake; this con was for *serenoe fiction* fans, the ones who read books with words in, and the *fanzish* fans who do fanzines. There were no alternative programmes either—you either took it or left it, and if you left it you socialized. Which, after all, is why we go to cons in the first place.

For some reason, the concept of Mexican has been loudly criticized in some quarters. A small and vocal minority have branded it "Elistist", "Cliquey" and "Pseudo-Intellectual". I find it amusing, and a little sad, that these bigoted morons (to remain scrupulously neutral) see nothing remotely cliqueish in attending conventions devoted to other minority interests, like long-defunct television shows. (And if reading without moving your lips is sufficient to brand you a "Pseudo-Intellectual", then God help us all.)

So what we had was a concentration of the most active and articulate fen, thrown together in their very own convention, certain of meeting their friends and acquaintances as soon as they walked in. The whole social round was automatically accelerated, leading to total physical collapse for a record number of people. Come Monday afternoon the hotel lobby looked like a cross between the Somme and the Night of the Living Dead.

At the Misfits party the bed ended up in the corridor, the mattress got ruined, Steve Green was caught in the act of committing indecent assault on an underage beer keg and Martin Tudor was politely asked to check out next morning.

At Kate Davies' party (where the hostess, looking incredibly ethnic in a flamenco skirt, was outclassed by Colin Greenland in his genuine Mexican waistcoat: "Bought it over there three years ago... just slipped it on cos it's cold in Newcastle...never realised...") Lillian Edwards came in, said "There's the realised incredibly perverse and decadent things going on downstairs", and disappeared before anyone could find out what they were.

The only genuine unpleasantness occurred on Sunday night, when some immature prat got loudly and aggressively drunk, and spent the evening breaking into conversations to snarl abuse at anyone unfortunate enough to blear into focus across whatever passed for his brain. After bursting the balloons someone had painstakingly assembled for the "Royal Tournament" he finally disappeared, much to everyone's relief.

The Royal Tournament eventually took place, two teams manhandling the inert forms of Tim Illingworth and Elda Wheeler (this team seemed to enjoy itself more, for some reason) across a reasonable facsimile of the famous field gun obstacle course. I can't remember who won in the end, but it was all good silly fun.

Earlier it had been my turn to make a fool of myself in public, in the quarter finals of the Ultra Quiz. After gulping down two cream crackers, blowing a pingpong ball across the floor with a straw, throwing darts, answering a silly question, and racing a metal loop round one of those twisty wire things that rings a bell if you touch it, I just failed to qualify for the semis. This left me free to admire some of the ingenious techniques devised by the later competitors to cut down on their times, or "cheat", to use the technical term. Biggest laugh-getter was Jim Barker's little blob of blu-tac, later hi-jacked by GUFF-winner Justin Ackroyd, enabling them to hurdle round the course with their pingpong balls firmly attached to their straws. Someone else spent the afternoon scratching frantically after disposing of a pulped cream cracker down his t-shirt.

Highlight of the programme, though, was Geoff Ryman's stage adaptation of *The Transmigrations of Timothy Archer*. It was the first and only time I've ever seen a virtual 100% attendance at a programme item anywhere, and by God it was worth it. There's talk of this appearing at the Edinburgh Festival, and a brief run in London—if you get the chance to see it, do, or admit you've already undergone brain, soul and heart death.

Little else lingers on in the memory, except Ashley Watkins' graphic description of the traditional Cornish treatment for tapeworm while I was trying to eat noodles ("You don't eat anything for three days, right? Then you open your mouth and you hold up a pork chop in front of it. And the worm's so hungry it leaps up your throat to grab it..."); Russell Hoban producing and winding up the original Mouse and his Child, to a chorus of "aahs" from supposedly jaded and cynical fans; John Jarrold eating his birthday cake all in one go, in aid of convention funds (very messy) and a euphoric Greg Pickersgill bounding around the closing ceremony like an underage Santa Claus.

And one final memory, of joining the rush to sign up for next year.

A good con? You'd better believe it...

## EASTERCON? SCHMEASTERCON!

### What does it matter as long as you enjoy yourself?

Ian Sorensen

The main joy of conventions is the ease of meeting people. They all wear badges with their names on, they all have something in common and they tend to be slow to take offence at anything you might say or do. So it seems silly not to take advantage of this opportunity to meet interesting people. Some you may already know through fanzines, without having met; others can be total strangers who become bosom buddies in the course of an afternoon. This is the essence of fandom: meeting fans.

My introduction to fandom was through a convention, and most of my work has been for cons. I didn't see a fanzine until I'd served on two con committees. Generally, convention committees are not composed of fanzine fans, yet it is fan writers who are the opinion leaders of fandom. It is they who debate the great issues of the day and in doing so influence everyone else's perception of the fanfannish ideal. Thus the two main threads of fan activity tend to be in the hands of disparate groups. For example, judgements on what makes a good convention come from fan writers who look at cons and fandom differently from me and, I suspect, from most con-goers. In what way then do my ideas of a good con differ from those commonly espoused in fanzines? Let's look first at what a convention is *really* like.

Fandom is a culture. It has its own language, social structure and customs. A convention is a venue for socializing, but a bar would do as well for the activities beloved of con-report writers, so why bother arranging a programme? Well, strange as it may seem, fandom has members other than the fanfannish fans. The image fanfannish fans have of themselves at conventions is of hard-drinking, independent-minded people exchanging views on life and fandom with friends, throats lubricated with unlimited supplies of beer. You've read the usual con-reports describing high jinks, incredibly erudite discussions and hilarious anecdotes, etc., in the bar, and possibly had some difficulty relating the description to the reality of the con you attended. This is not to say the fanfannish fans are trying to kid us; they are simply using clichés of their culture to say they had a good time. In fact few con-goers get drunk, and many are actually teetotal. I know, from advising hotels on how much drink to order, that coke and orange outsell beers and spirits by about 2 to 1. So why the hard drinking image? Well, it's not really a macho thing, more a symbol of cultural identity. "I am a fanfannish fan. Fanfannish fans spend the con in the bar because they've seen most of the films. So they must drink a lot, and I must write about drinking to let them identify with me."

The image of conventions as non-stop binges is a result of the main lines of communication—fanzines—being controlled by the fanfannish fans. However, many con-goers never see fanzines and are unaware of this image. Instead they dress up in outlandish costumes, or hide away playing D&D. Many actually go to programme items, some being happy to sit in the dark watching films and videos all weekend. They never emerge to contribute to the social side of the con, but they've paid their money, so deserve what is for them an enjoyable time, just as much as the fanfannish fans. Most do get together with friends in the corridors, or even in the bar, at some point during the con; but they don't write about it themselves and no-

body else comments on their activities. However, the con committee must be aware of them and cater for their needs. Fanfannish fans are easy to please—give them a bar and some seats. But how do you provide a weekend's entertainment for people who never say what they like and to whom you can't relate very well because you are a fanfannish fan yourself?

This is the lament of the convention committee members who spend their time, effort and money so the rest of you can enjoy your own part of a convention which they miss through being rushed off their feet getting it all set up, running smoothly, then taken down and put in a box till next year. It takes more thought and effort than any fanzine, yet there are no awards: no Novas, Hugos, Ansible poll ratings. Nothing. The occasional kind word in a con-report is about the best they can hope for. The committee members are largely unknown to fandom, even to long-term fanfannish fans, unless they happen to publish their fanzines between running cons. Like the programme-going fans, they print little about themselves, except for those curious personal details invented for the programme books—and who reads them anyway? If asked why they bothered, the fans in charge would be hard put to answer. They are committed to running a convention as best as they can; beyond that they cannot say.

And they can't be sure who to cater for: do you cut back on the programme or close one of the bars? A great deal of discussion goes on as to what facilities to provide, and often decisions are made for the simple reason that someone in a fanzine has complained of not liking the way it was done last time. He who shouts loudest gets his preferences catered for. The committee must try to strike a balance between the requirements of the very vocal minority and the silent majority. It's not easy and you'll never please everybody, but it should be the aim of any good committee.

OK, why try to please everybody? Why not run a Silicon, a Mexican or a media con; aim it at one particular interest group? The reason is simple: there has to be a venue for cross-over between different strands of fanfannish culture. Science Fiction is a ghetto, we don't need to ghettoise it further. Media fans grow into fanfannish fans, or stay media fans, whatever suits them. At a big con catering for everyone there is a better chance of a change from consumer-fan to producer-fan taking place—a producer-fan being one who gives something back to fandom by way of publishing fanzines, appearing on panels, giving talks, running cons, or being a gopher. Specialization is off-putting. Talking to Kev Williams about the Mexican while back, I asked if he was going to try to get the public in through the door and he said Yes. But how much more intimidating is it for "the man in the street" (even one who's reading the latest Gene Wolfe) to go to a specialist con than to an Eastercon? Despite a lot of press coverage and publicity in Newcastle itself, there were few walk-ins at Mexican. I suspect that selling it as a narrow-interest event discouraged people from turning up.

Most fans went to their first convention knowing nothing and no-one, only to realize: "these are my kind of people, at last I belong". But how many conventions bother to advertise in the hope of attracting punters who might have a similar experience? The media always distort what we tell them into "Sci-fi Freaks Beam Into Town" headlines, but should we be discouraged from trying to get the real message across? People who turn up as a result of a newspaper story may watch the films and slip away never to return, or may come back the following year. They may be happy with just that one con a year, and not get involved in fandom generally. You might argue that they aren't really fans as they contribute nothing to fandom; you would be wrong. They are the *real* SF fans, the ones



who read it, watch it, dream it. We who write fanzines or run cons are a bunch of misfits who have generally humdrum existences against which our nature rebels, so we create a fannish alternative to the real world and live in it. Yes, there are a lot of wallies, tossers and cretins in fandom, but who cares? They all help make it interesting. Could you imagine what it'd be like if everyone had the same ideas on how it should all be? Heaven help us if that happens.

So, warts, wallies and all, let's keep the variety in fandom. Yes, have specialist cons. Yes, produce fanzines. Yes criticize standards of writing, production and artwork but don't, please don't, do it in such a high-handed manner that it discourages people from joining in and becoming part of our culture. Seacon 84 may not have been the best Eastercon but it had the right idea—that a convention should be a place where many different kinds of fans can meet and mix. No matter what programme items there are, whether there is a video room or a fan room, if people can attend the convention and come away having made new friends then it has been a good convention. The trend toward specialist cons will ultimately fail through lack of new blood—after all, people tend to spend only a few years in fandom before "growing up", i.e. getting a job, a mortgage and 2.4 kids. However, if the Eastercon-type of event is to carry on growing it must be better organised, with a greater awareness of the different threads to be woven into the convention framework. The Mexican can never be an Eastercon; the Eastercon must not try to become just one small part of itself. People want one con a year where they can meet everyone; I suspect the reason for the dislike of Yorcon III is its committee's plan to split the con between hotels. The fans in the street might vote with their feet and not attend. And that would be a tragedy. Let's make Yorcon III a good con—if we all go along despite any reservations we may have, it'll be a good Eastercon whether the site is split or not. All it takes is people.

