

Matrix

ISSN 0307 3335

57

THE NEWSPAPER OF

bsfa The British Science Fiction Association

• PROFILES •

STARTING IN THE NEXT
MATRIX...

A column where BSFA
committee members
can get rid of those
embarrassing passport
photos'.

The Profiles...
See Alan Dorey &
Co. in glorious
monochrome...

Last Orders..!

CENSORSHIP SHOCK!

BANNED FROM PUB!

ARE SCIENCE FICTION FANS TOO RADICAL?

The British Science Fiction Association has been asked to take its monthly meetings elsewhere by the pub that has hosted them for the past three years. The reason given by the proprietors of the "King of Diamonds" in Hatton Gardens is that the meetings have become "more like CND meetings than science fiction meetings".

The BSFA's meetings organiser, Judith Hanna, is puzzled. "Some of our members wear CND badges along to BSFA meetings, and do have conversations about CND-type issues. But other members strongly oppose CND policies. I am shocked that the pub management should give disagreement with the political beliefs of some of our regular members as the reason they no longer want our meetings on their premises."

BSFA meetings normally focus on discussion of some science fictional topic. The last occasion when the nuclear disarmament issue was discussed formally was during an "Any Questions" panel in early 1983. "Because I myself am not only a CND member but employed by CND I have taken great care not to arrange events that might appear to be propaganda for my private convictions," says Ms. Hanna.

The BSFA had previously had excellent relations with the "King of Diamonds".

NB: The new London meetings organiser is Nick Trant.

THE MATRIX EDITORIAL.

Version Number 2 by Dave Hodson.

It is now the 12th day of February, and Matrix should have been safely tucked away in the printers hands nearly a fortnight ago. Unfortunately the GPO has had one of its ever more frequent lapses, and I've now got to send another lot of pages off and sweat on their arrival. Still, let's look on the bright side, I've been able to include a bit of more up-to-date news, and at least I don't have to type the whole thing up again having only sent photocopies in the first place.

Still, let's impart some of that more up-to-date news...

The biggest thing to happen is a possible fiction magazine. It now seems likely that the BSFA will be publishing a fiction magazine at the end of the year. The format, content style, etc, is yet to be decided, but this will at least be seen as an effort to give members what they want.

Another snipet comes from Dave Langford, who feels that due to lack of response, he can no longer contribute a competition for Matrix. Is there anybody out there that feels they can come up with a new kind of competition? If so get in touch. Crosswords, wordsearches, anagrams, or straight trivia style quizzes. I don't care so long as it is good...

The new 'Round the Clubs' person is Trevor Mendham. Yes, that's right, editor of the fanzine ATU XVIII and co-writer of probably the worst computer football simulation game I've seen (UNITED FROM CCS)(only joking Trevor, honest!) and now Matrix clubs person, where does he find the time?

Speaking of fanzines, there is a certain editor that would like to see more of them, so if I'm regarded as a good enough editorial whiz, the address is on the inside front cover.

The games column which began last issue got a lot of response, nearly all favourable, and I now need somebody to take the task on, so if you feel up to it...Colin Bird has volunteered to take over the comics column, and John Fraser is to do

PTO...

FACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETS

NOW AVAILABLE !

The first three BSFA facts sheets providing up to date bibliographic information on Science Fiction authors :-

1. P. K. DICK
2. R. A. HEINLEIN
3. C. J. CHERRYH

Suggestions for further authors to be included in the series welcome.

Available free with S.A.E. from the information officer :-

MIKE MOIR
7 The Thicket
Whitenap
Romsey
Hants

FACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETSFACTSSHEETS



the computer games column. Colins work has appeared frequently in Matrix, and John has contributed articles to MICRO-ADVENTURER for quite a while, so both columns are in good hands. All that leaves is a vacancy for News Editor. This is possibly the hardest of the jobs going, firstly all the book publishers, comics publishers, games manufacturers, computer games companies, film companies, TV companies, distributors, and just about everybody else has to be written to for us to be placed on their circulations lists, and when news does start to filter through it all needs to be collated and put into order of merit, typed up, pasted up, etc, etc.

I'd prefer the post holder to be in London as I'm going to have to be in close contact with them, but if not I'm sure a workable system can be set up. So if anybody out there is willing and able, please contact me at the editorial address.

Alex Prentice answered the plea for a cartoonist, and Bernard Smith also offered his services on a continuing strip. More news next issue.

This issue has a mixed letters bag, and I was really pleased about the amount and quality of contributions, keep them coming. So, until the next Matrix, keep in touch and I hope to meet a few of you at YORCON.

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Artwork this issue: Alex Prentice- Front cover, pages 6 & 12. Dave Hodson- page 20.

Dave

(I DO WISH THE GABY WOULDN'T KEEP TRYING TO PINCH THE PEN WHEN I'M WRITING...)

Also included in this mailing are the final BSFA Award ballot forms and notice of the 1985 AGM, to be held at YORCON III.

The 1985 mailing schedule is: February 16/17...April 13/14...June 8/9...August 3/4... October 5/6...December 7/8.

MATRIX 58 DEADLINE : MARCH 16 (ARTICLES/REVIEWS/LETTERS). MARCH 23 (NEWS).

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All contributions should be sent to: Dave Hodson, Matrix editor, 104 Debden, Gloucester Road, Tottenham, London, N17 6LN.
(Telephone: 01-801 4574.)

BSFA membership can be entered into lightly by sending £7.00 to:

Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, BLANTYRE, Lanarkshire, G72 9NA.

Membership can be renewed by sending the same piddling amount to:

Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, READING, Berkshire, RG6 1PL.

Chairman of the British Science Fiction Association is:

Alan Dorey, 22 Summerfield Drive, MIDDLETON, Greater Manchester.

That having been said it falls to me to remind you all:

"Let's be careful out there!"




By the time you read this, we may actually be out of the Big Freeze and back into something like acceptable weather. In the meanwhile, we sit and suffer and hope that things will take a turn for the better.

Here in the thrilling BSFA, we've had a mixed few months this winter. First, the good news - We now have a new BSFA Clubs Liason Officer, Trevor Mendham, who is even now scheming away to produce the first of a new series of Club Columns in the pages of Matrix. He's got some good ideas already and fully deserves your support in bringing to his attention all the various local groups there are up and down the country. Apart from his regular Matrix column, he'll also be producing the annual Clubs Directory which is a useful guide to all that's currently happening.

Another piece of good news is that regarding VECTOR. We now have an editor - or should I say editors, since in future it will be reverting to being run by an editorial team. Paul Kincaid will look after the reviews section, whilst Dave Barrett will be taking over the mantle of Features Editor. The two will work very much as a team, perhaps alternating editorials and editing the Letters Column and so forth. There will also be a third member of the team, but this position remains to be filled. The Job is to be the Production Editor, ie. typing, laying-out and arranging for ads to be placed and the magazine to be printed. Again, this person will need to work very closely with Paul and Dave, so I am looking for a volunteer to fill this vital role. Obviously, some experience with design and/or production work will be necessary. For the next issue or two of Vector, we will have someone to take this job on, but they will only be able to do this on a temporary basis. The sooner I can appoint someone to this important post, the better- so, don't hesitate - **WRITE TO ME TODAY!**

More good news - Paperback Inferno is to be taken over by Andy Sawyer. He is currently talking to Joseph Nicholas with a view to arranging a suitable take-over issue, and I suspect that this could well be the June issue. Andy, for the longer-serving BSFA members, isn't a stranger to producing BSFA magazines, having edited Matrix (!) prior to John & Eve Harvey in the late 1970s. I'm sure that you'll all join with me in welcoming him back!

THE BAD NEWS - I'm afraid to say that it looks as if our litho machine has just about given up the ghost. Now, this isn't an insurmountable problem, but it has meant that Operation Newlook - the relaunch of the BSFA - has had to be postponed just a little. John Harvey has struggled manfully with the machine to produce this mailong's issue of Focus, but with a broken platemaker and an ailing printer, there's not much more that can be done. John has also spent many, many hours over the years tirelessly printing the BSFA magazines, and what with the cold weather at present (the machine is housed in his garage which has no heating!), I'm very surprised that he's managed to do anything at all! All credit, then, must go to John, and his wish to take a back seat from Printing supremo is understandable. He'll still do duplicating work and help out as much as he can, though....However, this does mean that there may be one or two hiccoughs in the next month or two as we try to settle down with a Professional printer who can be relied upon to do a good job, on time and cheaply enough. As I type these words, it's touch and go whether Vector will be ready on time, and we've already had a hiatus with Matrix in that the copy got lost in the post! Still, we'll make it yet! **AND that is all I have space wise...don't forget to vote in the BSFA award, and don't forget the AGM!**



FILM • TELEVISION • THEATRE



Apr 5-8 '85

The 36th

British Easter SF Convention

REGISTRATION FORM

Please send this form, when completed, to:
MIKE FORD, 45 HAROLD MOUNT, LEEDS, LS6 1PW, U.K.
(or if more convenient: Mary Burns, 23 Kensington Court, Hempstead,
NY 11550, U.S.A.)

Please print CLEARLY. **ATTENDING £10** **SUPPORTING £6**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Post Code _____

Please fill in your real name above; if you wish an "alias" to appear on your convention badge, enter it here: _____

I require the following type of membership (please tick):

Supporting ☐ Attending ☐

Conversion from Supporting to Attending ☐

I claim £1 credit for Pre-Supporting membership ☐

and I enclose \$/£ _____ (Cheques etc. to YORCON III, please.)

IMPORTANT. Taking into account the distribution of events proposed in this PR, please indicate which hotel you would prefer to stay at:

DRAGONARA ☐ QUEENS ☐

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____



* Granada has bought the UK rights to Arthur C. Clarke's 20,001: The Final Odyssey and Songs of Distant Earth from Ballantine/Del Rey.

* Borderland is a new Canadian semi-professional magazine, and is looking for fiction around 3,000-5,000 words long, preferably dark fantasy (horror?). They can be contacted at Borderlands, 7305 Woodbine Avenue, Suite 517, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 3V7.

* US company West End Games have acquired the rights to do three Star Trek boardgames based on the Paramount movies. They have also bought Eon Games complete line of games, which include Darkover, and intend to revise and re-release them throughout 1985.

* The SF and Fantasy top ten films in the US for the summer season were announced recently. In order, they are: Ghostbusters (which made gross profits, in more than one sense of the term, of \$188,550,041), Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (\$167,334,648), Gremlins (\$136,678,227), Star Trek III (\$75,699,453), Romancing the Stone (\$74,729,331), Muppets take Manhattan (\$25,042,103) - is this really SF or P? The Last Starfighter (\$22,200,789), The Neverending Story (\$20,158,808), Dreamscape (\$8,887,086), The Philadelphia Experiment (\$8,103,310).

* Zoran Perisic, who developed the flying effects used in the Superman films, is to direct Pirates of the Asteroids, based on Asimov's David Starr, Space Ranger.

* Star Trek IV is expected for release in summer, 1986.

* Gene Simmons, bass guitarist of the truly appalling KISS, is to co-star with Tom 'Magnum' Selleck in the film version of Michael Crichton's Runaway.

* The Red Sonja film is to be adapted to the silver screen by Clive Exton and George MacDonald Fraser (he who did the Flashman series and The Pyrates), so it may be worth seeing, unlike Conan.

* The cartoon series The Jetsons are back. Hanna-Barbera are to make 41 new episodes.

* The film version of Alfred Besters The Stars My Destination is to be made at Elstree Studios from September onwards.

* TSR, the people behind D&D, are rumoured to be about to drop a large percentage of the games they publish.

* News of more movie sequels. Psycho III, Romancing the Stone II, Poltergeist II.

* The surprise SF package of the year looks like being The Terminator, it is reported to be doing well at the box office and, even more surprisingly, Arnold Schwarzenegger is supposedly very good in the role of the cyborg assassin.

DON'T VAT THE PRESS

There are strong reasons to believe the Chancellor of the Exchequer is planning to impose VAT on your magazine. Such a move would turn the clock back 130 years — the last tax on newspapers and journals was repealed in 1855. Since then 'No tax on knowledge' has been a principle agreed by all Governments, even in the darkest days of war.

