

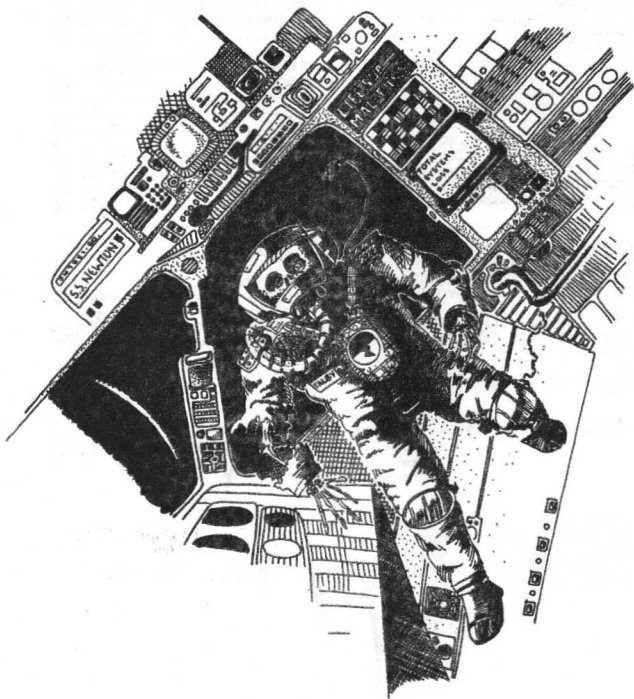
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# MATRIX 64 - JUNE / JULY 1986

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This issue of Matrix was edited by John Harvey

News Editor - Dave Hodson

Typing - Eve Harvey (all typos by John Harvey)

Proof Reading - what proof reading? "We don't need no poof reeder"

The next issue will be edited by Maureen Porter, who can be found at 114 Guildhall St., Folkstone, Kent, and would love to hear from you ALL.

MATRIX 65 DEADLINE

JULY 1986

Front cover art by ??? - I'm sorry to say I don't know, it was in Eve's art file but the covering letter was missing. Can anybody claim responsibility?

BSFA Membership costs £7 per annum and can be obtained through Sandy Brown, BSFA Membership Secretary, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire, G72 9NA  
 Membership renewals to Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading, Berkshire RG6 1PL

# I'M LEAVING NOW - I MAY BE GONE FOR SOME TIME

(John Harvey)

I'm very pleased to be able to announce that this is the last time my name will grace these pages as editor - yes fans, we've got ourselves a new fresh face, all rev'd up and raring to go as the Matrix editor. Those who've read the contents page will have seen that Maureen Porter has been honoured(?) with this post.

Maureen has been involved in fandom for some years now and those of you who attended Mexican II in February will have seen her working on the convention committee. Her credentials include being successful at one of the most harrowing tasks to be found in fandom, that of breathing life into some of the more well-known Apa's - The Women's Periodical and Frank's Apa. Her energy, drive and wealth of ideas will, I'm sure, bring a breath of fresh air to these pages. So watch out for Matrix 65 due in August. Those of you who wish to contact her with contributions, letters of comment, offers of help or just to give a good luck wish, her address is on the contents page. My best wishes go to her.

To give you all a taste of things to come, Maureen has outlined her plans for future editions of Matrix in an article which can be found immediately after the News pages.

## ANTARES

Where's Antares? Not an astronomical question but one which quite a few BSFA members have been asking recently - some not as politely as others (see Bernard Smith's letter in this issue). For new readers, the Antares saga started almost 12 months ago when the BSFA (in the form of the then Chairman Alan Dorey) launched a collaboration with the Cassandra amateur publishing team to produce an anthology of SF stories. Publication date was due to be the end of last year; sadly this was not to be and Antares has drifted in limbo for most of this year. Prompted by personal curiosity and the number of queries directed at me, I telephoned Alan Dorey a couple of weeks ago to get the latest information straight from the 'horse's mouth'. Work and home pressures, which prompted his resignation as Chairman, were obviously still affecting him. This, and a distinct lack of communication from the Cassandra side of the partnership had left Antares fairly low in his list of priorities. However, my phone call obviously had some effect because a few days later a much more

cheerful Alan telephoned to say that the ball was rolling again. Cassandra were sending their long-lost contributions through to him and the anthology would be with the printers as soon as possible. So the next mailing should contain your copy. Everything comes to those who wait; thanks for being patient.

## FOCUS

As the BSFA's regular, practical guide to the mystic arts of fiction writing, Focus has been somewhat less than frequent of late. Sue Thomason was the last editor and her resignation came at about the same time as Alan Dorey left the Chairman's position. Finding a successor to Sue has obviously not had the attention it would normally have received if there had been a Chairman on the job. But all is not lost, as two very promising candidates have offered (independently) their services as editor. We are currently discussing with them the re-emergence of Focus and hopefully should have some further news in the next mailing.