## A FEW THOUGHTS ON EASTERCON

**Marion van der Voort**

During the nine years I have been going to Eastercons the number of people attending them has increased dramatically and an attendance of one thousand is now quite usual. I once helped to organise professional conventions and it seems to me it is time that Eastercon was put on a more businesslike footing. (After all with an average registration fee of £10 a head the committee are handling over ten thousand pounds: not chickenfeed, even by professional standards.)

Firstly, as only a few hotels in this country can take in excess of a thousand at the rates we are prepared to pay, we should start thinking, and talking, about alternatives, e.g.

- 1) Arranging Eastercons for a few hundred only, on a first come, first served basis.
- 2) Splitting into two Eastercons: North and South or East and West.
- 3) Using university or holiday camp sites.

Secondly, because a year is not long enough to plan a convention of this size, we should either have bidding sessions two years in advance, or have a Steering Committee which would arrange a hotel booking two years in advance, and then vote for the committee we wished to run the convention at the pre-booked hotel. (At the moment the only likely hotels are the Birmingham and Brighton Metropoles, the Glasgow Central and London's Bloomsbury Centre.)

Thirdly, the organising committee should have no more than nine members, with around fifty people actually working on the day. More than twenty weekend conventions are held in Britain each year so a lot of expertise could be called on for the Eastercon. Pools of equipment and labour exist all over the country. Some kind of file could be handed on from committee to committee, listing helpers, experts and equipment, with a masterfile kept somewhere in case of accidents.

Finally, let's spread the load a little. If everyone who has some convention job trains a successor, Eastercon will keep going for many years to come.

## CONTRAVENTION POLL RESULTS

**Chris Hughes**

As a decision making aid, and also out of sheer nosiness, the Contravention bidding committee circulated a huge quantity of questionnaires at Seacon 84 and Mexicon. 156 people replied; 122 from Seacon itself. As a pleasant surprise only four respondents gave consistently silly answers. Number of conventions attended ranged from 1 to 65+ with an even spread throughout the range. Thus the results can be taken as a representative poll of all fans who attend conventions and have nothing better to do with their time than fill in questionnaires.

In reply to *Who would you most like to see as Quest of Honour?* no less than 52 SF personages were nominated; 2 of whom were dead, several others suspected to be so, and 23 who garnered only one vote apiece. Of the remaining contenders, only 3 managed to win more than 10 votes. Leading the field was BSFA Award winning author John Sladek (come back John, all is forgiven) who beat Ursula LeGuin and our own Tanith Lee by a short head. The rest of the pack were a fair way behind although honourable mentions must be given to Garry Kilworth (who polled more votes than Asimov, Brunner, Aldiss and Holdstock combined), Bob Shaw, Harry Harrison and J.G. Ballard. John was rather more popular with the newer con goers (less than five cons attended) than with the older hands, while for Tanith the situation was reversed. 21 respondents did not want a Goh, couldn't answer the question or didn't understand it.

In the Fan Goh poll, 12 respondents said they thought that the FGOH idea stank and a massive 56 did not care enough to bother writing in a name, or could not think of one. 42 fans were nominated and all but a handful polled only one vote. Biggest finger was the famous Dave Langford (7 votes), weighty digits were Dave Bridges (5), Abi Frost (4) and the little pinkies were Martin Hoare, Malcolm Edwards, Ian Sorenson, Chuck Partington and Jim Barker (3 each).

*What do you think committees spend too much on?* drew a fair range of responses, most ill-disguised digs at Seacon. On the great PR question only 10 respondents thought them an over expense, despite the great PR furor a few months back. Flashy equipment (including walkie-talkies) got a fair amount of stick from people unaware that the vast majority of Seacon equipment was obtained free of charge by Arnold Akien. ... too little on? brought stronger responses: films being the most mentioned item, followed closely by prizes. But most interesting and expanded upon in depth by many correspondents were the guests—the main point being that too much was spent on unknowns and too little on the main guest.

*At which of the following venues would you like to see the convention held (Brighton/Blackpool/Birmingham NEC)?* The Seacon portion of the poll was



overwhelmingly in favour of Blackpool (future conventions please note). Unfortunately, it was later found that the Blackpool hotel was already booked. Mexican voters were, therefore, asked to choose between only two sites and they wholeheartedly preferred the NEC one. More interesting was the number who said you couldn't drag me there with wild horses: Brighton 14, NEC 9. Most popular suggestions for alternative sites were the Bloomsbury Centre London, and unspecified hotels in Manchester and Glasgow. Related to this question was the innocuous *How often do you leave a convention to go for a meal?* Excluded from these results were the 1-4 cons attended group who were assumed to be locals living in Brighton and Newcastle and therefore slightly crazy. The most frequent response was Once/day (Contravention committee groans out loud) and over 80% said at least once every two days.

*Which SF magazines do you read on a regular basis?* can be dispensed with in double quick time. Not surprisingly, Interzone was by far the most popular. F & SF led the (in)digestible publications although Asimov and Analog readers were not far behind in admitting to their little peccadillos (10-15% for all three). (Foundation scored only two votes in the whole poll. Is filling in questionnaires beneath the dignity of Foundation readers or have so few of you heard of it?)

*Which was the best convention you have attended?* Arguments for the application of complicated algorithms to normalise the data, account for geographical spread of respondents, differential convention experience, etc. were quietly sat upon in favour of a rule of thumb assessment. Highly thought of were Seacon 79 (which polled twice as many votes as its 1984 counterpart), Becon 2 and Unicorn 3 (although sister events were also highly praised) and, alone among the Eastercons, Albacon II. Despite its geographical location no-one said Channelcon, and despite its regularity very few mentioned Novacon. For the bigger conventions plus points were reckoned to be "Had everything", "Lots of authors", "Great films", "Superbly programmed", "It was BIG", "Lots to see and do", "I got laid". For the smaller conventions plus points were "Super atmosphere", "Laid back", "Lots of involvement", "Friendly committee", "Could get out", "Well, but not over organized", "Terrifically fanish", "Cheap", "Lots to do", "Easier to talk to strangers", "Comfortable seating near the bar", "Well laid out hotel".

More difficult to assess was *Which convention features do you consider important/unimportant?* Games room: 30% said important but all but 4 were from the less than 10 cons attended group. Fan room had an even spread: 70% thought it important. Bookroom: 97% thought this important. Video room: 60% thought it important, most 'unimportant' came from the Mexican crowd. The Bar: 88% thought it important, less than the Bookroom. Lounge (not often a consideration in convention planning) got a 76% thumbs up from the respondents. Art room: quite a low score for this well established figure, 66% said important. Staged room parties: again an even spread (except for the Mexicans who scorn such artificial social devices), only 24% said these were important. Information displays: ("Huh? What are they?" quipped one): 72% thought them important. Other features thought worth mentioning by several were a continuation room and a disco-free area.

*Attendance at programme items*, can be taken as a fair guide to programme (though possibly not as accurate as counting heads at the next convention). Rating 'Always attend' as 1, 'Often' as .66, 'Occasionally' as .33 and 'Never' as 0 and multiplying by the relative frequencies gives the following percentages

attending each item: Guest of Honour speeches 59%; Fancy dress 58%; Talks 50%; Films 49%; Panel discussions, opening ceremony and prize givings all 42%; quizzes 37%; and banquet (perhaps because there has not been one to attend lately) at a mere 17%.

By necessity these results reflect but the surface detail of the poll and no space has been given to the complex data normalisation and fudging undertaken by the analyst. Convention committees and others wanting further information or with specific questions they want answered are invited to contact Contravention at 128 Whitley Wood Road, Reading, Berks, for further information. Suggestions for future questionnaire items are also welcomed.

## Con news

1987 WORLDCON BIDS: San Diego has dropped out of the running leaving only the British and Phoenix (USA) contenders. This has dramatically increased the chances of Britain coming first or second at the 1985 bidding ceremony at Aussiecon II (Melbourne). The disastrous 1983 Worldcon Constellation, meanwhile, has managed to reduce its financial deficit to a mere \$33,000. Massachusetts Convention Fandom, Inc. have set aside a trivial \$10,000 to help pay off Constellation debts, but bankruptcy looms large. —CH

YORCON III's first progress report is now out and should have been received by all members of Seacon. Contents: Graham James on the shape of (Yor)cons to come; Joseph Nicholas on Gregory Benford; and a very interesting competition (first prize, £50 cash) for the best article with the title "What do we do now the future is here?"—entries no more than 3000 words. A free copy of PRI can be obtained from Mike Ford, 45 Harold Mount, Leeds LS6 1PW. —CH & AD

HARLAN ELLISON suddenly remembered a little thing he had long ago promised his publisher called *The Late Dangerous Visions* four days before he was due to appear as Guest of Honour at Albacon 84. "Look, terribly sorry about this, chaps," he explained to the frantic committee over the phone, "But don't you worry—there's this guy called Spinrad over here, who's always wanted to see Scotland. I've given him the ticket. Bye." Latest reports from Scotland say that everyone enjoyed themselves regardless. —CH

BECCON is almost sold out despite the convention being many months away. Membership £8 to 191 The Heights, Northholt, Middx. —CH

## Previews

KEY: Goh Guest of Honour, AM Attending membership fee, SM supporting membership fee, RR Cost of room/person/night (inc. breakfast). *Type of convention in italics.*

**SILICON 8.** 24-27 Aug. Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle. RR £7.50-£26.00. Details from 2 Seaton Ave, Newsham, Blyth, Northumberland. SP (ish).

**OXCON: UNICON 5.** 24-27 Aug. St Catherine's College, Oxford. AM £8, SM £4.50 to Norham Gdns, Oxford. Goh Brian Aldiss: an experienced Goh and public speaker who is very popular with fans. In addition to all the advantages an Oxford con has (lots of great pubs within walking distance, fine restaurants, a river with punts for hire, sights to see when you're not conventioning) there will be a large carpark adjacent to the site and we will have our own real ale bar run by experienced bar staff.

The planned programme contains all the usual items—panels, talks, films, videos, silly games, etc.—

plus a few wierd and wonderful features never seen before. We're hoping to strike a balance between having so much programme that everyone gets blitzed by it all and so little that everyone gets bored. The bookroom will be large as a number of dealers not usually seen at conventions will be coming along. There will also be a fancy dress (provided we get a few more entries—Come on you lot!).

There are still plenty of rooms available (at a mere £14/night including breakfast), so sign up, come along and have a nice, relaxed, fannish weekend. —HM

**GALILEOCON 84:** 24-26 Aug. Crest Hotel, Newcastle. GoHS Roddenberry, Barratt. AM £15 to 30 Kirksdale Green, Rye Hill, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. *Star Trek*.

**LA-CON II:** 30 Aug-3 Sept. Anaheim Centre, Los Angeles. GoH Dickson. AM \$75 to PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA91409, USA. 42nd World SF Convention.

**BENELUXCON:** 7-9 Sept. Gent, Belgium. GoHS Sheckley, White. RR £4.50, AM £5.50 to Edenplaspstraat 70, 89500 Evergem, Belgium. SF.

**MYTHCON:** 7-9 Sept. Humberstone Coll of Higher Technology. A convention where anything might happen! Last year, for example, our Artist Guest won the fantasy gaming competition, while the 1st and 2nd prize winners in the fiction competition had their stories printed in *Imagine*.