A free Press is a tax-free Press. No Government should be given the power to impose financial pressure on a Press it may not like.

Tell your MP to say 'NO' to any tax on reading.

Issued by the Periodical Publishers Association, London

The above is an example of advertisements that have been appearing in most of Britain's magazines and periodicals. What is still uncertain is how it will affect groups like the BSFA.

In the next Matrix I hope to run an interview with a representative of the Periodical Publishers Association that might cast some light on the subject. Hopefully Dave Langford will also contribute a piece telling how it will affect him as an author.

Certainly the threat of VAT on books and magazines cannot be taken lightly. After all, this will rise the cost of Interzone by about 20p, a 20p newspaper by 3p, an £8.95 hardcover book by nearly 40p, an £8.95 hardcover book by nearly £1.35, and that's not taking account of the VAT that will be added onto the printing costs of all the above.

Who needs censorship when the Government can price the press out of the market?

The Comic Review

News received since last issue confirms that Pacific Comics have gone into voluntary liquidation with debts of \$742,000. The companies assets were estimated at \$601,000, which are made up of accounts receivable (\$450,000) and inventory (\$151,000). The trouble is that neither of these is expected to produce anywhere near their true value. Other US distributors are also having problems. Capital Distributors are selling off huge amounts of back issues at ridiculously cheap prices. Longhorn have had a crazy sale of SF and Fantasy paperbacks in order to make space and raise urgently needed cash. Bud Plant have allowed operation of their Comics & Comix stores to be taken over by a partner with separate financial operations. All of this in the wake of Seagate, the pioneer of US comics distribution, imploding from the major distributor to a minor local company. None of this can make British distributors or retailers



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No. 4

very happy, and what with the fall of the pound against the dollar, it has become noticeable that the racks of import books and comics on the shelves of shops such as Forbidden Planet do not look quite as up-to-date or diverse as in the past.

The absence of Marvelman from the pages of Warrior has been explained by the fact that publishers Quality Communications are in the middle of a legal wrangle with Marvel. Warrior 25 carried the full text of a letter from Marvel's solicitors to Quality and a reply to it from Des Skinn, Quality's founder and managing director. As the letter from Des rightly points out, the character of Marvelman was being used in British publications long before the formation of Marvel UK, and was in fact appearing before Timely Comics changed their name to Marvel at the end of the fifties/beginning of the sixties. Will truth, justice and the (supposedly) American way of life win through? In the comics trade, who knows?

The 1984 Eagle Awards winners were announced at the Birmingham Comic Art Con with Warrior winning five awards (Favourite comic book UK, Favourite comic character UK-V, Favourite supporting character UK-Zirk, Favourite comic book story UK-V for Vendetta, Warrior 9-14, Favourite cover UK-Warrior 13). The associated staff won another two awards (Favourite artist UK-Alan Davis, Favourite writer UK-Alan Moore). Unfortunately the Eagles do not show how well received British comics are in direct competition with US comics, but fanzine editor Dick Donars Fanzine Fans' Favourites Awards do. The 1984 results were announced recently and in the comic book section Warrior came second with 66 votes to American Flagg (91 votes). In my eyes this was the only fair result. American Flagg is undoubtedly the best comic being produced on either side of the Atlantic at the moment. Other British publications in the list were 2000AD (8th with 25 votes) and Daredevils (9th with 24 votes). The excellent Cerebus the Aardvark came 10th with 20 votes. Warrior won the Magazine class with 101 votes, and I think that probably says it all on the question of how Warrior is received in this country.

unconventional!

ALBACON 85.

19th - 22nd July 1985 at the Central Hotel, Glasgow.
Guests of Honour: Harlan Ellison and Anne McCaffery.
Membership costs: £8=00 attending, £5=00 supporting.
Room Rates: Single room £15=00, single with bath £17=50, twin room £12=50, twin with bath £16=00, double room with bath £16=00, triple room £12=00. All rates are per person per night, and are fully inclusive of breakfast and VAT.
Information: Vincent J. Docherty, 20 Hillington Gardens, Cardonald, Glasgow, G52 2TF.

CAMCON 85/UNICON 6.

13th - 15th September 1985 at the New College Hall, Cambridge.
Membership: £7=00 attending, £4=00 supporting.
Room rates: £16=10 per person per night, inclusive of breakfast and VAT.
Registrations should be sent to Neil Taylor, c/o Perspective Designs Ltd, 9 Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3QY.

MEXICON II.

February 1986. Somewhere in the south of England or Birmingham.
Membership up to 31/12/84 was £6=00, no news as yet of revised prices.
Contact: Pam Wells, 24a Beech Road, London, N11. Please make all cheques payable to MEXICON.

YORCON III.

5th - 8th April 1985 at the Dragonara and Queens Hotels, Leeds.
Guests of Honour: Gregory Benford and Linda Pickersgill.
Membership costs: £10=00 attending (unemployed £6=00), £4=00 supporting.
Room rates: Single rooms £18=00, twins/doubles £15=50. All prices are per person per night and are inclusive of breakfast and VAT.
Information: Mike Ford, 45 Harold Mount, Leeds, LS6 1PW.
USA: Attending membership \$20=00. Contact: Mary Burns, 23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550, USA.

AUSSIECON II.

22nd - 26th August 1985 at the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, Australia.
Guests of Honour: Gene Wolfe and Ted White.
Membership: Up to February 85 A\$60=00 attending, A\$30=00 supporting.
UK Agent: Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER.

ALBACON 84.

Albacon 84 has finally wound up its financial affairs, and has made the following donations:

The Shaw Fund	£50
Head Appeal	£200

They go on to say: "As always, we, the Albaccon committee feel that we are responsible not only to our members, but to fandom as a whole, and hope that these donations will help both to promote British fandom overseas, and to help blind fans overcome the problems and isolation of their disability".

It falls to me to say thank you for these donations, and to remind people that copies of Bob Shaws Serious Scientific Talks booklet are available for £1=00 (or a signed copy for £1=50) from Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, GARSINGTON, Surrey, SM5 3QH. (please make cheques payable to Eve). All proceeds go to sending Bob off to the 1985 Worldcon in Australia.
Donations for the Head Appeal can be sent to: Matt Sillars & Brian Hennigan, c/o 8 Beaverbank Place, Edinburgh.

Dave Langford is to be co-GoH, with James White, at Novacon 15, to be held in the De Vere Hotel, Coventry, in November.

*** The MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD is a free advertising service for all BSFA members who wish to sell, exchange or buy items or information, make contacts, publicise fannish ventures, etc. Just send your advertisement to the editor via the editorial address.

FOR SALE...Original Jim Cawthorn artwork from the covers of Moorcocks 'Sword of the Dawn', 'The Runestaff' & 'Jewel in the Skull'. All the sleeves in my folio needed for my own stuff. Contact Dave Hodson, 104 Deben, Gloucester Road, Tottenham, London, N17 6LN.

MATRIX REQUIRES...A cartoonist to revive Luke Warm, DHSS PI of the future from the unpublished SIZZLING (absolutely no SEX (ual content) STORIES. Contact Dave Hodson at the editorial address.

FOR SALE. SFWA book on writing and selling SF. No dust jacket, but in good condition. I take care of my books. Need money/space. £2 plus postage. Don't send money, I'll invoice.
DOROTHY DAVIES, 3 CADELS ROW, FARINGDON, OXON, SN7 7AX.

ORBITER. Persons/volunteers/victims still wanted. Plenty spaces going begging. SAE for info sheet and current state of available space. DOROTHY DAVIES, 3 CADELS ROW, FARINGDON, OXON, SN7 7AX.

DOMINIC FRANKLIN, where are you? Please write - Phil.

DAN DAR.



Future gaming

Welcome back to the critical acclaimed Matrix games column. Last issue I said I was going to examine the merits of the recently released RINGWORLD RPG, unfortunately I'm still looking for them. At £24.95, it certainly seems to be the biggest turkey at the highest price I've ever come across - still, I think I've thrown together a relatively decent column. The rough draft includes how to incorporate the BSFA into the ILLUMINATI cardgame from Steve Jackson (US variant), a quick look at an SF play-by-mail, and a few other odds and sods.

First off though, after reading through a few of the most recent 'Military Modelling' issues (a very useful publication, this, for all of us that play games with little lead soldiers), I noticed that several companies are putting up the prices on miniatures due to the rising cost of model metal. On average, the price of miniatures seems to be about 45p now. How comes then, that the biggest miniatures company in this country is charging an average of 60p for a 25mm figure? Surely, being the biggest firm, they get the biggest discount on model metal. Fair enough, they probably have a few more staff to support, but, they can't have that high a set of overheads. Can they? Anybody who can illuminate me on the economics of casting lead soldiers is welcome to try and explain...

Undoubted the comment that drew the largest response in last issue's game column was the view I expressed on LASERBURN. Nearly everybody agreed that it is a marvellous set of rules, but a word of warning; do not feel tempted to part with the pennies for the advanced rules, they are just a wee bit over the top. Another set of very good rules from the lads at Tabletop Games are CHALLENGER, which, although not SF, cover ultra-modern warfare (up to 1990). Far better than the Wargames Research Group's equivalent set of rules, and, I think, more supplementary material available.

That PBM I was talking about in the first paragraph is STARMASTER from Mitre Games. Unfortunately, I cannot say I was impressed, although I must admit I am not an addict of play-by-mail games, preferring to have a face-to-face game rather than sending off endless wads of paper telling some faceless GM what I want to do. The player starts off with 300 points to 'spend' when designing an original race (300 because that's what they estimate, by their system, a normal humanoid type of race costs), and a list of things the points can be spent on, such as either an exo- or endoskeleton, claws or hands, one or two hearts, etc...

The list is comprehensive enough to be able to create a fairly unique race. After this god-like feat you are free to go and conquer the Universe. Unfortunately, it's not as easy as it sounds, because there are at least 200 other player controlled races out there trying to do the same thing. It also takes a very long time to travel the vast distances involved, which means either a lot of fairly boring turns at £1.80 each, or supplementing the regular turns with a lot of special actions at £1.50 each. Personally I would feel a little cheated.

Still, each to their own, but I found the rulebook more useful as a source of ideas for my own games, and, before I start my time travel campaign (anybody in London who is interested should contact me at the editorial address...), I may well modify the points idea and get the players to take a bit more effort than rolling dice to create their characters.

The STARMASTER starter set can be picked up from most games shops for £9.95 and includes a rulebook and two free turns to get you going.

Another new product just getting into the stores is DRAGONROAR, a new RPG from Standard Games who have previously released their version of board wargaming in the form of CRY HAVOC, STARSHIP CAPTAIN and SIEGE (to name but a few). The only thing that sets DRAGONROAR apart from the horde of other fantasy and/or SF RPGs is that there is a brief description of the rules on one side of a C60 audio cassette which is also included in the box. On the other side of said item is a solo adventure. Certainly, for the £12.95 asked, DRAGONROAR looks to be reasonable value, but I'll wait till I've got a set of my own to look at before I comment in more detail.

Other new products include a game based on the film 'The Last Starfighter' and a game based upon the old turkey of a TV series, 'Battlestar Galactica'. There's TWILIGHT 2000 which is supposed to be a future war RPG, and three new supplements to the STAR TREK RPG. Personally, I'm hoping somebody will treat me to the BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES board wargame. Hey, Valentines Day is coming, maybe the misses... (at nearly 20 quid, I doubt it).

Other news includes the REDUCTION in price of BUSHIDO, the RPG based around life in feudal Japan (Nippon?). Which has dropped £12.95 to £7.95 due to Games of Liverpool now publishing it in the UK under licence from Fantasy Games Unlimited. If G of L also licence DAREDEVILS and drop the price I may consider buying it. All of FGU's material is extremely high quality and, when all said and done, worth it at any price compared to some of the rubbish on the market today. Certainly what looks to be a prize bumper is the up-coming MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE, based no less upon the god-awful cartoon of the same title. How do some of these companies stay in business? The morons responsible are FASA, who also inflicted the STAR TREK RPG upon the gullible games world.