## HEADLESS MONSTER TERRORISES FANDOM?

(c) Dave Langford

Not quite, but we are still in need of a Chairman and sadly there do not appear to be any candidates offering their services. It's all very well members complaining that nothing was done at the ACM in the way of appointing a Chairman, but if we've no candidates then there's not much point in voting!

So how can we get candidates? I'm blown if I know, any of you know? Perhaps if I expound on what I feel is the role of the BSFA Chairman, some likely candidates may feel up to the job. The principal function of the Chairman is co-ordination. The BSFA functions through the efforts of a handful of enthusiastic amateurs working for no reward other than seeing a good job done and feeling a part of the organisation. Maintaining their motivation and enthusiasm is the most important job the Chairman has to do, together with the essential task of ensuring that jobs are actually being done. If a magazine editor gets fed up, or feels the effort just isn't worth it, what happens? No magazine happens. Similarly with all the other jobs, although lack of effort doesn't show as obviously (except for those helping to ensure the mailings actually get out), the BSFA still suffers if any one of them isn't done. So the Chairman must keep in touch with the various officers and, using the skills of a diplomat, rekindle motivation and enthusiasm for the BSFA. One thing s/he must not do, though, is take on the jobs personally;

if the Chairman is busy organising publicity and editing Vector, then the other aspects of the job are weakened.

Anybody out there feel up to the job?

#### PUBLICITY

It's clear from a number of recent letters to Matrix that publicity for the BSFA is not all it could be. One of the most practical solutions you have suggested is the provision of posters for display in local libraries, bookshops or wherever. For those who requested these, there should be a couple with this mailing. Anybody else who feels they can help should drop a line to Keith Freeman and he'll make sure you get some in the next mailing.

Of course, the most practical solution would be to have a Publicity Officer as a separate post. Anybody out there interested?

On the general subject of publicity and increasing the membership numbers, let me express some personal views. Of course the BSFA needs as much publicity as possible, but with a limited budget the results have to be maximised - it's not really much use to spend £70 on an advert to get 10 new members as we'd actually be losing money on the deal. In fact, you'd probably need more than 30 to break even (don't forget the cost of serving the new members). So paid publicity requires very careful selection and monitoring. Free publicity is what we want, of course, and here those of you who could get posters displayed would be doing a great service.

Sandy Brown reports the following results (up to the end of May) from a mention of the BSFA in the Radio Times (I didn't see it, did you?):

Enquiries received - 75  
New members - 29

Not many out of a circulation of 3 million or so copies! If we had paid for that mention we would most probably have made a loss on the deal.

One of the best forms of publicity we've found is the ad in the back of books. These are normally done on a reciprocal basis whereby we carry a publisher's advertisement in Vector in return for a page in the paperback. No money changes hands and we get a small but steady flow of new members for as long as the book is available (remember secondhand sales too). This does require negotiation by the Business Manager and limits the advertising revenue from Vector (swings & roundabouts!).

I think I've made it clear in past issues of Matrix that I've reservations

about boosting the membership numbers massively due to the simple problem of physically assembling large numbers of mailings. This is currently done by a handful of volunteers (often no more than 4) who collate and staple all those magazines, then stuff the envelopes. This job usually takes two days. Double the membership, and assuming the same number of mailing workers, it would logically take two weekends and by further extension, the mailings would never get done.

How could this be overcome? Obviously by reducing the workload; magazines would have to be collated by the printers and eventually we would have to consider the services of a commercial mailing agency. This costs money, though and we could well find ourselves requiring a substantial increase in the membership just to remain in the same financial position. For example, taking a current membership of 800, a cost of servicing equal to 26 per member p.a. and an additional cost of only 5p per member per mailing for the finishing work, the membership would have to go up to over 1,100 just to cover the additional costs without providing any further funds for the Association. I hope we can examine the financial position in more detail in a future Matrix.

I'm all in favour of boosting the membership numbers to thousands, even tens of thousands, but only if the BSFA management has the skills to meet the challenge this would pose.

#### PRINTING

It was my intention to produce this issue using the BSFA's litho machine, however time constraints have forced me back to the duplicator. I hope the slightly larger typeface is more readable than the last issue.

Whilst on the subject of printing I'd like to make it known to the membership at large that I do not wish to do any more litho printing for the BSFA. I've been doing this for six years now and it has become more work than I have the time or inclination for. The future of the BSFA's printing requirements will be high on the list of items for discussion at a committee meeting being held in the next few weeks. I hope that the next Matrix will carry a report of this meeting.

That's all folks.