Our Writer Guest this year is Anne McCaffrey, our Artist Guest is Brian Froud and our Special Guest is Dr Jack Cohen of Birmingham University. We will be having a full video programme, fiction and fantasy gaming competitions, an art show, and a dealer's room, and there will be a special showing of the film *Dark Crystal*. We start officially at 7pm Friday and finish at 5pm Sunday, with the odd item of two after that for people who don't want to go home.

We have chosen to hold the convention in a college because the room rates are very reasonable: only £7.50 for bed and full English breakfast. The rooms are fairly spartan—no private bathrooms—and the money does have to be paid in advance, but Penny Hill, who eats there often, assures us the food is very good.

Mythcon is a convention for intelligent individualists. We won't herd you round from item to item. As someone said last year, we are a Becon for fantasy fans. For more details write to me at 133 Sheen Lane, London SW14 8AE, enclosing SAE. Attending membership £10, one day £6.

—Marion van der Voort

**CONQUEST:** 10-12 Oct. Ingram Hotel, Glasgow. GoH White. AR £12, SM £5 to 104 Pretoria Rd, Bristol BS12 5PZ. SF

**CYMRUCON:** 2-4 Nov. Central Hotel, Cardiff. AM £5 to 56 Honiton Rd, Llanrumney, Cardiff CF3 9QL. SF.

**NOVACON 14:** 9-11 Nov. Grand Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Holdstock. RR £15, AM £6 to 11 Fox Green Cres, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7SD. SF(ish).



## COMPETITION

## Dave Langford

**Matrix 53—Constructive Book-Burning:** A gigantic turn-out of four eager entrants flooded the mailbox with new reasons for censoring unlikely SF works. Margaret Hall denounced C.S. Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* as an allegorical Drug Trip; David R. Smith found dope, racism, promiscuity and more in Asimov's 'It's Such A Beautiful Day'; Dave Wood slobbered over the unnatural perversions of John Russell Fearn's *The Golden Amazon*; Sue Thomason is grudgingly handed the fiver despite my resentment of her vile slurs on the Supreme Mistress of Skiffy (see also Vector 120), Anne McCaffrey:

**THE WHITE DRAGON:** This pullulating stew of deviant sex, drug abuse, violent, irrational behaviour and contempt for traditional morality, aims its poisoned barbs at the flesh of our innocent youth. From the ageing alcoholic singer-songwriter Robin-

ton, who encourages the young hero to defy his parent's orders, to the gangs of marauding territorial heavies who 'mount' their 'dragons' instead of motorcycles and 'protect' their society in typical gangland fashion, this book stinks of corruption. Even the *animals* take drugs! Why else does Jaxom encourage his dragon to chew 'firestone' in secrecy, against the express orders of his father, and with mounting irrational elation and excitement? Scenes such as the following abound: "The Harper expelled his breath slowly, his eyes brilliant with excitement. 'You're not too stimulated, are you, Master Robinton?' Jaxom asked, looking about for Sharra." This book is a blatant attack on wholesome, traditional values, tending to undermine children's respect for parents and other figures of authority, and to encourage them in depraved, corrupt, lascivious behaviour and unhealthy dependence on potentially drug-bolstered fantasy states. Seize it, ban it and burn it!

**Matrix 54—Spot the Blurb:** In response to pleas for "really trivial easy competitions which our dumb cretins can do", I invite you to identify a dozen book blurb extracts. Each is from a different, well-known author and publisher; intelligent guesswork is permitted; and you need only spot the book, not necessarily the publisher of the relevant edition (I'll reserve that for tiebreaking). One point per correct identification. On your marks...get set...

(1) Something is sucking the human mind dry! And has been for the past 200 years.

(2) In front of 80,000 people Heisenberg, the new Messiah, the darling of the media, had gone into a trance of immeasurable depth.

(3) From the most acclaimed writer of imaginative literature in the world comes this masterwork of myth and terror, a pantheon of modern gods...

(4) Once before the Lord of the Flames had been driven halfway across the universe. His return would mean a new era of chaos and conflict for the populace of Earth.

(5) The Chems were the prisoners of eternity, gripped by the despair that immortality brought... These are the super beings who control men's destinies and who derive their pleasure from the pain and torture they inflict.

(6) But in its way the earlier work is brilliant, as amusing, and as profound an indictment of the failings and follies of the British, as its successor is of the Russian, way of life.

(7) Extermination of an alien life-form leads to surprising consequences.

(8) Originally a Hugo and Nebula winning novella, now the most magical novel in science fiction.

(9) While attempting to repel an intergalactic invasion, mankind resorts to a weapon of such awesome destructive power that it...threatens the very existence of the Universe.

(10) A world of acceleratubes, Moonbase Zero, intelligent computers and mass-marketed psychedelics. A world where a quiet man can be turned into a human machine...programmed to kill.

(11) Barch, an Earthling, and Komeitk Leliann, the beautiful stranger from a far world, have together been captured and transported to Magarak by...great black creatures whose faces are stiff with black bristles.

(12) She had been built to serve Man, and yearned for his return and the feel of his bare feet on her decks. Then, after centuries, the miracle happened...

There you are. And remember a score of only 1 or 2 will win if everyone else fails to enter; don't be discouraged! Rush your painfully calculated answers to the Usual Address in hope of the Usual Prize: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks RG1 5AU. In time for the Matrix 55 copydate, please.

## CLUBS UPDATE

*Fan Groups:— Either continue to rot in the depths of obscurity or write in telling us you exist. Matrix is, as far as I know, the only British fan publication willing, nay eager, to print your vile revelations and thereby lure unsuspecting neophytes into your evil clutches. For goodness sake take advantage of it. Meanwhile, a brief guide to known ghettos (Leeds and Brighton groups might like to ask M. Ford and A. Robertson why they are not represented here)...*

**BIRMINGHAM.** Mercian SF Triangle meets last Friday of the month in the General Wolfe, Birmingham. Contact Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Brum. Conversation topics: mattresses, drumming, S Green.

**BOLTON.** "The Bolton and Distant SF Group meets every Tuesday at 8 o'clock in the Old Three Crowns, Deansgate, Bolton. The meetings are informal and the conversation is varied. We've just had our Summer Solstice Party, either the fifth or sixth solstice, depending on who's doing the counting. Highlights: saying to Steve Gallagher 'We've arranged for a video of something you've novelised, now what would you least mind it being?' Kevin Rattan saying to one young lady 'You exude an air of raw animal sexuality,' and then realizing that to sit next to her would involve shifting a dozen empty wine bottles; my do-it-yourself garden flares which would have worked if only the evening had been warm enough for us to move out doors. Best thing about the party was it gave Tom Taylor the motivation to move the mounds of kipple that were threatening to engulf his house...not so much spring cleaning as Major Urban Renewal."

—Bernard Earp

**CROYDON.** Speculative & Imaginative Literature Society can be contacted at 3 Canterbury Ct, St Augustine's Ave., South Croydon. Conversation topics: SF, fantasy!

**CHESTER.** Chester & District SF Group meets fairly regularly in various places. Contact Jeremy Crampton, 10 Vicarage Rd., Hoole, Chester. Conversation topics: drinking, fanzines, when and where to meet next, etc.

**GLASGOW.** Friends of Kilgore Trout meets every Thursday 8pm to 11pm in the side lounge of Wintersgill's, 266 Great Western Road. "...numbers vary from between 20 and 50. What we do: In a word, nothing. Trout is a group where people meet and talk. There is no organisation, and there are no rules, speakers or subscriptions. Attendees come from all walks of fandom and include space nuts and D&D buffs. Ages range from late teens to over 60, but most of us are in our twenties. Why you should go: Trout is a convention-type bar set up once a week so that if you wish to practise your barroom debating style for the next convention you can do so among friends. Everyone is friendly, approachable and easy to talk to. If you just want to sit quietly and listen, that's fine. If you don't drink, that's fine too (the pub sells more coke on Thursdays than beer!). The only thing you may find difficult is getting anyone to talk about SF. —Ian Sorensen

**LANCASTER.** Lancaster SF Group meets first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 at 45, Blades St, Lancaster and proceeds on to a pub at 8pm. Conversation topics: unknown (try "How about editing Matrix?").

**NORWICH.** Norwich SF Group probably meets every Tuesday in the Whalebone, Magdalen Rd, Norwich at 8.30. Conversation topics: unknown (see above).

**READING.** Glomerule aka SF Reading Berks meets third Thursday of the month in the lounge of the Railway Tavern, Greyfriars Rd and, less formally, every Sunday in the Pheasant, Southampton St from about 9 onwards. Conversation topics: computers, what it was like to be an undergraduate at Oxford, 280 processors, drinking.



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## PROLOGUE

It's a curious job, that of *Matrix* Fanzine Reviewer. What do readers want from me, I wonder? The answer is, of course, that different people want different things. Newcomers to fandom will want to know what fanzines are and where they can get them, fanzine editors will be looking for people to trade with, and fanzine fans will want in-depth reviews of items they're unfamiliar with. Over the next five issues I shall try to keep all these people happy.

Each issue I'll do several in-depth reviews of fanzines which, for one reason or another, have caught my attention. (If you do not want your fanzine reviewed in depth, please mark it 'DNR' when you send it.) Any opinions expressed will, of course, be my own and your tastes may well differ from mine. Just because a fanzine doesn't go under the critical knife that doesn't mean it's uninteresting. The only way to find out what a fanzine is really like is to read it yourself. I'll also provide a guide to what is around at the moment in the Short Title Catalogue of Current Fanzines. It'll list everything I receive between issues, so not all the fanzines will be generally available, and by no means will it be a complete listing. It will, however, give you some idea where to start looking and then where to look next.

So what is a fanzine? For a start it's not necessarily a serious, critical examination of SF. A fanzine is a written means of communicating ideas to other fans and contains anything which makes the editor want to say, "Hey, listen to *this*!" 'This' can be fascinating or boring trivia, fiction, essays on life, deeply-considered thoughts, impulsive rantings, illustrations (illos), or a hundred and one other things.

If you would like to see some of the fanzines listed try writing to the editor concerned offering postage stamps, to send your fanzine in exchange, a contribution, a letter of comment (loc), or whatever else he might wish for.

## IN DEPTH

So what did I really like this time around? Well, first of all, of course, there's *Abdamp*, the special sex and drugs and rock and roll issue, which also contains musings on the place of apas—amateur publishing groups in which each member sends out his fanzine to, and receives fanzines from, all other members of the group via a central coordinator—in British fandom, behaviour at conventions, etc., etc. I liked *Abdamp* because it's that *zaza avia*, a theme issue that really works. The six outside contributors take the powerful, slick, clichéd images of S&D&R&R, turn them upside-down and shake them to see what falls out. The result is some very thought-provoking writing. As the editor says, "If I'd been the type of person who's always unreservedly enthusiastic about S&D&R&R then this zine would probably have not been worth doing as I'd have picked only favourable articles..." Most people I know have strong feelings about one or more of *Abdamp*'s big three subjects, and a wide spread of opinions, attitudes and lifestyles is represented here. This is a good fanzine to get in order to provoke yourself into thinking about the issues involved; I predict that the next issue's letter column will be a real goodie.