Still, that appears to be about all for this month's column, I leave you with the following piece of tomfoolery. It's a BSFA card for the ILLUMINATI game, and anybody with a set should appreciate the special action at the top of the card (I claim full responsibility)...

Bye...

+4 TO ATTACK
ANY WEIRD GROUP



POWER: 1
RESIST: 5
INCOME: 1

WEIRD

* <u>GAMES MASTERS.</u> (Mail Order Games)	* * *		
* <u>Title</u>	<u>rrp</u>	<u>GM Price</u>	
* Basic/Expert D&D	£10.50ea.	£9.50ea.	*
* Call of Cthulhu	9.95	8.95	*
* Star Trek RPG	9.95	8.95	*
* Gamma World	9.50	8.50	*
* Middle Earth RPG	11.95	10.75	*
* Golden Heroes	8.95	8.00	*
* Runequest III	39.95	34.95	*
* Ringworld	24.95	22.25	*
* Traveller Starter	7.95	7.15	*
* Laserburn	1.95	1.75	*
* Full range of 15mm figures for above			*
* at 10% discount.			*
* Dune	16.95	15.25	*
* Battlecars	7.95	7.15	*
* Judge Dredd	7.95	7.15	*
* Illuminati	7.95	7.15	*
* Illuminati Exp 1/11	6.95	6.25	*
* Plus all the other popular RPGs and boardgames on the market at average			*
* 10% discount.			*
* 10% postage on orders under £7.00.			*
* Make cheques payable to D. HODSON.			*
* 104 DEBEN, GLOUCESTER ROAD, TOTTENHAM,			*
* LONDON, N17 6LN.			*
* TELEPHONE : 01-801 4574.			*

MEDIA REVIEW



CELLULOID
MAYA
by
MARK
GREENER.

DUNE
by
ANDY SAWYER.

DREAMSCAPE
by
COLIN BIRD.

THE GOON
SHOW: 1985
by
PHILIP
NICHOLS.

GORMENGHAST
&
TITUS GROAN
by
MATTHEW
SHACKLE.

THIS IS
HAWKWIND.
DO NOT PANIC
by
STEVEN
HUBBARD.

Quite a mixed bag of reviews this issue, and pride of place goes equally to Mark Greeners' look at the SF content of the 28th London Film Festival, and Andy Sawyers DUNE review.

I also recieved a DUNE review from Colin Bird, which is also excellent so I may well carry it next issue as a counterpoint to Andys' piece. Funnily they wrote nearly identical covering letters, something along the lines of "I expect you'll get dozens of DUNE reviews..."

Matthew Shackle also included a letter about how he sees the task of film reviewing, and the editing of pieces by people such as myself. He also said not to bother printing the letter, thanks, that saved my aching fingers further abuse. Still, I'm over the moon about the amount of material recieved for the review column this issue. Keep it coming.

Dave.

A CELLULOID MAYA: THE SF OF THE 28th LONDON FILM FESTIVAL.

by Mark Greener.

The LFF occupies a unique position in the film world. Not withstanding Derek Malcolms intention to premiere some original movies for other festivals to pick up, it remains "a celebration of cinema in all its forms, from the frankly commercial to the overtly experimental." (the LFF brochure). GREMLINS rubs shoulders with TRANSCENDENTAL TERRORISM or an avant garde slide show by the London Co-Op. As such it gives a unique insight into cinematic trends, not only in Hollywood, but also in the studios of the underground and independents. So, how did SF fare?

Hollywood has rediscovered the horror-comedy. Both GREMLINS and GHOSTBUSTERS have done extremely well at the US box-office, signalling the opening of the dam on a horde of imitators. As I write neither has opened here in the UK, but both seem set to repeat their fiscal orgy over here. GREMLINS opened the LFF. The plot is simple. A small-time, free-lance inventor, Rand Peltzer (Holt Axton), whilst christmas shopping in Chinatown, comes across an old shop where he buys a cute, furry animal unlike anyother, for his son Billy (Zach Gylligan). However, three rules are attached: "Don't get him wet, Don't expose him to sunlight, it could kill him, and, most important of all, no matter how much he begs, no matter how much he pleads, never feed him after midnight". Of course, all three rules are broken, and the cute pseudo-teddy gives rise to a horde of degenerate gremlins who procede to cause havoc in the small mid-western town...

I hold the director, Joe Dante, in high esteem, as he always has been able to transcend any limits imposed by his material, and produce films like HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD, PIRANHA and THE HOWLING, but when I read that the executive producers were Spielberg and Marshall, my heart sank. Spielberg has been showing a tendency to over sentimentality since ET. Just how was this going to be reconciled with Dantes' darker images? I need not have worried, the two extremes balance to create an almost perfect film.

Technically superb, funny, witty, Dante plays on our sympathies in much the same way Spielberg at his best does (I was lead to wonder to what extent Spielberg was involved with the direction) Nowhere is this clearer than in the films set piece, where the gremlins sit glued to a reel of SNOW WHITE, acting like the late night audience for the ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW. This film is damn near perfect. It forfills its aim, to entertain. All I can do is nit-pick.

One or two scenes jar. In these, the gremlins attack people for fun, instead of just attacking when threatened. This harks back to the more gruesome original version where the little muthafuckers eat Billy's dog. These scenes should have been deleted.

Perhaps what is more worrying is the films underlying implication. GREMLINS is a throw-back to the paranoid 1950's, where the alien was really a disguised commie. The gremlins are perfect analogies for subversives, and Spielberg has an uncanny of reading the state of the nation from which he hails. Nuff said.

Even so, go and see it. I've seen it twice already, once in the states and once at the LFF, and I'll certainly go and see it again. For as there can be no greater accolade then to see a film more than once.

Dante comes from the Roger Corman school, as did John Sayles. In fact Sayles was the scriptor of Dantes PIRANHA, and has proved himself to be a competent director with films like THE RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS SEVEN. The LFF presented his latest film, THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET. This SF comedy concerns the adventures of a black extra-terrestrial, played by Joe Morton, who, after crashing in New York harbour, makes his way to Harlem.

He is forgiven for not being able to explain his origins (he's dumb) by fixing the local bars video game by just laying his hands on it. But, all the time his pursuers, the sinister men-in-black, are gaining on him...

For a talent as great as Sayles I expected more. Although the film does have some very funny scenes which show Sayles real talent, the film lacks any real inertia, and just fizzles along. This film is only nominally SF, and the stranger-in-a-strange-land theme was examined with much more heart and wit in the excellent TRADING PLACES. Get the latter on video, or see a re-run, instead of THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET.

Another Corman protégé is Aaron Lipstadt. His first film ANDROID was the sleeper of the 1982 LFF and had a limited release to great critical acclaim. I had great hopes for him, and wished he would film a Vonnegut or Ellison story. My hopes were misplaced. His new film CITY LIMITS is, in the final analysis, a dismal failure.

A plague has killed all the adults in the cities, and one of these is now run by two gangs, the DAs and the Clippers. An uneasy truce exists between them, but an outside force, the Sunya Corporation, is set to disrupt this peace and rule the entire city. Out of the wilderness comes Lee (John Stockwell). He has been sent out by his "Uncle Tom" father-figure, Albert (James Earl Jones) to seek adventure.

Quite frankly, I was disappointed. Lipstadt's stated philosophy with ANDROID was, quote, "to intellectualise a subject and try to understand it from a critical perspective, then try to dramatise that perspective" (Monthly Film Bulletin, March 1983). With CITY LIMITS, he has taken a subject and strips it to its bare bones, adds a bit of MAD MAX and PAME, a sprinkle of FOOTLOOSE, and shakes it all together with a watered down WARRIORS. He then fails to view it critically, and we end up with a mess, which is even worse than the last attempt at a rock 'n' roll fable, STREETS OF FIRE. All this film left me with was a sense of loss because, although it has enough inertia to prevent it dragging, I know he can do better.

What is more disturbing is, like GREMLINS, it carries an underlying current of paranoia. The Sunya Corporation sound very Japanese.

What Walter Hill showed with STREETS OF FIRE, Lipstadt reiterated with CITY LIMITS, and with METROPOLIS, Giorgio Moroder has now proved without a doubt that rock 'n' roll does not mix with SF films.

Moroder has taken Langs classic SF film and scored it with the likes of Queen, Bonnie Tyler, Adam Ant and Pat Benatar. Although the must may be good, it just does not work with METROPOLIS. In the process, Moroder has added another rediscovered ten minutes. Go see it for this, but ignore the out of place music. If only they'd done it as a Thames Classic with the original score...

The 28th LFF doesn't bode well for the future. Where were the real SF films? All the films were light-hearted (even METROPOLIS was turned into a comedy); two comedies, one rock film, and a juvenile. The fact that GREMLINS was the best film worries me. Perhaps in these gloomy times no-one feels they can present down beat films. In this depressing age art is acting, not as a mirror, but as a panacea, and I'm not sure if that's its role.

DUNE.

Directed by David Lynch.

Reviewed by Andy Sawyer.

Did I find DUNE impressive? - Yes.
Did I like it? - Ah, that is another question!

DUNE is an epic and it's notoriously hard to film epics. What appears on the page as a glorious sweep of space and time can, when translated to a few seconds of dramatic exposition, become so much gobbledygook. In the interests of reducing the film to a manageable length, large quantities of sub-plot and explanation have to be jettisoned. This means that, inevitably, what is left is truncated; a précis rather than a retelling and very likely to suffer from a sense of being artificially stunted rather than allowed to grow naturally into shape.

DUNE's special effects and associated scenes- the worms bursting through the sand like gigantic phalluses, the journey to Arrakis which worked amazingly well in giving a visual representation of the spice aided transpace linkages- the scene where Alia dominates the Emperor and Baron in their HQ are quite, quite brilliant. There's no doubt about that. I was also impressed by the opening scenes of the film which presented the Emperor- in the traditional pomp of the Galactic Empire' settings- as a puppet of the contending forces of the film, the Bene Gesserit and the Spacer's Guild. The Spacers' envoy was stunningly repulsive, and all-in-all I thought the representation of the Alien and 'futuristic-baroque', the mutations of body and mind which are so important a part of the original novel, were totally successful, the best I have ever seen.

The script was terrible. Not necessarily a failing, this: great films have had terrible scripts before, and Frank Herbert's original story is pretty melodramatic. I would be hard, after all, to under-play Baron Harkonnen, and the rival Mentats, Piter and Hawat, and in particular Feyd-Ruatha were wonderfully hammed on screen- straight out of Marvel comics and 'B' movies. Also, however, the soundtrack was appalling. Worse, even, than Star Wars. Why do major SF movies have to have such lousy music? The portentous thudding at every inopportune moment throughout DUNE dominated the film and reinforced the power of the gloomy lighting. One or the other, I thought. The lighting- dark shades and shadows- hinted at decadence, hidden secrets and oppression. It was right, but only in the desert scenes did it feel so; otherwise, much of the film felt stuffy. Combine this with the pretentious mystical wafflings in the script and it's not surprising that, instead of being enraptured by two-thirds of the way through, I was acutely conscious that my left shoe-lace was too tight.

I voiced a few complaints on my way home, annoyed more than I should have been, perhaps by the totally gratuitous ending- as if somebody realised that there had to be a climactic final scene after the duel and a committee had worked out something 'symbolic'. Unfortunately it was alien to the spirit of the DUNE series as I understand it and certainly nothing to do with the original book.

"But you can't expect SF to aspire to Great Art." Said Mary, who reads little SF, but told me that she quite enjoyed the film, even though she hadn't the faintest idea what it was about. But that's exactly what I do want, I suppose. There's no reason why DUNE should not have turned out at least as successful in genre-terms and as moving in human terms as, say, HIGH NOON or THE MALTESE FALCON among western and detective films, respectively. I'm not particularly a fan of Frank Herbert and, in fact, found WHIPPING STAR and THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT preferable to the DUNE series. DUNE isn't Great Art. But it is an enjoyable escapist melodrama with some first-rate world creation. Unfortunately, all that- the ecological stuff, the exposition, the appendices- aren't filmable. So as it was, we got

attempts - sometimes surprisingly successful, sometimes less so - gaping lacunae, and reduction of fairly complex, if second-rate, religious questions to simple and fourth-rate certainties.