Next, *Idomo 17*, an eclectic gallimaufry of succulent canapés, lightly tossed and served in a spicy sauce by the man with the cuddliest bad taste in the business. *Idomo* is a little bit of everything, and is therefore a fanzine for nibbling, for picking up and opening at random, gasping/giggling/scratching one's head at and putting down again. It's got fiction, it's got poetry, it's got newspaper clippings, it's got Fast Carrots, it's got Studio 54, and it may be the last one you'll see for a long, long time—so get it now, Sunshine! I don't know what *Idomo*'s attraction is for me. Perhaps it's the chance to gawp like a country bumpkin on her first visit to the big city where the life is out on the streets and all sorts of people/styles/ideas rub shoulders. There's a feeling of comradeship about *Idomo*, as Chuck encourages/provokes various writing groups (e.g. fans, 'little magazine' poets) to interact with one another. Some of the results are bound to be damp squibs, but there are plenty of sudden sparkles of insight/imagination/humour. There is something for just about everyone in *Idomo*.

Moving on, we have *Weberkoman's Krevence*. I've always had a soft spot for *WW*, because it was one of the first fanzines I ever saw, and I was absolutely thrilled to bits to get it unsolicited from Australia, when I was all shy and innocent and had just had my first loc published. Gosh! I thought, Fandom is *nice*! *WW* does more than give me a warm feeling that someone out there likes me when it lands on the doormat, though. There are some very emotive pieces of writing in this issue, notably a description by a remarkably well-balanced adult (under the circumstances) of what it was like to be a battered child, and a description of the power games played by a manipulative lover. This is hard, honest writing, not just a shock confessional for the fun of it.

Three successes, so it's time for an interesting failure. *Song To Anything That Moves* is an interestingly looking fanzine. When I first picked it up, I thought, Gosh, here's someone being really original. Appearances can be deceptive. I think the thing I liked least about this fanzine is the general impression I get of N.A. McCabe from it, as someone who both feels he's a victim of unjust, or at least unfriendly and non-understanding circumstances, while simultaneously believing that he's right and the rest of the world is wrong. McCabe plays 'confessions', by dangling a couple of well-baited hooks about his sex life, and then reveals...nothing. The anecdotes remain

superficial anecdotes. Would I like to meet this man for further discussion? Probably not. He'd most likely not think much of me either. Sometimes this happens with fanzines. You can't expect to like everyone you meet, even on paper.

Finally, let's consider *Alex's Restaurant* and *Egregious*, two editor-written personalzines small enough to fit in the same review. If you haven't got these already, you probably won't ever, so it's not much use me talking about their contents, but they both seem perfect examples of why little fanzines are such nice things. How many times, I wonder, have I written a letter to friend X and thought, Gosh, I must tell Y and Z about the woodpeckers we saw last week, as well as X. X's letter has a paragraph and a half of excited description. Y's letter, written several days later, has fewer details and a more muted interest in wildlife. Z's letter, written two weeks later, contains a bare statement of fact: 'Saw some woodpeckers a while ago'. Now if I'd sat down while I was in a letter writing mood and penned an open letter about woodpeckers, duplicated it and sent it to X, Y and Z, wouldn't that be nicer than the bald statement? Yes, it would. Both *Alex's* and *Egregious* are very like the people who wrote them. I like the people, I like the zines. A couple of pages of friendly, everyday gossip are always welcome. No stunning life-developments, not flashily written, just a gentle, low-key method of keeping in touch.

#### SHORT TITLE CATALOGUE OF CURRENT FANZINES

**ABDUMP 4.** From Paul Vincent, 25 Dovedale Ave., Pelsall Walsall, West Midland WS5 4HG. For trade, loc, 50p in stamps, 'offering me cheap second-hand prices on old Frank Zappa or Weather Report albums, plying me with drink, sending articles of anecdotal and/or revelatory nature, telling me I'm wonderful or, if all else fails, adopting a suitably subservient pose and asking me nicely.' 39pp, cover illo, editorial, letter col., outside contributions.

**ALEX'S RESTAURANT 2.** From Alex Stewart, 11A Beverley Rd., Colchester CO3 3NG. For editorial whim only, 6pp, personalzine, fanzine reviews (23 fanzines listed).

**ATU XVIII.** From Trevor Mendham, 53 Towncoat Cres., Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1BP. For trade, contrib., 30p. 29pp, cover illo, editorial, letter column, outside contribution. (Games oriented.)

**AUGURIES 2.** From Nik Morton, 235 West St., Fareham, Hants PO16 0HZ. For contrib., 50p. S. Hants SF Group fictionzine, with illos.

**BUZZ 1.** From Lawrence Dean, 12 Wilmslow Ave., Sharples Bolton BL1 7AX. Editorial whim only, 4pp, personalzine.

**EGREGIOUS.** From Eunice Pearson, 32 Digby Ho., Colletts Grove, Kinshurst, Birmingham B37 6JE. 5pp perzine.

**ELECTRIC VULTURE 2.** From Andy Hobbs, 2 Post Office Yard, Hove, Brighton, BN1 4JL. 13pp personalzine.

**EPILEPTIC CATERPILLAR (aka DON'T GET CAUGHT 5).** From Kevin K. Rattan, 21 The Square, Scorton, Nr Preston, Lancs. For editorial whim (but promise to loc or trade will increase your chances of getting it). 16pp, illos letter column.

**FANTASMAGORIA 7.** From Chris Hughes, 128 Whitley Wood Rd., Reading RG2 6JG. For editorial whim, standing nearby when it's handed out, sending 16p stamp. 14pp personalzine, Seacon report. (Brilliant—Ed.)

**FANZINE FANATIQUE.** From Keith & Rosemary Walker, 6 Vine St., Greaves, Lancaster LA1 4UF. For trade, locs only. 14pp, cover illo, fanzine reviews (42 zines listed), book reviews, Martian newsletter, articles.

**GEGENSCHEN 46.** From Ethel Lindsay, 43 Chapman Parade, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia. 18pp personalzine.

**GROSS ENCOUNTERS 12.** From Alan Dorey, 22 Summerfield Drive, Middleton, Gtr Manchester M24 2WW. For trade, loc. 20pp, cover illo, personalzine.

**IDOM 17: ADMIRAL CONNOR'S HOT STEAMY CONFESSIONS QUARTERLY.** From Chuck Connor, 65 Sildan Ho., Chediston Rd., Wissett, Nr Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF. For trade, contrib., locs, records, tapes (pref DIY), old mags you've finished with, a Johnson's Anti-Joggers Nipple Cream applicator, well greased ping-pong balls on strings, copies of The Artful Wedger, and things that go 'XNIPPI!' when they leap off the tops of wardrobes. 87pp, illos, fanzine reviews, fiction, letter column, poetry, outside contributions.

**THE LATE THAT ISN'T.** From Magnus Eriksson, Sernanders väg 7:241, 5-752 61 Uppsala, Sweden. For trade, 2pp; cunningly disguised request for British fanzines.

**QUARTZ 6.** From Geoff Kemp, 23 Raygill, Wilnecote, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4JY. For 30p/issue, £2.50/10. 12pp, editorial, fiction, illos, fanzine reviews, games.

**THE SNAIL'S COUNTRYDOWN AND THE RAT'S REVENGE.** From Christina Lake, 20A Chatsworth Parade, Queensway, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1DF (but watch out for change of address in near future). For trade. 29pp personalzine, fanzine reviews, cover illo.

**SODD'S LORE 4 with LITTLE BROWN JOB O.** From Ken Brown, 351 Ditchling Rd., Brighton BN1 6JJ. 31pp+7pp, group zine, illos, outside contributions, letter column.

**SONG TO ANYTHING THAT MOVES.** From W.A. McCabe, 53 Wernham St., Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 9SP. 20pp, personal zine, interesting format.

**FOUNDING THE RITUAL ECHO 2.** From Steve Green, 11 Fox Green Cres., Acocys Green, Birmingham B27 7SD. For trade, contrib. 20pp, illos, editorial, letter column, outside contributions.

**STAR CADETS vs THE SLIME THING (aka FOR PARANOIDS ONLY 2).** From Nigel Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, E. Garforth Leeds LS25 2LG. For weddings, engagements, barmitsvahs, funerals, trade, locs, woks, clocks, masonic signals, first editions of *Ulysses*, conspiracy theories, video nasties. 20pp, cover illo, illos, letter column, fanzine reviews (careful!).

**WALLBANGER 9.** From Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Rd., Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3QH. For trade, loc, contrib. 23pp, illos, outside contributions, letter column. On the lookout for illustrators.

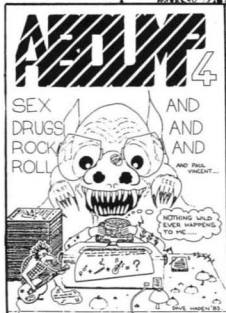
**WEBERWOMAN'S WRENGE 3 no.5.** From Jean Weber, PO Box 42, Lyneham ACT 2602, Australia. 16pp, cover illo, illos, outside contributions, book reviews, letters.

#### WeberWoman's Wrevenge

March 1984  
Volume 3,  
Number 5

stierhood  
strength

Shut 'em  
for her to say  
she's 7ft tall



## MEDIA REVIEW



## Film

### INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

Reviewed by Colin Greenland

Producers: George Lucas, Frank Marshall, Kathleen Kennedy

Director: Steven Spielberg

Screenplay: Willard Huyck, Gloria Katz

If you didn't like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* you won't want to know about this sequel. If you did, you won't want to know about the plot (headlong nonsense), or the style (Saturday matinee serial), or the characterization (larger than life). What you will want to know is, is it as good? And the answer is no. Or, to be more accurate, yes, but only sometimes. The rest of the time, and as a whole, it's rotten.

The good bits are quite as good—fast, furious, frightening, funny—as anything in *Raiders*. The first sequence, with Indiana Jones as a mock Bogart/Connelly in shining white d.j. (!) having trouble with double-dealing Orientals, a poisoned cocktail, a slippery diamond and a dance floor full of ice cubes and balloons, will have you gasping, wincing and giggling like an eight-year-old, which is exactly the point, of course. Lucas and Spielberg are intent on seducing you by reducing you back to the level of wide-eyed rapture, the response of the child they claim remains in all of us grown-ups. Even so, the jokes are there, to give the adult intelligence something to grin slyly over—for example, the fact that Jones makes his first appearance looking so dapper, that the nightclub is called *Obi Wan*, that when Jones and partner finally do plunge out of the window and escape, they hurtle through not one canopy but three or four. We know we are being kidded. L&S are saying: Remember this stunt? Now triple it. Look how far we can go and still hold this thing together. Later Jones and Sidekick (we'll get to him) are stuck in the old locked room with descending ceiling—twice. Plus spikes, plus more nasty insects than Rentokil would even give you a quote for. Later still, there's what bids fair to be the ultimate rope bridge sequence. Uh-oh, they're stuck in the middle of the rope bridge over the chasm! They'll have to cut the bridge and swing on it as it goes! And they'll have to do it now! But first—and then—The number of little routines they manage to

throw in, without breaking the tension, is one of the most accomplished pieces of audience-teasing I've ever seen.

Add a brisk escape from a plane crashing into the Himalayas with no fuel and a lot of chickens, and that's the good bits, more or less. What makes the rest so bad is the fact that the eight-year-old has grown up, and so has the cinema, and so has our understanding of how the world outside the auditorium actually works, whether we're eighteen or thirty-eight. There's no such thing as innocent fun under these conditions, only pretence. *Raiders* was so preposterous you knew it was all pretend. Nobody was taking it seriously. Unfortunately, the enormous success of *Raiders* made it a serious challenge: follow that. L&S & Co. did. They had to follow it, and top it; they took it all one stage further and ended up taking it very seriously indeed. There's a sequence of images that illustrates the fatal step very clearly. In *Raiders* it was tacitly established that Indiana Jones never loses his hat, no matter what. So in *Temple* that motif had to be maintained, and varied, if it wasn't to become redundant. So: when Jones finds the secret passage leading into the caves below the palace, he has to do a quick change from eminent archaeologist to rugged adventurer. He puts his hat on, and enters the tunnel. The hat signals danger, action, thrills. Then comes the scene in the room with the sinking ceiling, and a wonderful shot as he escapes at the last second, sliding out under the rock door as it slams down: he reaches back inside and whisks his hat out too. The hat signals comedy, a character quirk in the jaws of destruction. Later, after the increasingly vicious punch-up in the increasingly tedious Temple of Doom, the grand set-piece that replaces all the frantic chasing around that kept *Raiders* continually refreshing, Jones's sidekick—Oh yes, the sidekick; a kiddy sidekick; a cute Chinese kiddy sidekick called Short Round, idolizes Indiana Jones and emulates his every gesture. See it and weep. Well, anyway, Short Round wears a baseball cap, right, and it's come off in the fight or been taken away when he was captured or whatever, and after all the rough-and-tumble Jones hands it back to him. And Short Round hands Jones back his hat. His hat. With trembling hands and reverent close-ups worthy of John Boorman doing the Holy Grail. The hat signals majesty, power, the restoration of right; or, as Superman would put it, Truth, Justice and the American Way. But this scene in *Temple* isn't funny. If it had been funny it might have worked. Instead, Spielberg forgot to put his tongue in his cheek. He was taking it seriously.

And then you can't help but notice what he's taking seriously. All the non-white characters in the film are wicked, or stupid, or feeble. They worship the devil and eat vile foods like monkey brains, served in the heads of dead monkeys. They have to be saved or destroyed by the great white avenger, accompanied by his surrogate son and wife. Yes, wife. Karen Allen as Marion Ravenwood was a match for Indiana Jones in *Raiders*: a modern heroine for audiences who have grown up to learn, and want their children to learn, that women are as capable as men. Karen Allen is not in *Temple*. Instead we are offered Kate Capshaw as Willie Scott, a dumb blonde who screams and complains, and who we are encouraged to laugh at because she climbs on an elephant the wrong way round. And walks away from her Man in a fit of pique, until he reaches out his bullwhip and lashes her back to his side. She comes, with an adoring smile. John Norman couldn't have put it more succinctly.

*Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* is a big disappointment, and a rotten, rotten film. At the same time, it's a sobering reminder that fantasy, any fantasy, has to be handled with intelligence and moral care. Otherwise it goes bad.

## Play

### THE TRANSMIGRATION OF TIMOTHY ARCHER

Reviewed by Judith Hanna

(From the novel by Philip K. Dick, dramatized by Geoff Ryman, performed Sunday 27 May at Tynescon II: the Mexican, with the permission of Dick's literary executors)

A simply staged play is like a book in that it leaves much for the imagination to fill in. The book provides a set of directions from which the reader constructs a shadowplay. However vague and shadowy that mental imagery may be, we all know from watching films made from books we've read just how immediately and strongly our "No, no, that's not right, they've got it all wrong" response jumps up. Two factors set it off—first, mismatching of characters and back-grounds that appear on the screen with those our heads have made for us; second, a script that misrepresents the story we found in the book. These same two factors do lie in wait between audience and play, and it's to Geoff Ryman's credit, as playwright and director, that the audience of Dick readers emerged as enthusiastic about both the presentation and the script as those who had not read the novel.

Minimalism rules OK, Occam's Razor shaves fine. The simplest solution is the most effective, once found so obvious it becomes retrospectively inevitable. How else construct a script but by picking up Dick's own words, lifting key scenes from Dick's novel? Skilled editing made the script, selecting which scenes were essential, knowing where to make the cuts. What material Geoff added blended perfectly into the novel. And what other visual setting could the words need but 4 chairs and a table for the characters to sit around and talk on a plain stage. We're all skilled readers and viewers who know the conventions of scene-shifting without needing them spelt out for us. Dick's own words, and the background left blank for the imagination to fill in—thus far, fidelity to the book.

But there's one respect in which a play cannot simply conform to what the author dictated, and so must risk disjunction. Solid and real people have to be chosen as actors and the script given over to them for delivery. It's rare, perhaps impossible, for any real person to match the shadow imagination has abstracted from black marks on the pages of a book. The challenge each performer faces is to convince us, by how they speak their lines, listen, move, are still, and speak again, that they are the person Dick was writing about and that it was our imagination that had got it wrong. One hell of a job, that.

The play, as much as the book, is carried by Angel Archer who is constantly on stage, either as narrator or interacting with the other characters; this gave Kim Campbell a marathon role, and at times it was hard to tell whether the exhaustion she showed was Angel's worldweariness or simply fatigue. Her low-key performance threw into high relief the intenser and more mannered personations of Pete Gilligan as the charismatic and sophisticated Bishop Timothy Archer and Meg Kincaid as the perfectionist, neurotic and self-destructive Kirsten. The contrast worked well. Geoff Ryman played almost everyone else, notably Kirsten's schizophrenic son Bill. Convincing performances all around.

The play was unquestionably the highlight of the Mexican programme, and it's to be hoped that those who saw it will not forget it when time for the BSFA award nominations comes around again. For those who weren't there, let's hope that Dick's estate will give permission for it to be performed again in the near future.

## Videos

Reviewed by Colin Bird

### BRAINSTORM Directed by Douglas Trumbull

The special effects in *Brainstorm*, Trumbull's first film as director for twelve years, compare favourably with his previous work in such classics as 2001, *Close Encounters*, *Blade Runner*, but, here, tend to dwarf the other aspects of the film.

Christopher Walker and Louise Fletcher play two scientists who invent and perfect a device to record and play back peoples' experiences, providing a full sensorial input. In a key scene Fletcher suffers a fatal heart-attack but manages to record her demise. Walker, fascinated with the idea that her experience of an after-life may be on the tape, attempts to view it despite the project being disbanded by the government.

In spite of the lacklustre narrative, Trumbull tackles the dichotomy between technology and theology with flair and imagination. Sensibly, the special effects leave the eschatological questions unanswered. *Brainstorm* offers enough intellectual stimulation and stunning special effects work to warrant a viewing by any SF film fan.

### THE TWILIGHT ZONE Directed by John Landis, Steven Spielberg, Joe Dante & George Miller

While the assemblage of directorial talent is awesome, the film was made in some haste and lacks the forethought the idea deserved. It is an anthology movie with each director tackling a twenty minute story in the style of the TV series.

Landis presents a tale of uncharacteristic dourness concerning the passing of a bigot through several worlds in which he becomes the victimized minority, Jew in Nazi occupied Europe, Gook in Vietnam, etc.. The story is not convincing and a sad epitaph to Vic Morrow who died while filming.

Spielberg's segment has come under heavy critical fire as a self-indulgent manifestation of his alleged childish sentimentality. It is certainly his least successful work but hardly as bad as some comments implied.

Dante takes a claustrophobic tale of a child blessed with amazing psionic powers who torments his family. Rob Bottin's excellent effects make the cartoon characters remarkable to watch as the boy makes them appear in real life. Thoroughly entertaining.

George Miller's segment is an excellent example of how to make use of the limited time span in this format. John Lithgow plays a neurotic airline passenger with adroitness, while the special effects crew provides an evil-looking creature which Lithgow spots sabotaging the plane's engine.

Overall the film is variable, but each story is better than the last and Miller's finale updates the spirit of the TV series in fine style. The delightful wraparound segment by Landis is well worth the price alone.

### METALSTORM Directed by Charles Band

A mix of magic, mysticism and SF which is, at best, uncomfortable, at worst, ridiculous; the whole plot distorted by the maker's desire to cram in as many cut rate effects as possible. An all-purpose comic-book hero races across a desolate wasteland in his converted Land Rover, tangling with a ceaseless string of bad-guys in true Mad Max style, ridding the world of the evil, etc.. Some of the action is well staged but most is yawn inducing. The only thing that sets it apart from the growing pile of Mad Max clones is the frequent use of optical effects to liven things up.

Initially made to cash in on the 3-D boom, *Metalstorm* is a limp offering and not worth ninety minutes of your time.



## Comics



Comic strips are frequently criticised for their 2-dimensional plots and characters. Fortunately, this is not always the case, and when it is, it is more often than not compensated for by the imagery portrayed. A classic example is the Dan Dare strip as it appeared in the original *Eagle* comic of the 1960s and '70s. The tales had basic, even unimaginative, plots but the presentation guaranteed the pilot of the future immortality in the hearts of his generation.

What happened to that great British comic hero? Where is he now? The answer is simple: Dan spent most of the '70s frozen in deep space to be revived by *2000AD* and surgically altered to survive in the harsher comic world that had since evolved. The change of image was inevitable and it is to *2000AD*'s credit that they had the sensitivity to realise too many years had passed in the real world for him to reappear unchanged. Further, they knew it would be difficult to reproduce the original style—not due to lack of skill, but because of supra-editorial constraints. (Even the printers petitioned IPC to provide better quality paper to sustain more delicate artwork.) Dare was not to dwell long in *2000AD*, but in IPC's 1982 re-launched *Eagle* his spirit lived on. Here, the new Dare strip was to feature a supposed descendant of the original who also happened to be an astronaut. The strip ignored *2000AD* history and tried, but failed dismally, to recapture the style of the original. As for the new *Eagle* itself, unlike its namesake, it was not a cut above its peers.

The 70s saw SF taking a lower profile in the up-market British comics and a wealth of new talent appearing in the semi-underground, so-called 'adult' comics. Although the quality of their artwork was highly variable, they contained stories with more depth to them. *Near Myths* was one such; its lead strip was *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* by Bryan

Talbot (who also created the psychedelic 'Brainstorm' epic). The strip, featuring an ultra-stylish agent who flitted from one parallel Earth to another in his bid to save reality from the evil WOLTAN organisation represented the cream of the semi-underground comic world.

Hard SF fans were to find the '70s a lean time, but one strip did provide them with a space-going protagonist and all the Clarkean hardware a devices freak could wish for: Jeff Hawke. Although Sydney Jordan's strip appeared in the *Daily Express* for a number of years, it successfully mirrored much of the hard SF dealt with at that time by the genre's literary dimension. It was unfortunate that, editorially unappreciated, Hawke lost his national platform when the *Express* went tabloid. (Jordan now has an SF strip in one of Glasgow's papers; at least that light still burns.)