It's all somehow incomplete and that incompleteness, I think, created and formed my reaction to the film. DUNE as a film isn't a single complete work. It's one of those multi-media art forms which we're getting more and more of. Film, plus original book, plus Herbert's own sequels, plus the DUNE STORY BOOK with simple text and pictures from the film - all the hard bits left out - plus various essential additions like Willis E. McNelly's DUNE ENCYCLOPEDIA which are, as it were, some of the 'hard bits' left out of Joan Vinge's novelisation and which gave us the essential factual background to the universe in which the action takes place. This is obviously an excellent marketing ploy... but once you've got beyond that cynical reaction there's nothing particularly wrong with it as an art form in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Add up the cost of all this, even, and it's probably less than the cost of a Covent Garden opera ticket. It's just that you can read the book and enjoy it on its own, without knowing the book, I think I would have found the film incomprehensible. You need the DUNE ENCYCLOPEDIA if you're to get the most from the film.

So despite its achievements - and they are notabler mainly in the effects line, but I must praise the acting which headed into the poor script with gusto and finally overcome it - DUNE provided for me an incomplete experience. Yes, it was impressive, yes, it was a brilliant and sometimes successful attempt at filming the unfilmable. But it was deeply flawed.

Yes it was worth seeing. I'm glad I saw it. It was worth the money and I'm not adverse to seeing it again (apart from having to sit through the soundtrack). I recommend it, certainly.

I'm just not sure I enjoyed it very much.

DREAMSCAPE.

Directed by Joe Ruben.

Produced by Bruce Cohn-Curtis.

Reviewed by Colin Bird.

From the opening sequence the presidents wife running away from a nuclear blast, DREAMSCAPE is heading for rampant silliness. These medium budget SF films are usually on a loser right from the start. All the cash is needed for SPFX leaving no money to entice talented actors, scriptwriters or directors. The movie is left to stand solely on its special effects. But, when your intrepid Matrix reviewers come to examine the film, it must be judged as a motion picture, not purely as the latest try-and-out-SPFX that statement.

So back to the plot (such as it is)...

A device has been discovered by Max Von Sydow and Kate Capshaw by which psychic individuals can enter and influence peoples dreams. One of the makers of this film has obviously read a summary of Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams" on the back of a crisp packet, because, sure enough, psychological problems can be controlled by observation of the patients dreams. Early on we see proof of this as a man is cured of acrophobia and a boy is cured of his fear of snakes (IndianaJonesphobia?). Up until now the research programme has been running smoothly and everyone walks around with self-satisfied smiles. The President will be suffering those awkward dreams of nuclear holocaust, decides to offer a disarmament proposal to the Russians. Enter Christopher Plummer (playing a counterpart to Cliff Robertsons' character in BRAINSTORM) as the head of the local Sinister Government Agency, a device which is so often used as the

villain in these movies. Plummer, being true blue and fanatically right wing, decides it is better to kill the president than suffer world peace. At this moment we discover the device can also be used as a weapon since anyone who dies in their own dreams also suffers a heart attack in the 'real' world. Can you guess the evil Plummer's plan? Can Denis Quaid (the hero) stop grinning and chatting up Kate Capshaw long enough to save the president?

I have made a list of the points in this film that annoyed me, but here are just a few of the major ones...

Denis Quaid's central character is so smug and arrogant that, instead of being charismatic as intended, he is merely irritating.

The crossover between 'real' and 'dream' life and vice versa is shown inconsistently throughout the film.

The other psychic character who is used as the presidents assassin is obviously a psychotic killer, yet he is allowed to roam free by the doctors.

The theory that a shock such as ones own death in a dream could induce a heart attack for an elderly president is fine. But a healthy young man?

The resolution of this story is just plain silly, as it is an attempt to end with self-effacing humour.

I am all in favour of SF films that ignore the trash Space Opera themes for a more down to earth subject, but in this case DREAMSCAPE fails miserably.

THE GOON SHOW: "NINETEEN EIGHTY-FIVE"

BBC RADIO 4, 6th January 1985.

Reviewed by Philip Nichols.

Described by the BBC as a long lost Goon show only recently discovered in the archives (though Spike Milligan says he has had a recording all along), "Nineteen Eighty-Five" was first broadcast on January 4th 1955, and has never been repeated, except for a complete re-staging of the same script a few weeks later. Based, naturally, on Nineteen Eighty-Four, it takes its inspiration largely from Nigel Kneales 1954 adaption of the Orwell novel.

Parody is difficult to pull off, often failing because the would-be parodist is not sufficiently knowledgeable of the work under attack. This production, though, follows its source as closely as is possible in less than thirty minutes, revising Orwells vision by the inclusion of such routines as:

MISS PHNUTT: Let's take a chance. Let's meet somewhere under the moon, alone.

We can clasp each other to each

other, and then...Ooh!

WINSTON SEAGOOD: Now, darling, where?

PHNUTT: Somewhere where no-one is listening.

SEAGOOD: I know the place- Home Service, 8.30

Tuesday night.

PHNUTT: You mean- the forbidden Goon sector?

SEAGOOD: Yes. Wait; that belt you're wearing.

PHNUTT: That's the Anti-Sex League belt.

SEAGOOD (clearing throat): Well...I don't

think I'll come...

It is a little disappointing, then, to discover that this is not a parody at all, but, instead, a satire on contemporary broadcasting, the villain being the Big Brother Corporation (B.B.C.), the Enemy of the People being the Independent Television Army (I.T.A. - for this was the year commercial television was set to free the viewing population from the monopolistic control of Auntie Beeb). On this level it works extremely well, enabling Milligan and co-writer Eric Sykes to get in some spirited digs at the BBC, and at the then threatening medium of television. Unfortunately, some of the gags are now clichés, having been reworked by lesser talents (Winston Seagoon is tortured in Room 101 by being forced to listen to popular radio

shows of the time, for example), and more - a surprising number, in fact - are very much of their time. Remember Ben Lyon & Bebe Daniels? Wilfred Pickles? "Bedtime with Braden"? So, whereas this diachard Goon fan (born six years after this programme was made), an admirer of their originality and inventive use of the medium, was slightly disappointed that this was not the classic he was expecting, it remains an amusing glimpse at 1950s broadcasting, and for that reason possibly means more to first generation Goons fans, and nostalgic buffs - though even they find themselves the butt of Goonish humour:

SEAGOON: Old man - tell me, what was it like?
Back in 1954?

OLD MAN: Well, we had sports and games, coloured movies, Charlie Chester, Monkhouse, Gilbert Harding...Ooh, it was terrible!

"TITUS GROAN" & "GORMENGHAST"

Based on the novels by Mervyn Peake, dramatised for radio by Brian Sibley.

BBC Radio 4, 10th & 17th December 1984.

Reviewed by Matthew Shackle.

Anyone attempting to adapt a 500 page novel into a 90 minute radio play is going to have to make sacrifices somewhere. The problems are all greater when the novels' distinctive features are descriptions of characters and their environment. Gormenghast is a huge, rambling, ancient castle, whose inhabitants' lives are governed by the rule of the Groans, who in turn follow the wisdom of the Law. Into this world of peace and tradition comes Steerpike who, in the first novel, worms his way by cunning from kitchen boy to a position of power. Other conflicts between characters break out, and the castle's way of life is threatened. However at the end of the first novel, continuity and order are maintained although the new Lord, Titus, only a baby, hints in his symbolic rejection of the tokens of power at his inauguration that he will wish to be independent and free of Gormenghast. The second novel builds up to the conflict between Steerpike, who is finally driven to violence, and the rebellious Titus, now a young man.

The unique style of writing in which the story is told has given the books a large following and acceptance as an important 20th century work. The plots of both books are not complex, but cover so much that, in both plays, many of the subsidiary plots were lost and the central parts of the books highlighted. The meticulous depth of characterisation, motive and detail of the books made way to a necessary simplicity so the plays can be understood. Both plays therefore concentrated on each character at a time while advancing the main plot. To help the listener to feel the strangeness of Gormenghast, Brian Sibley introduced a narrator to set scenes and introduce characters. Unfortunately the narrator was also used within a scene so that conversations were interrupted by "Said Gertrude", "Flay moved across the room". This became increasingly annoying when it continued long after each character had become distinctive. It also broke up the continuity of the scenes, by the trivial nature of the comments.

The cast was of a quality rarely heard on radio and in the limited time all fleshed out the basic mannerism of each character into a complete personality. Stating as Steerpike reviewed top billing since this could be said to be his pet project. So keen is he on the novels, he has acquired the film rights. The first play has shown the potential for adaption and, since he will not have battles or sandworms to worry about, the project could be a great success. As Steerpike he had the perfect voice. Sometimes he was smooth and polite, as when he arrived for the first time at Prunesquallors, and,

at other times, he became the calculating, vicious young man, manipulating events to his own ends.

Bernard Hepton stood out especially as Dr. Prunesquallor, as did Sheila Hancock as the twins. Fuchsia was not given enough time to show the change from moodiness to womanhood. Gertrude's strengths that came to the fore in saving Gormenghast from Steerpike and the flood in the second play were not emphasised. Sepulchre (David Warner) became suitable mad, but I felt that Play, Sourdut and Swelter were victims of the lack of time and were unable to develop to the extent that Barquentine (Maurice Denham) did in the second play.

The second play should have been easier to adapt since the large chunks dealing with the schoolmasters is secondary to the hunt for Steerpike. Unfortunately the catastrophe of the flooding of Gormenghast, a true apocalypse, is squashed into the last twenty minutes or so. This section is unnaturally rushed and the powerful antagonism between the desperate Steerpike and Titus, who also believes he has lost everything, is not brought out.

In fairness it would have been difficult to have adapted the books differently without making the plays incomprehensible to the listeners who had not read them. However I think the producer, Glyn Dearman, should have been braver and let the atmosphere of the castle and the actions of the characters stand on themselves and restricted narration to scene setting.

Still, it was excellent radio.

This is Hawkwind, Do Not Panic: Hawkwind recorded live at Stonehenge 1984. Flickknife Records Sharp 022.

Reviewed by Steven Hubbard.

From the moment Hawkwind ripped into 'Psi Power' until Nik Turner's final psychedelic crescendo with 'Watching the Grass Grow' it was solid, dynamic, high energy, SF rock all the way. On the way to 'Watching the Grass Grow', I fell into a 'Death Trap', was 'Shot down in the night', and experienced a touch of 'Levitation'.

In many ways this live double album (or alternatively an album and twelve inch single) is reminiscent of the Space Ritual in its atmosphere, energy, and density of sound. This album, however, has the addition of Huw Lloyd Langtons brilliant lead guitar work. It seems that, with Hawkwind, the guitars should be reinforced by the synthesizers, rather than dominated by them, as happened several times on their RCA album 'Choose Your Masques'.

While their RCA albums had a cold, clinical sound to them, all of Hawkwind's Flickknife records material has so far had the warm, rich atmosphere of their earlier works. This is probably due to the fact that a large percentage of the Flickknife material has been live, hence the comparison with their first live album - Space Ritual. However, all the material on 'This is Hawkwind...' was written comparatively recently, the last six or seven years. It also seems to be the best of their recent work.

Literally, it's Bob Calvert's fiercely literate style on 'Psi Power' and 'Death Trap' that make the most impression. He comes out with telling lines such as "I can read your mind like a magazine..." in 'Psi Power', which is an investigation of the more inconvenient aspects of telepathy and thought reading. "It's like a radio you can't switch off...", I have a feeling that Calvert has a piercing clear idea of what the worlds all about. Dave Brooks lyrics on 'Levitation' and 'Angels of Death' show he's just as good at the words as he is at the music (he also did an immaculate job producing the album). 'Angels of Death' does a bit of cross referencing with the 1975 studio album 'Warrior at the edge of time'.

"We are the warriors at the edge of time,
We hide inside your brains, looked inside
your minds."

After 'Angels...' comes Steve Swindells' pseudo Springsteen 'Shot down in the Night', which, whilst not competent lyrically, generates more manic energy than the rest of the album put together, and begs to be played at full volume.