Today, much of Britain's SF comic talent is associated with *2000AD*. Artists Bryan Talbot, Brian Bolland and Pat Mills, and story-board writers Alan Grant and John Wagner have been drawn to *2000AD* where, battling with the harsh, restrictive IPC (alias Tharg) they turn out an imaginative comic. *2000AD* is worthy of adult subscription and gets it, despite IPC targeting it at 12 year olds. It features the award-winning Judge Dredd, a top-notch cop of Mega-city One whose perps (criminals) are all too aware that it is "better to be dead than Dredd". It's said someone once tried to cash in on JD's deserved success by selling Dredd goods. This being slightly illegal, the guy was hauled up in court where the judge apparently said "I am the law and you had better believe it!".

Another *2000AD* strip is Skizz. It came out after *ET* and was clearly inspired by the film, but unlike that shallow (albeit colourful) feature, Skizz was tasteful and had plenty to say. A brilliant one-off epic, it showed ET up as a pissed teddy bear. Harry Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* has appeared a couple of times, demonstrating the artists' ability not only to parody film, but also to present a novel in comic format. Bearing in mind the constraints imposed by a change of media and the need for overall harmony within the comic, Harry Harrison need not be displeased with the outcome.

Many of its strips are semi-regular and of variable quality. This may dissuade the not-so-dedicated from including it in their collection. But not to worry: some of the better strips have been printed and bound into giant-sized paperbacks by Titan Books (see below).

*2000AD* is IPC's best selling comic publication and provides its illustrators with their bread and butter. Yet, because of editorial constraints, some of its artists have sought a more 'creative' outlet for their talents. Black and white and costing about half as much again page for page, *Warrior*, targeted at a more

**Jeff Hawke**  
by SYDNEY JORDAN





Brainstorm—a psychedelic epic.

mature readership, is worth the extra pennies and has a small but firm following. Nonetheless, with many of its contributors earning their keep elsewhere, it is not nearly as good as it could be.

*Warrior* and those of its ilk do have a market, and so a certain economic viability, but they have been shunned by the giant publishing corporations who could provide them with the sound backing needed to turn viability into success. But then again, any such comic in the hands of a publishing giant would undoubtedly lose the creative environment its contributors originally sought. Such backers are only interested in fast, BIG profits. One is therefore drawn to the conclusion that the split between the mass-market and the semi-underground British comic will continue for some time; there will be no middle-ground, no UK equivalent of *Heavy Metal*.

\* \* \*

Compleatists who wish to include some comics in their SF collection may find the following of interest

*The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*—Bryan Talbot—Never Editions, £2.95. Vol.1 out only. A reprint of Arkwright's *Near Myths* adventures. Good printing but poor binding. Intro. by Moorcock. (A collectors item.)

*Judge Dredd* from Titan Books, about £4. There are others in the series and yet to come is Jeff Hawke.

*Dan Dare 'Man from Nowhere Trilogy'*—from Dragons Dream, £4.95. Three part reprint of the last original *Eagle* adventure.

## Media news

JOHN LANDIS, director of *Twilight Zone* has, according to a recent issue of *Rolling Stone*, been acquitted of a charge of manslaughter following the deaths on set of actor Vic Morrow and two Vietnamese children. Although Landis was clearly not responsible for the deaths, which happened during shooting of the final scene of his section of the film, the article highlights some disturbing aspects of the background to that scene. Recommended reading. —AD

DESPITE KNOCKABOUT COMICS winning their initial court battle over the impounding of their comics and books for 'censorship' reasons, it seems retailers are becoming increasingly edgy about what they sell. In the north-west, video shops are circulating an unofficial list of non-approved films, many of which have been on the market for years and have been granted a certificate by the British Board of Censors. Most have had a theatrical release and some, such as *The Evil Dead* have been reviewed on TV. —AD

## TV

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

Directed by George Roy Hill.  
Screenplay by Stephen Geller

Screened 15 June, BBC1

Reviewed by Simon Ings

*Slaughterhouse-Five* is a faithful, intelligent film adaptation of Vonnegut's book of the same name. To some extent Geller and Hill were aided in their efforts by Vonnegut himself who describes in his book the best manner in which the story may be told:

"...each clump (of narrative) is a brief urgent message - describing a situation, a scene. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep." Vonnegut himself achieved that ideal, using the gentle sadness of his narrator's personality to fuse the jumbled out-of-sequence life of Billy Pilgrim into a satisfying whole.

The film, for all its range, cannot achieve the distancing necessary for it to exactly mirror Vonnegut's quiet melancholia. Rather, it attempts to balance the book's fatalistic narrative style with more conventional drama. For example: Geller's script, while it relies strongly on Vonnegut's original dialogue, deals in far greater depth with the book's other characters—notably Billy's fellow POWs Lazzaro and Derby. Unfortunately, the film's greater dramatic impact somewhat undercuts Vonnegut's fatalistic, utterly undramatic philosophy. On a more straightforward level, however, Hill's film succeeds in illuminating and interpreting its kaleidoscopic original. Producer Paul Monash brings sympathy and imagination in equal measure to his visualisation of Billy's disordered world and Michael Sacks is admirably cast as the gentle, awkward, childlike Billy Pilgrim.

A commendably ambitious adaptation of a fine book.



STAR TREK & DR WHO: the former is back the latter has a new format. The BBC, desperate to increase their early evening viewing figures after the recent *Sixty Minutes* debacle, have started showing *Star Trek* again. A recent issue of the *Radio Times* states that the whole series will be shown throughout in chronological order, excepting, of course, those unspeakably depraved episodes 'Empath', 'Plato's Stepchildren', 'Whom Gods Destroy' and 'Miri'. Next season's *Dr Who*, meanwhile, is to be shown in 45 minute episodes once a week. This, in response to the accidental showing of one story in this fashion last season. BBC Audience Research proved conclusively this is how the man in the street likes his dose of the Doctor. —AD, CH & KO

## BOOKS & WRITERS

1984 NEBULA AWARD WINNERS: Novel: *Startide Rising*, David Brin; Novella: 'Hardfought' by Greg Bear (IASFM); Novelette: 'Blood Music' by Greg Bear (Analog); Short story: 'The Peacemaker' by Gardner Dozy (IASFM); Grand Master Nebula Award For Writing Lots of Books Not Good Enough to Win Any Other Award: Andre Norton. —CH

J.G. BALLARD'S NEW NOVEL, *Empire of the Sun*, will be published in a limited edition by Gollancz on 12 Sept. It isn't SF, but a novel based on his extraordinary experiences in Japanese-occupied Shanghai during World War II. Only 100 copies, signed by the author, in special binding and slipcase, will be available; price £40. Nearly two-thirds are sold already, but I will try to reserve a few for BSFA members who may wish to get a copy. Send a cheque, payable to Gollancz Services Ltd, to me (Malcolm Edwards), at Victor Gollancz Ltd, 14 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8BQ. We will supply the book post-free. —MJE

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM: A History of the World 2000-3000AD is the mighty non-fiction epic from Brian Stableford and David Langford. The former is convinced that the future mostly consists of genetic engineering and interesting sociological developments; the latter, unable to write at such voluminous length, insists that the future is all physics and hard stuff like that. Both are moderately chuffed by hardback sales to Alfred Knopf (USA) and Sidgwick & Jackson (UK), and are looking forward to an exhilarating session in which the packagers Shuckburgh Reynolds Ltd demand a complete rewrite. Meanwhile, the sex scenes are being offered for pre-publication in Focus. —DRL

## Obituaries

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER (1912-1984) died on 6 June following a heart attack two days before. He was born in Aldershot, Hampshire, and served most of his life in the British, Australian and New Zealand merchant navies; long an Australian citizen, he became that country's "Dean of SF". His first story was "This Means War" (*Astounding* 1944) and his most famous the novelette "Giant Killer" (*Astounding* 1945). Of his more than thirty books and collections the best known are the Rim Worlds sequence starring Captain Grimes, an effective translation into space of C.S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower. Chandler won several Ditmar awards in Australia, where—as in the USA—he was a popular figure in SF and fanzines; received other awards in Japan; and was the principal Guest of Honour at Chicon IV, the 1982 World SF Convention held in Chicago.

—Dave Langford

CHARLES G. FINNEY (1904-1984) never fully recovered from a 1972 stroke and died on 16 April. His first book was the offbeat fantasy *The Circus of Dr Lao* (1935), in which magic and seedy mythology have startling effects on a staid town in Arizona, the state where Finney lived from 1935 until his death. This novel was an international bestseller, was translated into several languages, influenced Ray Bradbury, and became the somewhat unsatisfactory George Pal film *The Seven Faces of Dr Lao* (1963). Finney's US army service in Tientsin (1927-9) is also reflected in his lighter but still witty oriental fantasies *The Unholy City* (1938) and *The Magician out of Manchuria* (1968). But his lasting fame rests on *The Circus of Dr Lao*.

—Dave Langford

MODERN VISIONARY FICTION—A WRITING APPROACH is the title of Chris Priest's creative writing course at Maryland College, Woburn, Milton Keynes, on 5-7 Oct. "This course will approach the writing of one of the most intriguing strands of modern fiction: the visionary or fantastic. Primarily a writing course, in which participants will be invited to bring examples of their work, if they wish, it will include examination of the work of such writers as Ballard, Dick, Borges, Kosinski, Garcia Marquez, Thomas, Carter, Fowles, Vonnegut and others," says the official press release. "Excuse for a piss-up...in a big country house miles and miles from rural downtown Milton Keynes," says the unofficial Chris Priest. The course is supported by the Eastern Arts Association and costs around £40 (meals and accommodation included). For further details contact Alex Boyd, Vice Principal, Maryland College, Woburn, Milton Keynes MK17 9JD. For general information about other EAA run courses this year write to Laurence Staig, Literature Officer, EAA, 8/9 Bridge St, Cambridge CB2 1UA. —CH

CHRIS'S NEW NOVEL *The Glamour* will be published by Cape on 18 Oct and he urges everyone to panic-buy it as soon as it hits the shelf (perhaps in the hope this will confuse the publishing houses so much they'll forget to correct the typographical error in the last cheque they sent him). Chris reports: "For the last few months I've been working as a script consultant for a new American TV science fiction series, the title of which I do not utter even in my sleep. I am thoroughly ashamed of myself, and only did it for the money. It has been an illuminating experience, and I now know at first hand exactly why American TV is a load of shit. My contract is up this week, and all the riches of the mystic Orient would not persuade me to renew. I hope the series flops." So, yet another mystery for Priest completists to unravel in years to come. Still unknown, of course, is the title of Chris' Falklands hack novel featuring 'Blood and Guts' Nicholas in a cameo role. —CH

INTERZONE 9, due out this autumn, is set to be an all-star issue. Already lined up are Aldiss, Ballard, Disch, M. John Harrison, and Kilworth. Current plans include a re-designed front cover and logo for greater visual impact. Subscriptions: £5 for 4 from Interzone, 124 Osborne Rd, Brighton BN1 6LU. —AD

"FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION ARE NO LONGER SPECIALIST AREAS OF FREAKISH INTEREST" proclaims a recent Penguin publicity flyer. "Penguin have uncovered and captured this large market with Puffin's *Fighting Fantasy* series—with sales of over a million copies and no fewer than four titles in the bestseller lists." Now Penguin are to move strongly into the broader market with a wide variety of titles, ranging from hard core SF to strong adventure fantasy. *Fighting Fantasy* showed us where the market was and taught us how to reach it—now we are ready to exploit it—JOIN US IN A WIDER, MORE PROFITABLE UNIVERSE. The "hard core" portion of the "wide variety of titles" consists of John Christopher's 1967 *Tripods* trilogy (described as a "brilliant, near future based SF trilogy, serialized in the Dr Who spot BBC1"), Keith Roberts' 1968 *Palimpsest* (Oct), *Broken Symmetries* by Paul Preuss (Nov: "...a scientist's lust for the Nobel Prize leads to the isolation of a sub-atomic particle. The hero, a theorist...tries, but fails to avert disaster—there is a vast explosion but the hero is spared. The book breaks new SF ground..."), Sabheragen and Zelazny's *Cotile* (Dec: "Zany, modern SF: the hero can communicate telepathically with computers..."), Keith Roberts again with a reissue of his 1966 novel *The Paries* (Jan 1985), Rudy Rucker's *Software*, (Feb: "Kitsch and funny, light-hearted and warped"), James P Hogan's *The Code of the Lifemaker* (Mar), and Bruce Stirling's *The Artificial Kid* (Apr: "The clone of an Ancient with insufficient memory capacity to take in

all his previous self...keeps himself pre-pubescent with drugs and revels in his video street-fighting fame. He's forced to flee from what is thought to be the government (which turns out to be no more than the consciousness of the planet) with the revived old man who founded the colony, [but he] has had no access to his drugs and is therefore mature and in love. SF on a large scale...). On the fighting fantasy side of things we have *The Seven Serpents* (out now) and *The Crown of Kings* (Oct) by Steve Jackson; *Tales From the Vulgar Unicorn*, the sequel to Robert Asprin's *Thieves' World* anthology; and last, and most definitely least, Penguin's "super illustrated fighting fantasy magazine" — *Warlock: The Fighting Fantasy Magazine* — created by those kings of fighting fantasy, Ian Livingstone, and Steve Jackson. A regular quarterly blend of fantasy, adventure, features, competitions and prizes to be won!" Available now, unfortunately. —CH

Not content with cluttering up the world with effing FF, Penguin have also started their own fanzine called *Zone*. Well, fanzine's not quite the word for it, 'glossy advertising puff' would be a better term. The first issue includes a truly appalling article by 'Lemmy' of the heavy metal band Motorhead. Then, of course, there is the exciting competition: included is an awful monster drawing and you are asked to come up with a name that fits the image, together with three special powers that makes the monster an even more terrifying opponent to meet in a fantasy labyrinth. Wow! it proclaims itself to be the "First Bulletin from Another Dimension". I guess that other dimension must be a rubbish tip. —AD

WHAT MICRO? MAGAZINE appalled that, despite "Science fiction's enormous popularity...very few writers seem to pay much attention to the micro itself", have decided to start their own SF microcomputer short story competition. First prize will be a Sinclair Spectrum and £50 of software plus possible publication in the magazine (presumably at their normal rates of payment: £60-80/1000 words). Entries must be SF, not more than 3000 words in length, and must feature a microcomputer as the central character. Boss of *HM?* and competition judge is one Matt Nicholson, a man of dubious academic record who's not overly keen on "Game over—insert another coin" endings. Closing date: 1 September 1984. Send your entries to 1984 Short Story Competition, *What Micro?* VNU Business Publications BV, 62 Oxford St, London W1. —CH

The letter columns of PRIVATE EYE have been swollen of late with letters refuting or confirming the existence of frequent Matrix contributor, multiple-Hugo nominee, and author of some books, David Langford. It all started with an innocent attempt to plug his own *An Account of a Meeting With Devisans of The Phoenix on a Sunday Night and Other Half-Baked, Kooky Ideas I Had While Working at AWRE, 1871*, but it soon became apparent Dave had bitten off more than he could chew. Even before he'd had a chance to plug *The Rest of the Half-Baked Ideas I Had While Working at the Leaky AWRE, 1884* the multiple split-personalities of editor Paul Barnett were winging in missives to *Eye* simultaneously denying and confirming Dave's existence, and revealing sordid details about the phantasm such as how Dave had once offered a certain Ede Devereux 50p to be allowed to place his hand on her thigh. Although the philosophical questions raised by *Eye* correspondents were never satisfactorily answered, I can now reveal that I spoke to Dave *only last night* shortly after he had lost his seventh successive game of bar-billiards to me and he told me to "F072-off!" in a very realistic manner. Dave Langford is 39. —CH

## THE MEMBERS BITE BACK



## New-look Matrix

\*\*\*Several correspondents commented on the new-look Matrix 53. Here, in some cases totally out of context, is what they had to say:

Jack D. Stephen: "I liked it...it seemed so much more 'newy'."

Sue Thomason: "I liked it...but isn't it a pain to layout?"

Dorothy Davies: "Liked having something to read straight off."

Stephen O'Kane: "I preferred it."

Roger Waddington: "Here's one vote for its continuation...the smarter, professional look is just the sort of image we need for the Association."

David K. Smith: "When I first picked up the issue, I thought the cover was missing from my copy. However once I realized that was how it was meant to be, I decided I quite liked it."

Mark Greener: "A change is as good as a rest. I just hope that, if this format becomes editorial policy, the art content does not suffer as a result."

Ken Lake: "A gem! Yes, corny skiffy covers ARE unnecessary, Virginia."

Simon D. Ings: "Makes the thing look terribly official and presentable and Guardianish from the outside, of course, but unless there's a consistent change in layout the whole effort seems half-hearted and decidedly amateur."

## BSFA Awards

Jack D. Stephen  
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Glenrothes, Fife  
Scotland KY6 2SQ

I agree that the BSFA awards novel category tends to favour hardbacks over paperbacks and that this needs looking at. I certainly cannot afford hardbacks, and my local library is not likely to stock the more out-of-the-way nominations (such as John Crowley last year). But a more serious deficiency in the system is that, by the time I have received the actual ballot form, it is too late to order any books not read already from the library in time to read them before having to send off the ballot. It would be difficult for me to read all the nominated novels in the short time available even if I already had copies. (Anyone not subscribing to *Interzone* would also have had a problem in the short category this year.) A system of stratification into hardbacks and paperbacks would have the added benefit of serving notice of books to read with especial care when eventually they do come out in paperback.

Sue Thomason  
9 Friars Lane  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria LA13 9NP.

I'm in complete agreement with the Harveys' comments on the BSFA award. It would seem sensible to have some sort of award for paperbacks-of-hard-

backs, as they're what most SF readers actually read/buy. As for library access to hardbacks, there is not only the problem of waiting lists, but the fact that many libraries buy only from library suppliers means that many new publications are missed. My library does not yet possess *Heretics of Dune*, *Hellionia Spring*, *Little, Big*, *Golden Witchbreed* or *Lanark*, to name but a few of the titles I've asked for recently.

\*\*\*Both David R. Smith and Roger Waddington made similar points.

Peter Cohen  
2 Belgravia Road  
North End  
Portsmouth.

First, Joseph seems far too content with the BSFA awards. This may be because they are going to the sort of works of which he approves; but his pat response

to my queries about the award has failed to convert me. He should face the fact that the number of votes cast make the ballot for the European Parliament seem heavy.

Is Joseph happy with an award which has so little support that no more than 59 BSFA members thought it worth the cost of a second class stamp and no more than 61 Seacon members thought it merited their leaving the bar? His call to the membership to choose their nominees makes it clear that he is not satisfied. So why not take the opportunity to change the novel qualification so that more members might have read the books before voting time comes round?

The other comment I made on the BSFA Awards at the AGM was that they showed signs of being far too wound up with the BSFA hierarchy. At the same time as we were sent the ballot paper, we were also sent a note informing us that an *Interzone* editor was seeking re-election as BSFA Chairman and that the author of the (*Interzone*-published) eventual winner of the short story award was seeking re-election to the Council. This same author is the SF Editor for the publishers of the winning novel. No doubt these weird and wonderful coincidences could be accounted for by the fact that very few people are prepared to put much effort into any aspect of SF other than reading and writing, but the views of the elite on what constitutes a good short story bear as little resemblance to the views of the membership or the general SF readership, as the prejudices of the Cabinet bear to those of the people of this country.

Who needs the award anyway? It is patently clear that the world's greatest SF novels do not come out at convenient one year intervals. So, why should we dole out these awards when last year's runner-up may be better than this year's winner? Surely the apathy of those eligible to vote shows that the only result which reflects their views is NO AWARD. If Joseph sends me the form, I shall cast my votes for next year, now.

## Fan fiction

Bernard Smith  
8 Wansford Walk  
Thorplands Brook  
Northampton NN3 4YF

With regard to the question of whether or not the BSFA should reproduce a fiction magazine: if, by the term "proper" author, Graham Smith (M53) means

one who accepts money for his/her efforts, then I suppose we must include under that heading the purveyors of child pornography, Mills & Boon, Dr Spock vs Godzilla, Noddy, etc., and all the other literary gems that find their way onto the bookshelves. They are

paid, they are published, and that, in his view, makes them "proper". Has it ever entered his head that the difference between a good and bad author is in the quality of the work they produce? Would it be too much for him to comprehend if I told him that there are authors around who do not aspire to become tax exiles through their work, but write because they love the language, original ideas and sharing a vision with someone else? As co-editor of a fiction magazine, I come across people like this all the time. They write with consummate skill, and have too much respect for language and craft to produce the sort of commercial pulp required for them to be regarded as "proper" by Graham Smith.

Terry Pyle seems to think that Orbiter is the ultimate aspiration for all amateur SF writers. That's fine, as long as you don't want more than five or so people to see your work and are happy to remain confined in a small, tight-knit circle. He ignores the fact that, given time, the members of that circle will inevitably be able to predict the style and content of the work produced. They will also, no doubt, get to know each other and even predict the reaction to criticism. There are some writers who would prefer to risk opening their work up to criticism from the wider public, strangers who are not frightened of stepping on a few toes. Apart from that, with all these Orbiters and the subsequent 'in depth analysis', isn't it about time we saw some of the results?

It is nothing short of rank hypocrisy to continually whine that 'no fiction worth printing' is ever sent to the BSFA. To produce anything readable requires a lot of time, patience, effort and—in many cases—soul baring. Who in hell is going to take the time and trouble to produce decent work when they know full well that the organisation to which they belong clings to a blind form of dogma that regards amateur writers with contempt? To get anyone to produce anything of worth, it is necessary to create an environment that will help feed that process. Since joining the BSFA one year ago, the only environment I have been aware of is one which seems bent on fostering personal vendettas and creating an arena for negative attitudes and political in-fighting by a privileged cliqué who seem to enjoy priority in the letter columns to the exclusion of everyone and anything.

When I helped to start off Cassandra Anthology, it was done as a deliberate attempt to create the atmosphere wherein a prospective writer could put forward work without the fear of derision, because the organisation was run by people who are more interested in creating new ideas than hot air. The result has been, in twelve months, the production of four anthologies of prose, poetry and artwork and enough material to take us through to the end of this year. Subscribers and membership are growing steadily, a weekend workshop is being held in August, the anthology has had good reviews everywhere and is selling well in all the retail outlets we have managed to find. Feedback from the readership has shown that people are, in all, surprised at the standard of an 'amateur fiction magazine' and enjoy reading the contents (yes—enjoy. That may be a dirty word for the pseudos, but not for us normals). And where do most of these authors come from who can fill the pages of an amateur SF magazine that can sell out in the West End? Yes, you guessed it. The BSFA. And where does that put the author of the remarks splattered all over the letter pages of M53 who spoke of 'the validity of this "apparent need"... unlikely to be enough to fill a fanzine'? Yes, you've probably guessed that too.