After 'Shot down...' has totally and, depending on your point of view, deliciously, smashed your brain in, you can relax and recover whilst listening to Brock and Harvey Bainbridges' 'Stonehenge Decoded' which includes some excellent saxophone playing by Nik Turner. Finally, if you've survived so far, there is Turners acid crazed (in the best possible way) meanderings around the nether regions of the brain, appropriately titled, as mentioned before, 'Watching the Grass Grow'.

Also on the album are 'Space Chase' and 'Circles'. The former first appeared on the 1980 album 'Levitation', and is an excellent instrumental piece by Huw Lloyd Langton, which makes it easy to relate to the images the title evokes. The latter 'Circles' is co-written by Brock and Lloyd Langton, and has some excellent lyrics and vocals (is it called Circles in deference to Stonehenge?).

I'm sure it's been said before that moving to Fickknife has brought the cutting edge back to Hawkwind. It would be interesting to see the Hawks transfer this edge to an all new SF/Concept album. This is Hawkwind. Do Not Panic is, an excellent album, and anybody who likes Hawkwind should enjoy it. Personally I think it's their best since 'Space Ritual'.

FANZINE REVIEWS Sue Thomason

Send fanzines for review to: Sue Thomason,
1 Merrick Square,
Dolgellau,
Gwynedd LL40 1LT.

Anything not for review should be clearly marked DNR.

HOW NOT TO GAFIATE or SO YOU WERE WONDERING

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FANZINE REVIEWS...

I'm sorry about not getting the fanzine reviews in for the last Matrix. Anything that I was going to say then, I'll say now instead, so you haven't missed anything. See, I've moved, and started a new job, and I've been working rather hard at that, and anybody who thinks reading 473 fanzines in about a week is FUN is invited to try doing so. I kept doggedly on, until I realised that I was not having FUN reading these zines. I wasn't doing them justice. I was suffering from an acute fanzine overload (the current practice of everyone distributing their zines at cons to save on postage doesn't help this feeling), so I STOPPED READING FANZINES for over a month. And I now look forward to reading them again.

This happens to most people in fandom, sooner or later, in one way or another. Whatever you're doing stops being fun and turns into tedious boring hard work. The answer is to stop doing it for a while. Fandom understands. Fandom won't run away and hide while your back is turned. And it's really good to get back to it after a break...

On with the reviews themselves. These reviews don't claim to a serious, unbiased look at current fanzines; I wouldn't know how to set about writing such a thing, and I'd need far more space than I've got here. This is just a collection of things that interested me, caught my attention, in the fanzines I've read over the past few months. Because of illness, work, etc. I haven't read everything listed

in the short title catalogue, so if your favourite fanzine is there and doesn't get a rave review it might simply be that I haven't got round to it yet. Or it might be that I've reviewed the title before. I try not to spend too much space saying the same things about zines that are consistently good- CRYSTAL SHIP or THIS NEVER HAPPENS, for example- or zines that are consistently useful, like FANZINE FANATIQUE.

What did I like, then? I had a very pleasant time over Christmas, with a stinking cold, doing the word searches in SIRIUS MOONLIGHT and EMPTY HANDS, two groupzines from St. Andrews and Durham universities respectively. The fun is in a) finding the words, b) finding the spelling mistakes, c) finding words that aren't listed ("The Nude Hobbit"). A wonderful occupation, I really had fun with both of these, but obviously if you're the sort of person that hates crossword puzzles you'd probably enjoy the other bits of both zines more in comparison.

Then there is STILL LIFE, Simon Ounsleys zine, which is not only extremely funny but also has a very good article on the place of apas in fandom and their effect on fanwriting and zine production. Well worth reading for anyone who takes an interest in fanwriting.

TO CRUNCH THE MARMOSET has an excellent article on fanzine reviewing which grabbed my attention very firmly. My next review column in Matrix may end up being a sort of reply to this, but I'm still thinking too hard about it to be able to formulate my thoughts very clearly. Other well-written articles in this zine include Judith Hanna on cooking and Jim Barker on Scotland. MARMOSET is the most consistently interesting zine of the bunch this time round, I think.

Or perhaps that honour should go to BLUE REPRINT PLUS! which is a lucky spin-off from Franks Apa for those of us not favoured enough to be in it, containing the fascinating HOUSE QUIZ in which the secrets of your personality are revealed according to what sort of ideal house you'd like to live in. If apas produce this sort of writing, which is then made more generally available, then I'm very much in favour of them.

A few items of interest, not actually zine reviews, to finish the column off with: Diamond Press is offering its photocopying facilities to anybody interested in producing their own zine who may lack a means of reproduction (!). Prices quoted on the flyer I've seen range from £4.00 for 25 copies of an 8 page zine, to £105.00 for 200 copies of a 28 page zine. For further details, contact G.R. Kemp, 23 Raygill, Wilneote, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4JY.

Also received, and worth a review, though not actually a zine, the 1984 EUROCON PRESS REPORT is an extremely useful 18-page booklet which tells you how to publicise your con through the mass media. An authoritative and informative publication, the report does assume some basic familiarity with the process of dealing with the press and other media. I would expect the booklet to become a standard item of the Publicity Officers' armoury at any respectable con. Available for 75p including postage and packing from 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Hill, Essex. A Becon Publication.



A SHORT TITLE CATALOGUE OF CURRENT FANZINES.

- AEON. From: Cesar Ignacio Ramos, Apartado Postal 4129, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00905.
For: usual. 10pp, "the first 100% Puerto Rican fanzine".
- ALFA OMEGA 1. From: Riccardo Schiaffino, Redazione Alfa Omega, viale Areszo 7/1, 16146 Genova, ITALY.
For: usual. 10pp, English language edition of an international fanzine. Wants English language contributions.
- ALEX'S RESTAURANT 3. From: Alex Stewart, 11A Beverley Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3NG.
For: editorial whim, mostly? 10pp, the warm, friendly persine.
- ANDY GOES TO CRICKLEWOOD. From: Andy Sawyer, 45 Greenbank Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside, L42 7JT.
For: usual. 6pp, persine.
- ANSIBLE 40.41. From: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU.
For: money (6 issues for £2.00). 8pp, scandal, information, Triffic.
- BACK BRAIN RECLUSE 1. From: Chris Reed, Netherspring, Dyers Field, Smallfield, Surrey.
For: 50p, contribution? 20pp, subtitled "a magazine of fiction and art", includes song lyric by Moorcock and quite a lot of work by Chris Reed. Quality: good-average.
- BLUE REPRINT PLUS! From: Anne Warren, 8 The Hermitage, Portsmouth Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 2LZ.
For: usual? 30.5pp, reprints of Franks Apa contributions plus extra bits, excellent.
- BRIGANTE 4. From: Eunice Pearson, 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham, B37 6JE.
For: usual. 8pp, chatty semi-persine with articles on Spars Rib, schooldays, book reviews.
- BUZZ 3. From: Lawrence Bean, 12 Wilmslow Avenue, Sharples, Bolton, BL1 7AX.
For: usual. 8pp, persine.
- CALABAN 4. From: Eunice Pearson (see BRIGANTE for address).
For: usual. 10pp, fiction, poetry, illios, book reviews.
- CLOUD CHAMBER 30.31. From: Dave Langford (see ANSIBLE for address).
For: members of Franks Apa, editorial whim. 4pp, brilliant persine.
- CRYSTAL SHIP 9. From: John D. Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks.
For: usual. 56pp, consistently excellent zine which I'm not reviewing in depth this ish 'coz I haven't got round to reading it yet...
- EGREGIOUS 2. From: Eunice Pearson (see BRIGANTE for address).
For: usual. 4pp, persine.
- EMPTY HANDS 5. From: Durham University SF Society (try MATRIX CLUB NEWS for address, or try Sally Moon, Trevelyan College, Durham.) For: trade, 20p, or possible loc. 28pp, groupzine, articles, illios, wonderful word search which I found really good fun.
- EPSILON 16.17. From: Rob Hansen, 9A Greenleaf Road, East Ham, London, E6 1DX.
For: trade, loc, editorial whim. Fannish, substantial.
- FANZINE FANATIQUE. From: Keith & Rosemary Walker, 6 Vine Street, Lancaster, Lancs LA1 4UF.
For: usual? 10pp, Indispensable fanzine reviewzine, 27 titles reviewed, articles on zine classification.
- FOR PARANOIDS ONLY 2.001-The Unquiet Grape and FOR PARANOIDS ONLY 5. From: Nigel E. Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG.
For: the usual, the unusual or 32p in stamps.
- GRAZING SAINTS 8.9.10.11. From: Cath Easthope, 113 Abbey Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 7QQ.
For: Apa-B and others. Persine.
- INDIAN SCOUT/NORTHFIELDS MORTICIAN 1. From: The Cretins, c/o 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire, G72 9MA.
For: usual? 20pp.
- LILITHS CHILD 12. From: Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST1 5JG.
For: Members of Apa-B / The Organisation, editorial whim. 18pp, mostly personalzine.
- MSTO 2. From: Martin Smith, 64 Purley Bury Avenue, Purley, Surrey, CR2 1JD.
For: usual, or a ticket for the shuttle. 6pp, persine.
- ONOMA 2. From: G.A. Bryant, 92 Rue de l'Arbre Saint-Roch, B-4480, Oupeye, Belgium.
For: usual? 78pp, persine.
- PAWS-The Newsletter of the Soft Toy Liberation Front. From: Roola, c/o 113 Abbey Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 7QQ.
For: editorial whim?
- QUARTZ 7.8. From: Geoff Kemp, 23 Raygill, Wilnecote, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4JY.
For: 40p. Games, articles, fiction, artwork, etc, etc.
- REAL TIME (I think this may be GEGENSCHIN 47). From: Eric Lindsay, PO Box 42, Lyneham ACT 2602, Australia.
For: usual. 20pp, diaryzine.
- RIVERRUN TO CALIFORNIA. From: Paul Dörner, 41 Lee Court, Lee High Road, London, SE13 5PE.
For: editorial whim. 26pp, "A travel diary of a journey by plane and train to get to the World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles".
- ROT 6. From: Mal Ashworth, 16 Rockville Drive, Embay, Skipton, North Yorks.
For: editorial whim. 44pp, just thought I should mention that there's a mere 20 year gap between ROT 6 and its predecessor, ROT 5. And you thought I was behind with the fanzine reviews... It's events like this that make me feel right at home here in fandom...
- SIC BISCUIT DISINTEGRATE 5.6. From: Dave Rowley & Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs ST1 5JG.
For: loc, NOT TRADE, contribution, whim, 40p. Big fat fanzine: articles, illios, fiction, poetry, lots of everything in fact.
- SINKING. From: Magnus Eriksson, Sernanders vag 7:241, S-752 61 Uppsala, Sweden.
For: usual. 8pp, used to get the guy a trade and get into Swedish fanzines.
- SIRIUS MOONLIGHT 8. From: St. Andrews Science Fiction & Fantasy Society, Students Union, St. Marys Place, St. Andrews, Fife KY16 9UZ.
For: usual? 16pp, informative groupzine, articles on forthcoming films, work by Frank Herbert, Tolkien based wordsearch (are wordsearches a feature of groupzines?). Good value.
- ...SOMEWHERE BEFORE 2. From: Ian Bambo, 14 Eskdale Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne NE2 4DN.
For: usual. 17pp, persine, really good stuff this (see review of ...SB 1 two Matrices ago).
- STILL LIFE 1.2. From: Simon Ounsley, 21 The Village Street, Leeds, LS4 2PR.
For: editorial whim? 14pp, 2pp, persines.
- SWANSEA WITH ME 1. From: Alex Zbyslaw, 197 Herbert Avenue, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4HR.
For: usual. 12pp, ensembled persine, zine reviews.
- THE MAGNIFICENT MINE. From: Ian Sørensen, 142 Busby Road, Clarkston, Glasgow, G76 8BG.
For: usual. 15pp, and full of mine.
- THE MAGNIFICENT SEVENTH XYSTER. From: Dave Wood, 1 Priory Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7QA.
For: usual. 41pp.
- THIS NEVER HAPPENS 6. From: Lilian Edwards & Christina Lake; editorial address is 235 Ifley Road, Oxford, OX4 1SQ.
For: usual? The fanzine is available for hollowed out pumpkins, bona fide ghosts and, of course, money (say 85p or more). 44pp, lots of fascinating articles, illios, Captain Kelvin strips (yum! yum! (I'm fond of Captain Kelvin)). You should be getting it already.
- THYME 38. From: Roger Weddall, 79 Bell Street, Fitzroy 3065, AUSTRALIA.
For: news, money (ten issues £5.00). 12pp, Australian version of ANSIBLE (q.v.).

TO RAUNCH THE MARMOSET. From: Paul Kincaid, check the address as he seems to be a bit peripatetic at the moment, but last heard of at 114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1ES.
 For: editorial whim (try bribing him). 21pp, illios by Jim Barker, includes articles on Scotland and the Scots by Jim Barker, Cooking by Judith Hanna, also linguistics and fanzine reviewing by PK.

WEBERWOMANS WREVENGE Vol. 4, No. 1. From: Jean Weber, PO Box 42, Lynneham, ACT 2602, AUSTRALIA.
 For: usual: loc or contribution preferred. 18pp.

WIZ 12. From: Richard Bergeron, Box 5989, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00905.
 For: usual. 2pp, "Machiavellian Intrigue issue".

WOONSOCKET 1. From: Peter Crump, 9 Llys Wylfa, Mynydd Isa, Mold, Clwyd CH7 6XA.
 For: loc, trade, contribution, editorial whim. Joint production by Pete Crump & Philip Collins. 16pp, articles, illios, comic strip.

YEAR OF THE RATU (ATU XVIII 12). From: Trevor Mendham, 53 Towncourt Crescent, Petts Wood, Kent, BR5 1PH. For: usual. 50p. 32pp, good as ever.

YUM! From: Saul Bura, 143 Stornaway Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 4NX.
 For: usual. 8pp, first fanzine, contains the INSIDE STORY of Ashley Watkins and the pretty clothes...

BYE - BYE BSFA by PHILIP COLLINS.

"If there is anything that we can do that will encourage you or help you (and others in a similar position) let me know. We will try- honest." - Alan Dorey replying to a letter from Hilary Robinson in MATRIX 55.

Excuse me while I laugh, a lot.

Now admittedly Alan Dorey was writing here specifically about fan fiction whilst I'm going to be talking here about writing generally for the BSFA, but surely if they do really want to help new people, they've got to grab them while they're enthusiastic, and encourage them to contribute. But do they in fact do this? Do they Hell! I'd like here to give an outline of my experiences since trying to become active in the association two years ago.

VECTOR:- I decided to become more active in the BSFA coincidentally about the time Geoff Rippington took over the editorial reigns of Vector. At first I thought Geoff was doing a good job and wrote telling him so. All no LoCs from this period were published. However as time went by in my opinion Geoff got into a rut, with each new issue being almost exactly the same as the previous one. I grew bored and disenchanted. Rather than suffer in silence though, I wrote stating my reservations- I do pay for the zine after all. It is noticeable though that not one of my LoCs from this period was ever published. Could this be why certain issues of Vector were without letter columns? Were other members of the BSFA equally bored? I feel we should be informed. Finally I gave up writing to Vector altogether- why write when response is non-existent?

Just before I gave up writing letters, I decided to try my hand at writing articles. I had a few ideas, and phoned Geoff to tell him about them. "Well, no promises sir," said Geoff. "but please send your article along and I'll give you my comments on it. Please enclose an SAE though for a quick reply."

Fair enough I thought, and sent him my article and an SAE. That was early February 1984. As I write this it is now the end of December and I've yet to have a reply at all.

I didn't expect the article to be published necessarily, but a short letter giving details of its faults would, at least, have encouraged me to try again. As it was I got nothing, so it's bye-bye Vector.

PAPERBACK INFERNO:- Joseph Nicholas too seems to share this "I'm right, you're wrong, piss off" attitude- look at any of the letter columns for ample evidence of this. What's the point of writing LoCs when one continually meets this sort of response?

On the same day in October 1982, I sent off identical letters to Joseph Nicholas and Jo Fletcher, the book reviews editor for the British Fantasy Society, stating that I would be interested in trying my hand at writing some book reviews. From the BFS I got a book and a letter saying in effect, "Have a go!"

From the BSFA I got a letter talking about the whys and wherefores and symbolic purpose of reviewing. No book though. I wrote the review for the BFS, it was published, and I've been happily writing for them ever since. Bye-bye Paperback Inferno.

MATRIX:- When I first wrote to Matrix, Graham James and Linda Strickler were reaching the end of their reign as editors. I sent them three film reviews (of "Conan the Barbarian", "The Thing" and "Star Trek II- The Wrath of Khan"), and what did I get in reply? That's right, the traditional BSFA reply, bloody sweet Fanny Adams. Look carefully at the WAHF list in Matrix 44 and you will see the name of Philip Collins buried in there somewhere. Wow, what an honour! Really makes you want to rush out and write some more doesn't it?

Still, in the words of the late, great W.C. Fields, "If at first you don't succeed- try again, then give up. It's not worth making a fool of yourself." So, when I found that Matrix had a new editor, Simon Polley, I sent off another film review, this time of "The Beastmaster".

Now I'm not here to defend any of Polleys rather strange editorial decisions, but it must be said that he is the only member of the BSFA, to date, to offer me any form of encouragement. So, alright, he didn't publish the "Beastmaster" review, but he does mention in Matrix 47 that he received it, and actually apologises for not having the room to publish it. This was what I had been writing for all this time- a sign of interest in me, the readership, the people that pay to keep the BSFA running. Thus encouraged I sent in another film review and it was published.

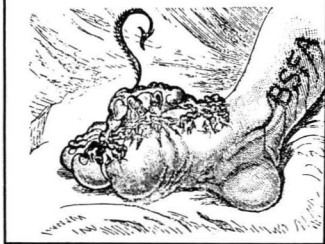
I continued to send in film reviews to Matrix and continued to get the positive feedback of seeing my name in print. Flushed with this success, I even wrote offering my services as Fanzine Reviewer. Stoney silence was the reply, but whilst I was at least getting some stuff published I plugged on.

When the new Matrix editor, Chris Hughes, took over, I wrote to him asking about my offer to become the fanzine reviewer, and also asking if he'd be interested in relieving some film reviews from me. Chris Hughes wrote back saying sorry, but the fanzine reviewer post was filled (fair enough), and, although he was planning a media review section, he would not be interested in any submissions from unless they were typed up first. I absolutely flipped at the latter- I'd already had numerous letters and articles published in fanzines, all of which I wrote by hand (I can't type). If they could manage it, why couldn't he?

I was so annoyed and disgusted by Chris Hughes' attitude that I threw his letter in the bin in a rage. Bye-bye Matrix.

That was the last time I tried writing to the BSFA, until the present article. This will be the final thing I write for them as my subscription is due in April 1985. And then it is Bye-bye BSFA.

THE MEMBERS BITE BACK



Stuart Falconer
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Ponteland
Newcastle Upon
Tyne NE20 9RG

Many congratulations on your first contribution to the 'Quote Unquote' book of typographical errors. Professionally printed was it? Well I

never. Some points from your letters page. I have to say that I strongly dislike the idea currently being kicked about in the higher realms of the BSFA that there should be a single "Mega-sine" comprising all the present magazines. Let us not forget that the camel is a horse designed by a committee. In "The Book of Imaginary Beings", J L Borges suggests that the Chimera, a beast which possessed the external characteristics of numerous other animals, was so much of a confused mixture that even the ancients did not take it seriously. Similarly, any attempt to reconcile the differences between the associations publications will be doomed to failure. Does the BSFA exist only to publish magazines? Surely the best interests of the membership are served by the present heterogeneous approach. As far as I can see, there would be nothing to gain other than an modicum of prestige, and there are more important things to consider.

The other big issue under discussion seems to be the idea of a fiction magazine. Here I have to join those who are pressing for the association to launch/revive such a publication. This is a serious lack at the moment. We are told that our worthy chairman is not opposed to amateur fiction, but to bad fiction only. Unfortunately, his published statements seem to indicate that he sees amateur as being synonymous with bad. As an amateur writer of fiction I take that kind of thing as a personal insult. At the moment the BSFA seems to be interested in one side of SF, namely criticism. In other words, those who run the BSFA are only interested in talking about it, not doing it.

I see it as an important function of BSFA that it should help to promote the work of unknown authors. I say this not for the reasons which the chairman usually uses to dismiss the idea, that is "vanity" publishing. I send my work to publishers because I want to share my ideas with as many people as possible. I can assure you that it is not the fame and the money that drives me to write. It is one thing to have my work rejected because it is not good enough. This is entirely proper. It is something else to go unpublished simply because there isn't room. There will always be a need for outlets for new fiction. Intersone and Cassandre have proved this. Here Roy Gray shows terrible naivety in saying that good fiction will always find a market. There is a long list of successful authors who had to hawk their wares 'round every publisher in town before someone had the foresight to take them on. Richard Adams &

J R R Tolkien are just two names that spring to mind. They were near misses. How many others have we lost altogether in this way.

The suggestion is often made that a magazine is only as good as its contributors. In other words, a BSFA fiction magazine would lower the general standard. In my experience the tone of a magazine is set by its editor. If a magazine publishes bad or weak fiction it is because the editor can't tell the difference, and not because he can't get anything better.

Focus is often cited as the associations outlet for fiction, but that is only part of its function. Primarily it concerns itself with the craft of writing and the business of getting published. This job it does very well and I will be glad to see it more frequently. There is a very real need for BSFA to produce a fiction magazine and to encourage the next generation of writers.

You rightly point out the value of the Writers' and Artists' Yearbook. In my opinion this is quite indispensable to the aspiring writer. It often surprises me how many people have never heard of it. However I have details of a couple of magazines which it does not mention. One is Panurge. This is a new publication. Only one issue has appeared so far but it holds some promise for the short story writer. It is published twice a year and the editorial address is 70 Birks Road, Cleator Moor, Cumbria, CA25 5HU. The other one, called Iron, has been going for about eleven years. It is what is usually referred as a literary magazine with poetry, fiction, and various things in between. I would urge people to read it for its quality (and I'm not just saying that because one of my things was in the last issue), but also because it is probably the best produced magazine of its kind in this country. It comes out three times a year from 5 Marden Terrace, Cullercoats, North Shields, Tyne & Wear, NE30 4PD.

*** In the words of Dave Langford (Focus 9), "Consult the book by all means, but warily...". As well as the Writers' & Artists' Yearbook, I assume most people with serious aspirations to authorship also get the 'Bookseller', and, for an informative look at what happens to the many pages of manuscript produced every year, the 'Distribution Yearbook' is a must, covering profit margins for shops, printers, etc, and the physical manufacture of books and magazines. I really must apologise to Hilary Robinson because, after mentioning *Isang* in the last issue, it was only when I referred to an article in issue 10 (I was adapting the snooker in D&D rules to pool, for a Casey NPC I created) that I noticed her 'Starwing and Enler'. Unfortunately I still have not found time to read it.

I also have had rejection slips, although my personal favourite is the one I received from Eclipse Comics in the US. I had sent them photocopies of two comic strips I'd done based on some of Bob Calverty's poetry, and I received a postcard from Dean Mulleney saying "I do not care much for this psychedelic, hippie heavy metal stuff..." and going on to say "I guess I'm just a cotton-pickin' jazz fan at heart". Takes all sorts to make a world.

Over to Dorothy Davies with the latest Focus news...

Dorothy Davies For the record. Since I
3 Cadeals Row offered to co-edit Focus
Faringdon, Oxon. with Sue Thomason, I have
had THREE (3)(tres), what-
ever language you like, it still comes to 3.
fiction submissions. I have accepted 2 of them.
Bernard Smith is seemingly getting the submissions,
so please could we have some too.

Observation. I don't read the newspapers (can't afford them) and therefore am unused to reading broken words, such as I find in this edition of *Matrix*. It does terrible things to the reading flow. 3 columns per page is a little too much to ask of anyone who doesn't have a justified margin on their typewriter. Do us a favour, cut it out!

If anyone knows of a foolproof way to keep cats out of a garden, would they let me know?