Margaret Hall  
5 Maes yr Odyn  
Dolgellau  
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The first steps in writing can be helped and encouraged by articles in Focus and Orbiter workshops, but there comes a stage when they are no longer enough, and constant solitary writing begins to seem futile, like cooking dinners that no one eats. Though I'm still getting a lot out of Orbiter and have certainly not outgrown it (the group grows and develops as an entity, after all, so that now all the members of our group are considerably better writers than when we were first thrown together), I'm beginning to feel that if I'm ever going to have work published and get money for it, then I ought to be taking the next step on the road to being a "proper" author. But where do I go from here? Where is the professional magazine to which I can submit my stories? (And don't suggest *Interzone*; they can only publish about 20 stories per year in their four issues, and naturally a writer who has already made a name for himself is going to have a head start over the raw beginner. And I say himself deliberately as it seems to be a magazine written for men by men. Neither does it publish the kind of story I like to read, so I can't expect it to publish the kind of story I like to write.) In fact where is the magazine publishing the kind of stories I like to read?

*Interzone* could be regarded as the elite of the British magazines; it certainly seems to regard itself as the elite (despite the fact that it has no competition). However, what we struggling would-be-writers need is a middle ground, and that is currently missing from the British fiction market. By asking new writers to aim straight for *Interzone*, you're asking the impossible and all that happens is that writers become disillusioned. Alan Dorey says "...many prospective writers haven't got a clue". This is because, as there is no choice, writers will submit stories to *Interzone* that should never have been submitted to that magazine. Perhaps market forces rule out a professional magazine to fill this gap, but there could be a place for amateur magazines in this middle ground. I've recently discovered the Cassandra workshop and their excellent anthologies. This could be a natural next step from an Orbiter group as the workshop is a larger, looser organisation and the stories receive a wider exposure. Also John Owen is working on a fiction magazine to be called *Quiet Sus*, which he says is going to set a high standard for fiction. It will be interesting to watch the progress of these two projects to see if they do help provide the opportunities new writers need and are sadly lacking at the moment. Otherwise where will the new writers of the future come from? Scathing you may be about amateur writers, but every writer had to start somewhere and a few of the amateurs now struggling to make progress will be the revered authors of the years to come.

\*\*\*Only one anti-fan-fiction letter was received this time around. Its author (Mark Greener) chipped in his two pence worth with "If as I suspect would happen, the zine degenerates into an organ for self-congratulatory mutual literary masturbation it would only harden the general world opinion of SF as a media for repressed cracks."—a notion your editor is forced to admit he does not fully comprehend.

## The nuclear debate

Malcolm Edwards  
Victor Gollancz Ltd  
14 Henrietta Street  
London WC2E 8JQ

I find the statistic-slinging between Michael King and Joseph Nicholas a little dispiriting—you get a glimpse of why arms-reduction talks

never get anywhere. I wish there were more discussions of the wider moral argument, which one might have expected BSFA members—who should be aware that the

future is a fairly long-term proposition—to take very seriously. If the theory of the possible nuclear winter is sound—or if it is probably, or even possibly sound—then are people really saying that they are prepared to balance the inconvenience or privations of Russian hegemony (as suffered by, let's say, Hungary or Czechoslovakia) against not just their own future life, or the lives of their children and grandchildren, but the lives of everyone and everything, now and forever, on the planet? I cannot see any short-term or medium-term political squabble which could conceivably make that a sane response. If people would rather be dead than Red, that's a personal choice that they are entitled to make: but to say that they would rather see the entire planet dead than be Red, that seems to me insane. To put it in the kind of perspective SF readers ought to be able to appreciate: wouldn't it seem absurd if the Saxons (had they enjoyed the capability) had blown up the world in order to stop the Norman Conquest? Wouldn't that seem a stupid, selfish, short-sighted, crazy thing to do?

Simon D. Ings  
10 Geddes Way  
Sheet  
Petersfield  
Hants. GU31 4DJ

If I have to stagger through another bloody letter about the Nuclear Arms Situation I will not be responsible for my actions. Surely the best reason, the most obvious reason, why *Matrix* should

not publish epistolary political debates is because such debates simply do not reflect the concerns of the rest of the magazine! In the same way *Sanity*, the CND magazine, does not publish letters referring to the state of SF fanzines, who won the TAFF award, and so on. What the hell is the point of having a letters page that does not relate in any way to the magazine in which it is printed? Just because these letters are written by members is no good reason why they should automatically be printed. Unless of course the BSFA really is a vanity press organisation...

David R. Smith  
7 Laburnum Road  
Cumbernauld  
Glasgow G67 3AA

I feel that discussions on politics the arms race, etc. are beginning (?) to take up too much space in the letter column. I accept that such subjects have a place in

*Matrix*, but think it might be better if those with a lot to say (one letter takes up about 2½ pages) could be encouraged to write a complete article. This would give more room to expand on arguments, and might reduce the temptation to make it into a dispute with another person. Since the idea of a fiction magazine is in the air, why not have someone start a separate political zine? (No! No! I was only joking.)

## On civil liberties

Peter Cohen  
(address as above)

I was interested by Mark Greener's letter on the decrease in liberty (Media, M53). Although I agree with his general points and with his praise of Moorcock's anarchist tract "The Retreat From Liberty", I do have a few quibbles.

He seems to have fallen into the trap of looking back to the Golden Age before Thatcher and deciding that things weren't so bad then. Paternalism may suit her government, but it would also suit a Labour and, especially, a Social Democrat government. She just uses it more than average. Any number of *Forties'* newsreels show that paternalistic governments existed in the past under various administrations.

This government is not using CND "as a safety valve". It would be glad to see the back of the organisation so that it can prepare for the great confrontation with the Forces of Darkness without being hampered.

As for the imprisonment of Britton for selling books available throughout the country being comparable to a parent wagging his finger: well, I know from experience that the nuclear family is not the greatest thing in the world, but isn't that a bit of an understatement?

The peace campaign does perform some useful functions, such as showing that merely camping outside an American base merits your being manhandled and locked in a cage, but its fundamental aims are totally unreal. What I'd like to see are campaigns against direct infringements of liberty. Not just censorship, but the sort of harassment that makes police visit those with unpopular views and question them on invented charges. What about repealing the seatbelt laws and all those other laws that train people to do only what they are told because the nice government wants to make anything unsafe illegal? And what about stopping these attacks on cuts in government expenditure? The poorer taxpayers do not tend to use social services such as the NHS because they cannot afford the time of off work. Children from poor families do not go to Oxford because their families cannot support them during the vacations. How many working class people take advantage of government funding of Covent Garden or Interzone? The numbers of lives saved by the Welfare State is fewer than those lost to the War State.

## O Alien

Anthony Bloomfield  
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Simon Ings' review of the television documentary *O Alien* really does deserve some comment.

For a start, the programme wasn't meant to be anything to do with SF but was rather an examination of modern society. The alien was simply a vehicle to allow this examination to take place.

But what really amazes me is that Simon Ings can watch any number of atrocities going on in the world, such as the killing of animals (the scene showing a cow having its throat slit nearly made me sick) or 'men' trying their damndest to shoot each others' brains out due to the greed and insanity of world 'leaders', or even scenes of the Earth being destroyed through nuclear war and not have the remotest feeling that something is wrong with the world! But oh no, if something isn't 'weird' or 'original' then it deserves to be ignored. And if you're not original? Then you're to be 'pitied' or you have a 'shrivelled imagination' and ought to go to see a psychiatrist so that he can ease your fears (through a lobotomy maybe, or being pumped full of drugs, or how about ECT?) and eventually you can return to society a 'good normal citizen' able to take up your place in the world and make an 'honest living'.

And Simon Ings calls David Gladwell a "poor man"?

## In reply

Michael J. King  
6A Newlands Road  
Bentley Heath  
Soltihull B93 8AU

Despite my earlier promises not to write again, I really cannot let Jeremy Crampton's letter go unanswered.

Joseph and I have, I think, been given a more than fair hearing and probably said more than enough. However, Mr Crampton raises a number of points that I should like to comment on. As he said himself, he did not attempt (in MS3) to argue the issue with me. What he did was to make some rather personal remarks and claims which a reader could have no way of checking. To me this is both dishonest and bad-mannered.



I think that if Mr Crampton was to re-read his letters to me he would find I ignored rather less of them than he did of mine and that I did at least attempt to deal with his main points. Mr Crampton first raised the question of legal action when he (wrongly) accused me of mis-quoting from Mike Ashley's *Illustrated Book of Science Fiction Lists*. I merely said I would not agree to him quoting me out of context, but would not object to all of our letters being printed in *Matrix*. I am quite happy to agree I can be very rude—when provoked. I consider Mr Crampton (in his letters to me) to have adopted an abrasive and condescending tone from the start and, in fact, to have received rather helpful letters from me in return.

Of course no-one can know whether I am right or Mr Crampton is, which makes me wonder why he wrote his letter in the first place. Still, I would like to wish Jeremy well in America, even if the voters there do seem more inclined to accept my views over his.

\*\*\*We also heard from OSCAR DALGLEISH, who wrote two long letters to apologise for not having the time to write a short piece on the Albacon Medical Kit (contact him at 67 Robslee Road, Giffnock, Glasgow, for more details); DOROTHY DAVIES ('My only criticism of Simon Ings' review of *O Alien* is that it didn't go far enough. It really was appallingly bad.');

K.T. GOULD; KEN LAKE, who will shortly be receiving a visit from selected members of the Seacon 84 Committee following his perceptive and witty review of the event in a recent *Interstirrer*; STEPHEN O'KANE; PAUL VINCENT (Re *Specious-Echcs*: 'I enclose the contents of a fat envelope which fell fatly on my doorstep a week or two ago. You'll note that the 'newsletter' refers to the tickets, which I've also enclosed, saying that I should be a good little twerp and send more money or return the tickets. Instead, I'm sending them to you to chortle over. If Mike Parry thinks this remiss of me, then I guess he can attempt anal-intercourse on himself as far as I'm concerned. Any guy who uses publicity material which purports to be advertising a media event as a platform where he can whine about his fucked-up personal life must be more of an asshole than I already think he is.');

MARION VAN DER VOORT, who finally revealed where it was that Alan Dorey sold his TV21 collection; and ROGER WADDINGTON.

Letters of comment on this issue should be sent to:  
Alan Dorey, 22 Summerfield Drive, Middleton,  
Gtr Manchester M24 2WW





# ODYSSEY 7

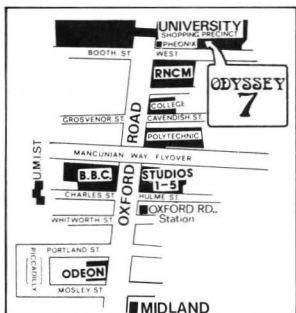


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