In one Saturday 6 cats got into our garden 8 times. We have goldfish, and a resident population of starlings, sparrows, blackbirds, a single thrush, a pair of blue tits, a chaffinch or two, a robin, a frog and baby, and the odd hedgehog. We consider them more important than cats. The garden is 30' long but only 12' wide, fenced on one side with chainlink, on the other by boards with holes, admittedly, for the creatures to get in. We plan to do something about that, but it's expensive. Within the immediate vicinity live 9 or 10 cats, you see...have tried SCOOT, rain affects it. Have tried Odor Sticks, expensive, again. Turn your minds to problems other than nuclear disarmament for a moment or two, and then go back again. I'd hate to stop you considering it permanently. CND supporters, I'm with you all the way.

*** There is a very simple answer to the cat problem, it's called a Rhodesian Ridgeback, a dog that stands about the size of a pit pony with jaws about two feet wide. You won't have to spend a lot on food, the cats will do nicely...followed by the birds...hedgehogs...even troublesome neighbours. Personally, I'm a bit worried about that baby living with the frog. Is it yours? Mary Whitehouse will have a fit. Was it placed there by a London Borough of Camden social worker? Or did it go of its own free will? By the way, what division are CND in? Spurs are still at the top, Andy Brewer!

Stewart Morri
22 St. Andrews Close
Moreton-on-Lugg
Hereford HR4 8DD.

The debate over a fiction magazine seems set to run and run and, while I'm sure the committee

would like to see the back of it, I must take the opportunity to stoke the fires.

Surely a marriage of those proposals put forward by Andy Brewer and Charles Stross would be the most workable and desirable. That is a fiction magazine produced once a year in which a high quality of material can be assured, as Mr. Stross indicates, by paying the authors. In reply to his point you say that paying contributors to a regular fiction mag is currently impractical but must this also be the case for a one-off?

Or, perhaps if Focus was produced on a more regular basis (ie. every mailing session) perhaps one issue a year could be set aside solely for fiction. Where there's a will...

The idea of a members ballot seems to have been smothered. I hope the logic for MBE is not symbolic of the effects of the members comments on the 'hierarchy', that is to say a flea bite on the big toe of the BSFA.

Moving on I can only sympathise with Hilary Robinson whose difficulties I share. She asks for address for such elusive mags as 'Fantasy Tales', 'Whispers', etc, and you refer her to the Writers and Artists Yearbook. Well I have the 1984 edition and the only SF market with an entry in the UK market is 'Ad Astra' which I understand to be long deceased. We need addresses! If you cannot supply them please tell us who can!

Finally, as the nuclear debate is currently to the fore I must chip in.

Andy Brewers letter struck the right note with me, I share his fears about unilateralists. However laudable their aims, naivety is naivety in any guise.

The current trend seems to be towards the idea that nuclear war is inevitable and that mankind has no future. To my mind such an attitude is indefensible and smacks of an excuse not to think ahead, a cop out if you like.

I believe this idea, if it persists, is in equal danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy as is military preparedness, the latter being suggested by Charles Platt to Pournelle in 'Dream Makers Vol. II'.

By the way, spare a thought for us poor West Ham fans while yourself, Alan Dorey and Mr. Brewer revel in the glory.

*** The only foolproof way of getting the address of any journal is to buy a copy, and it must be said that unless you do sample a potential outlet you are never really going to know what sort of material they are after.

P. Nichols
19 Kendal Avenue
Copnor Portsmouth
Hants PO3 5AX

Sorry to complain about your first issue of M(56), but I guess you picked the wrong time to take on the job. I want to have a

good moan about your atrocious typing. I shall refer to your handling of my review 'Three Radio Plays', not to be self-serving (well, not entirely) but I know the bulk of the errors in the piece were at your end.

You missed out apostrophes, you mis-spelt "playwright", you missed out key words - you mis-typed "climactic" as "climatic" Twice! (you also changed 'populist' to 'populartist', for which I thank you - except that I am unable to find either word in the dictionary. At least in the sense I intended it, so I remain convinced I must have made it up).

It's petty, I know; certainly more petty than Matthew Shackles complaints of editorial interference. And I know M's print form makes it difficult to correct mistakes, and typos are difficult to spot, and M is a last minute paste-up job, and my article arrived after the M56 deadline (Oops, sorry) - but please try to preserve the sense of what you print, even if it makes untidy corrections.

I don't read comics any more, and nolonger have any interest in the field, but I nonetheless accept - and guardedly welcome - the introduction of a comics column; the comic is just as valid an artistic medium as any other (don't laugh-I mean it). However, I loathe the idea of a wargaming page. Whatever next? Highest scores at PacMan?

What peeves me most (and I'm not easily peeved) is your implication that gaming will receive a regular space when, for example, media reviews are given no guarantee of space; in the past, reviewers have been given space as required (sometimes a dozen, sometimes none). Maybe I misinterpret your intentions...?

Okay, so M returns to nuclear weapons, but nothing new is said - just the same old for/against arguments. I'm not one of those who argue that it is a taboo subject, never to be mentioned in M, but unless somebody has something new to contribute, could they please drop it for five minutes?

I resent the implication that those who are bored with the subject AS PRESENTED IN M are trying to cocoon themselves from reality. Some of us read newspapers to keep up with events pertaining to armageddon. Some of us spend many hours scared witless at the implications of nuclear winter as described in 'The Cold and The Dark' by Sagan. Apart from the odd original letter, M does not begin to tackle the subject and would be better off avoiding it unless (to repeat myself) the handling of the subject matter is sufficiently novel.

I'm just about enough of a humanist to believe that no man or woman, Russian or American, will ever be unfeeling enough to knowingly and willingly press the button. But I'm just about enough of a cynic to know that the best laid plans of mice and men...

This morning, a cruise missile landed in Scandinavia. By mistake. This time it was a dud.

*** If you feel I've truly done you wrong, many apologies. As you say, you sent the review after the deadline (which was tight, to say the least), and that shows how quickly, and what sort of pressure I was under, to get M56 together.

The gaming column is to be a regular, but have no fear, the media reviews will not suffer. They provide the meat and gravy of Matrix and it is unthinkable that they will be limited space wise. Indeed, they are another part of the magazine I'd like to expand, taking a far broader range of mediums onboard.

Andy Sawyer
45 Greenbank Rd
Birkenhead
Merseyside
L42 7JT

It's rather unfortunate that you should be hit with "problems beyond your control" on your first issue of M, because what there is of the rather truncated issue we have is pretty promising. No doubt you'll be hit by hundreds of outraged purists objecting to your inclusion of pieces on games playing and comics. DON'T LISTEN TO THEM! It's good to expand the frontiers a little! Having just bought a Spectrum I'm now trying to take a more active interest in SF based computer games. Admittedly the ones I've seen look like you've got fed up with them after a week or so, but there seems to be some exciting developments on the horizon.

I'd be happy to review computer games for you if you want- along with many others, no doubt! I know nothing about role-playing games, partly because I just don't have the time to get involved in them, but that does not stop me thinking that there's a place for them in M. Just so long as the 'conventional' side of things- books, films, TV- doesn't get totally abandoned.

There seems to be an increase in newer names writing for M now, which is all to the good.

Opinion on fan fiction and the BSFA seems to look with a certain degree of openness on some sort of anthology rather than an actual fiction magazine as such. It's something I've also suggested, and it's interesting to see Roy Gray also floating the idea, although ideally I would like to see the BSFA producing a "Best of..." anthology reprinting the best fan fiction from the years amateur fiction magazines, rather than Roy's actual suggestion. This would lay all this squabbling about control which I think is unfortunate and has allowed the entire question to get lost in personality conflicts. Perhaps payment could be offered? The advantage of this idea is that the BSFA could act as a focus for the better amateur fiction, bringing it to a wider audience than it first had, and by presenting it as the best, allow some discussion of quality to take place. The disadvantage- apart from the cost, which could be considered if even a token payment is offered- would be that even a token payment, not being offering a new opening for writers in the way that, say, Cassandra does. I float it for discussion, no more, but it seems to me to have some merit.

Dave Kelly
179 Ramsgate Road
Broadstairs
Kent CT10 2EW

Nice to see M widening its horizons with the games and comics features.

Dave Hodsons remarks on Laserburn are undeniably true- Laserburn is simply the best, no question.

One reason why I joined the BSFA, and hence receive M, was to read constructive and intellectual comments and discussions on SF. I certainly did not join to keep up to date with the nuclear debate. There are other publications better suited to this, and, quite frankly, I think that is where such comments should go. M should be a nuclear- debate-free zone.

And a final note of warning: though the new style M may look like toilet paper, it certainly shouldn't be used that way. It took me over a week to get the ink off my bum.

*** Hum...Well!

Marcus L. Roland
22 Westbourne Park Villa
London W2 5EA

I'm glad to see that you are finally going to give some coverage to SF type games; I'd guess that at least half your membership play them. However, I should mention a tiny snag with the title of the article, "The Name of the Game".

Last Christmas the British RPG magazine "White Dwarf" asked me to write an introductory series for them, which appeared for four months around April. I was looking for a title, and, by coincidence, I choose "The Name

of the Game". A while later a legal friend of mine warned me that I might be laying myself open to problems, since this is a registered title used by ITC for a Gene Barry film series. However, I've never heard anything from them, so I expect its OK.

While I think that Dave Hodsons coverage was mostly fair, he seems to be misinterpreting the idea of RPGs. Because it is a lot easier to describe rules and combat mechanics than the ambience of a game, there's a tendency to favour playable games over games with a good background and atmosphere. Call of Cthulhu and Traveller both score heavily here; Call of Cthulhu because a good referee can scare the pants off players without ever putting their characters in physical danger. Traveller because there are at least a hundred thousand words of reasonably consistent game background in print. Gamma World and Star Frontiers do extremely badly here; they are basically D&D in disguise. Remember, the whole idea of an RPG is, as the name implies, Role Playing. If there's nothing more to do than fight monsters you might as well play a pure wargame. Laserburn is very good in this respect, as Dave says. However, it just can't be described as an RPG. The nearest I've ever come to role playing in this system was on an expedition to recover some body parts stolen by an organlegger, uttering a cry of "I've come for my goolies!" as I leapt on the villain. I've certainly nothing against wargaming; I just think that they are two distinct genres and Dave hasn't distinguished between them very clearly.

Finally, a note on your comic review section. As Gyrnruon attendees will know, the reason that Warrior hasn't featured Marvelman lately is that they are involved in a protracted legal vendetta with Marvel Comics. It isn't fair to blame Warrior for the delay.

*** It is not difficult to improvise Laserburn into an RPG, it merely requires expanding the skills section of the game. Indeed, White Dwarf featured a scenario that could be played using Traveller, Space Opera or Laserburn. The game only become a full skirmish or wargame set of rules when one uses the 'Imperial Commander' add-on rulebook. Regarding 'atmosphere' over 'playability', yes, Call of Cthulhu is very good in this respect, but Traveller is an unimaginative set of rules, owing more to George Pal style films than to SF as it really is. It's age is obviously an important factor here, but Metamorphosis Alpha is as old and still has more imaginative content. When it comes down to the bottom line, the column was written with people that have no experience of RPGs in mind, and simplicity is the prime factor in such cases. Be it popular or not, the introduction of a games column has certainly provoked response.

C.R. Laker
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Belgium

"Matrix is a bi-monthly newsletter/magazine," (of the BSFA), and BSFA means British Science Fiction Association. Now having identified that your magazine is a vehicle of the BSFA, unless I've missed something somewhere, I believe you have a responsibility as editor to see that you provide a forum for SF fans. Up until the letters page things are fine, and SF is right up there waving the flag, however, Matrix does get a bit pear-shaped in its "The Members bite back" column.

My first concern is about something we are all more than aware of: the nuclear debate. I don't subscribe to the BSFA to read ill-advised articles on this overworked topic, which has nothing at all to do with SF. It's fact, same as the air we breathe, the clothes we wear, or the colour of our skin; these armaments are there, and no amount of bad prose is going to make them disappear. Bearing this in mind, I object to your taking the liberty of not only giving reams of space to this subject, but also your assuming licence to say, "such topics as the nuclear debate should be on these pages" I don't say that we are all rooting for

armageddon, or that the discussion of this subject is a bad thing, in the right place, I just say that by definition a BSFA is not the place.

Incidentally, if you knew anything at all about NATO, you'd know very well that French and American rounds do fit NATO members weaponry. The whole concept of the alliance is that the different member nations can use each others armaments against a common enemy. Your comment contrary to this is inaccurate and misleading, and I believe you should correct the error.

I'm also concerned about what seems to be your campaign of an unreasonable amount of damp-regging fiction. I'm not in the least bit interested in the virioli campaign between you, Augustus, and Bernard Smith, but it is evident that your membership wants somewhere to publish its fiction. Your readers enjoy book, TV, games and computer reviews, despite the fact that none are written by Arthur C. Clarke or Brian Aldiss, so why wouldn't fiction from the same type of source be just as entertaining? In that sense, Mr. Smith isn't as you appear to be blackening him "an outsider interested in feathering his own nest, or promoting his own ideas and effecting some sort of control over the BSFA" (my quotes). More he looks to be someone trying to provide a service that your membership wants.

In support of the proposal, it's fair to point out that the BSFA doesn't have a medium for fiction. You can't count FOCUS, because it contains little fiction in its few pages, and its rare appearances make its contribution as an outlet almost negligible. Intersone can similarly be discounted because it seems to be for and by the professional/established.

I agree that the fight for quality is a difficult one; I've read some really painful "SF", both amateur and big name professional, but I venture to suggest that it's not so much the quality as the interest in getting it going that is lacking. Cassandra seems to want to offer you somewhere for writers and readers to place and view British SF, by and for members of the BSFA. To say you can't sponsor or give lip-service to such a proposal is farcical, but by taking this stance you are contradicting yourselves. You are incorrectly and presumptuously assuming that your membership doesn't want to read it's own SF; thereby doing what you fear uncontrollable fiction editors would do: that is dictating. The difference is, of course, nobody can stop you.

Like it or not a goodly percentage of SF is reading, and to a lesser degree writing. Knowing that, why not show a bit more enthusiasm, before you find yourselves with a reader/sponsorship of just you zealous office holders.

I would guess that one of the main reasons most people have left, or are dissatisfied with the association is that they are continually being dictated to through the BSFA's various organs. I'm sure they get as fed up as I do reading about the various attacks and counter-attacks on and by members. Too, you make yourselves look very silly when you keep publishing the same type of letter from different people all asking for the same thing, then saying you're not interested. I believe there would be considerable merit in asking the members to see what they have to say.

I'm not too interested whether you publish this letter, if you've read it and still do nothing, that's up to you; it'll take a conscious act of irresponsibility to it in the wastepaper basket. I dare you not to.

*** Regarding your comments about the coverage given to the nuclear debate; if I receive six letters in a batch all remarking upon it and two that don't, as I supposed to ignore the six regardless of whether they represent the majority of correspondence I've received or not? Indeed, I take great care to make sure I do not misrepresent anybody in the letters page, do to including grammatical mistakes, just so nobody can say I've misrepresented an issue. If I received a dozen letters on

unemployment I would carry them (depending on whether or not they repeated each other) and suffer no pangs of conscience, as obviously a number of BSFA members regard this an important issue. The BSFA as I see it serves an important function in bringing together large numbers of people both physically and in print, and it would be naive to assume that all they could possibly have in common is SF.

Regarding the NATO arms, I've been a wargamer for several years, and this requires quite a bit of study into arms and armament. I'm pretty sure of my views and facts, maybe you just see things a different way, and that is your privilege.

And on to the main body of your letter, I really do feel that you are seeing the BSFA committee as a sort of Bravarian Illuminati, shaping the world in the image they want. Such could not be further from the truth, all of the work done for the BSFA is voluntary and as such is a labour of love. If any committee member has reservations about something, it is usually for a far better reason than they just don't like it. A vital consideration is that the BSFA has been going for a long time now, and if it can possibly be helped the BSFA will continue for a lot longer, continuing to inform, help and act as a social focus for a great many people.

Martyn Taylor I am loathe to come to
Flat 2, 17 Hutchinson the rescue of any cry
Square, Douglas, tic under attack (even
Isle of Man. myself, most of the
time), but Matthew

Rattles attack on Ros Calverley in M56 really cannot be left to go unremarked. 'Irrelevant' he loftily says, without saying irrelevant to what, in whose opinion (other than his own), and by which criteria. For myself I thought Ros touched on most of the significant features of 'The Search for Spook' with the exception of the pace of the action and filming, but that is by the by. All reviewing is essentially a matter of personal taste, but if we are going to disagree then at least let's quote chapter and verse in support of ourselves, something Matthew fails to do. Indeed his whole letter is barely is barely coherent and as for his request that there be a 'Matrix line' on reviewing... Well, I've done my share of media reviews for Matrix, and I would do more but movies tend to get too tough late, if at all and I would no more lay down rules for a reviewer than I would abide by anybody else's - if they contradicted my own tastes and conclusions. Surely the attitude of any reviewer is dictated by the nature of the work in question and the personality of the reviewer. If Matthew needs to ask then I'd suggest he is not yet sufficiently aware of what he is doing as a reviewer to attempt the task.

On to weightier matters. I think it is about time someone voiced some disquiet about our beloved chairman, and the council. What let it be known that I consider their general demeanour and achievements to be excellent, and they deserve our thanks and support. I do not want their positions, thank you very much (I'd have a hell of a time making it to meetings...). Nevertheless there have been three significant faux pas in recent years which cast doubt upon judgements both individual and collective. The first was the Eddie farce. Now as far as I'm concerned the only major failing on the part of BSFA officials in this matter was a belief that everyone would act reasonably and that it is a failing I wish none of us shared). An unfortunate accident, with lessons to be learned rather than any major catastrophe, but perhaps indicative of a set of mind in certain places. Then we have the appointment of Simon Polley to the editorship of Matrix. Now I do not know who the other candidates were, although I do know others who were interested within a very short time of the first Polley Matrix appearing. My experience, though, raises the suspicion that the 'contest' for the editorship was at best a Dutch auction and at worst a fraud. Of course I have no proof, and I doubt whether the matter could be proved one way or the other except by publication of the minutes of the relevant council

meeting. Nevertheless a man was appointed whose devotion to the BSFA was demonstrated by his not even being a member prior to his appointment and whose qualifications for the post appeared to be a close encounter with 'Black Hole' and close association with the (mythical, of course) Leeds mafia.

Once, as Mr. Fleming says, is happenstance, twice is coincidence, and three times...

The third time is, of course, Cassandra. Now I am not concerned with the actual decision (all in all the right one - and I am an active member of Cassandra) but with the manner of its making. Anyone who can recall the late (and let it be said, largely unlamented) Extro will recall the unalloyed welcome given to that publication by those BSFA illuminati who also happened to be associated with Interzone (Messrs. Dorey, James and Ounsley). With friends like that even Paul Campbell had no need of enemies. Can the BSFA Chairman be so crass as to regard Cassandra as a threat to his beloved (if boring) Interzone? Well, probably not, but as Alan has himself admitted (in Gross Encounters) he had a lot on his plate during the initial phase of the collision with Cassandra. Which is all well and good, except that BSFA members elected him to be Chairman of the BSFA rather than Lord High Executioner of Season or even Chief Cook and Bottleswasher to Interzone and I don't think I am alone in thinking that Alan has neglected his responsibilities as Chairman this last year, the several confusions and lost papers during the whole mess over Cassandra being the evidence.

Now I repeat, I am not asking for Alan or anyone to resign. What I do want to see is the sloppy organisation and broken backed communication which hallmarked all three episodes eradicated. The BSFA is its members, us. We pay our dues, and we are entitled to be told what is going on, what is being done by our elected officers (perhaps Matrix could print the minutes of each council meeting as well as those of the AGM). After all, how can we be expected to elect those officers on an informed basis if all we have to guide us are the rumours and hashed up prevarications and self justifications which have afflicted us so often during the Cassandra campaign?

It is an interesting question whether there might be less difficulty finding members for the associations publications had previous decisions been seen to be made in a more open manner.

Anyway, if 'Vector' is evidence of the way the publications are to move than those movers and shapers cannot be all bad, can they.

*** Over to Alan Dorey:

"Martyn has a lot of interesting and constructive comments to make; it would be a mistake for me to defend myself or the committee because that would look like sour grapes, and after all, in general, Martyn is happy with the way things are going. However, I would say that communication between the committee and officers in the last few months has probably been much better than in many a long year. Also despite the mistakes in appointing some people it is incredibly difficult finding sufficient people to fill the roles who are both committed and capable. Since last August, we have replaced most of the posts within the BSFA and now only one vacancy remains - that for VECTOR editor. However, for my thoughts on that, please refer to my column elsewhere in this issue".

The only thing I could possibly add is that up until very recently I was a MALGO steward, and even within a trade union with over two hundred thousand members the same problems exist, and they also have a great deal more money and time in which to fulfil their tasks.

The facts as I see them are that both Alan and Bernard Smith of Cassandra, despite all the difficulties mentioned in Martyn's letter, have taken on responsibilities for things they believe in, and despite holding down full-time jobs, bringing up families, and all the many other tasks involved in everyday life, they fulfil those responsibilities very well indeed, and until the day when Cassandra goes professional and the BSFA has the membership and

income to afford full-time workers, they are to be admired for the amount of time and effort they put into these additional tasks.

Bernard Smith
8 Wansford Walk
Thorplands Brook
Northampton NN3 4YF.

First off, a couple of corrections to the letter from Charles Stross in the last issue of Matrix.

Bernard Smith never said that the latest issue of Cassandra would break 500 copies, and most certainly did not utter any comments about going professional (although I think I can see where the confusion arose). The publishing world is already littered with the bones of small presses that tried to go too far, too fast, and we don't intend adding to them.

I am indebted to Sandy Brown for taking the trouble to let us know just how and why certain decisions were reached with regards to the printing of a fiction magazine, but it's a pity that nobody bothered to be so communicative when it really mattered. However, there are parts of his letter that I found a bit disturbing both in regard to the way our offer was interpreted and also the reasons why the conclusions were reached. The letter was not, nor was ever intended to be, a take it or leave it offer but a suggestion open to discussion, flexibility, etc. It is obvious that if a magazine becomes an official publication of the BSFA it would be subject to the same rules, editorial control, etc as any other produced. We were prepared to accept that, so why couldn't the committee realise it? The letter read like a complete litany of misinterpretations that could have been straightened out with a telephone call had anyone on the committee been bothered. Strangest of all, though, was the saga of TANGENT. OK, a fiction magazine was attempted (how many years ago - four, five, six...?) and the whole thing went to hell, it seems, due to a berserk editor. There are plenty of ways to avoid that in the future - being a damn sight more careful who you select as editor being one. What is not acceptable is for the committee to use this foul-up as a reason to promote the idea that the BSFA membership is incapable of producing any readable fiction. The reason that I receive enough good fiction to keep Cassandra Anthology going on a regular basis has nothing to do with hard work, the refusal to pass the buck and this funny habit I have of waiting until I've read a piece of fiction before passing judgement on it.

Roy Gray appears to have got 'good fiction' confused with 'marketable fiction' - they do not necessarily mean the same thing (some cynics might argue that they are incompatible...). As has been pointed out repeatedly, publishers want financial return and will produce what gives it to them. Accountants are concerned with figures, not words. His point about fan publications being a cop-out is not only wrong but also insulting both to the motives of the writers and the judgement of the editors. It may very well happen, but that doesn't make it a Newtonian Law and there are people in this world who sometimes get it right. As regards the comment about writers 'having to conform' (as if they were a collection of office juniors), has it never struck him that fan publications could be regarded as a way of allowing a writer freedom of expression and subject matter denied by the dictates of the market?

Happily, there were some worthwhile suggestions among the letters, mainly that of having a yearly fiction magazine, or even a one-off, and it was nice to see that at least Martin Smith is aware of the fact that a fiction magazine would be primarily for the benefit of the READER, not the writer - a point that the vanity press brigade seemed to have conveniently overlooked or ignored.

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