# NEWS

\*\*\* Remember that item about the magazine STARDATE in the last news column? Well, poor old Titan won't even get the chance to distribute one issue in this country because it's been cancelled.

\*\*\* Tim Powers has won the Philip K. Dick award for the second time for his novel DINNER AT DEVIANTS PALACE, which is currently available in this country as a Chatto trade paperback. The hard cover has long since become quite scarce.

\*\*\* The contents for the 1986 YEARS BEST HORROR STORIES have been announced and are as follows.

PENNY DAYE by Charles L. Grant (originally available in the Fantasycon X programme book); DWINDLING by David Silva (Spectrum Stories); DEAD MEN'S FINGERS by Phillip Heath (Borderland); DEAD WEEK by Leonard Carpenter (Dark Lesions); THE SNEERING by Ramsey Campbell (Fantasy Tales); BUNNY DIDN'T TELL US by David Schow (Night Cry); PINWOOD by Tanith Lee; THE WOMAN IN BLACK by Dennis Etchinson (Whispers); THE NIGHT PEOPLE by Michael Reaves; MOTHER'S DAY by Stephen Wilcox; THE WEIGHT OF ZERO by John Taylor; IN LATE DECEMBER, BEFORE THE STORM by Paul Samson (Twilight Zone); CEREMONY by William Nolan (Midnight); ... BESIDES THE SEASIDE, BESIDE THE SEA... by Simon Clarke (Back Brain Recluse); LAVA TEARS by Vincent McHardy (Darkness on the Edge of Town); RAPID TRANSIT by Wayne Sallee (Grue); JOHN'S RETURN TO LIVERPOOL by Christopher Burns (Interzone); RED CHRISTMAS by David Garnett (Mayfair); TOO FAR BEHIND GRADINA by Steve Sneyd.

\*\*\* Yet another Philip K. Dick novel has been turned up. MARY AND THE GIANTS is to be published by Arbor House in the United States. The same publisher has bought the new Bruce Sterling novel.

\*\*\* The film rights to William Gibson's NEUROMANCER have been purchased by a newly formed U.S. production company, CABANA BOY PRODUCTIONS, INC., for \$100,000.

\*\*\* It's that time of year when... The 1985 Nebula Awards were announced recently and the winners were:  
Best Novel: ENDER'S GAME - Orson Scott Card.  
Best Novella: SAILING TO BYZANTIUM - Robert Silverberg (from Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine for February 1985).

Best Novelette: PORTRAITS OF HIS CHILDREN - George R. R. Martin (IASFM 11/85).  
Best Short Story: OUT OF ALL THEM BRIGHT STARS - Nancy Kress (Fantasy & Science Fiction 3/85).  
Grand Master Award: Arthur C. Clarke.

The June issue of LOCUS announces its 1986 award winners...  
Best Science Fiction Novel: THE POSTMAN - David Brin (who will be visiting this country for a year or so as of August or September) (Bantam Spectra, to be imported into the UK by Transworld next month).  
Best Fantasy Novel: TRUMPS OF DOOM - Roger Zelazny (the new AMBER novel published by Arbor House/Avon in the US).  
Best First Novel: CONTACT - Carl Sagan.  
Best Non-fiction/Reference: BENCHMARKS: GALAXY BOOKSHELF - Algis Budrys.  
Best Novella: THE ONLY NEAT THING TO DO - James Tiptree, Jr. (FESP 10/85).  
Best Novelette: PALADIN OF THE LOST HOUR - Harlan Ellison (Universe 15 & Twilight Zone 12/85).  
Best Short Story: WITH VIRGIL ODDUM AT THE EAST POLE - Harlan Ellison (Omni 1/85 & MEDEA).  
Best Collection: SKELETON CREW - Stephen King.  
Best Anthology: MEDEA: HARLAN'S WORLD - Harlan Ellison, editor.  
Michael Whelan got the best artist award, LOCUS the best magazine and Ballantine/Del Rey the best publisher.

\*\*\* The August issue of PLAYBOY is to feature an interview with Arthur C. Clarke.

\*\*\* Angus Wilson has sold an SF novel called KRISIE'S DOOM to Sphere. It is the first of a trilogy.

\*\*\* Following on from the sad news last month is a report on the death of THOMAS N. SCORTIA. Although Scortia never quite became one of SF's big names, he did write the novel on which the popular disaster movie THE TOWERING INFERNO was based with Frank M. Robinson. His final novel, DEEP CUT, is due for release in the US later this year.

\*\*\* Another lot of ol' cobb... awards; the Ditsars', which are presented at the Australian National SF Convention over Easter weekend:  
Best Australian Novel: ILLYWACKER by Peter Carey (which was also in the running for the Booker prize last autumn and is a bloody fine novel, published in the UK by Faber).  
Best International Novel: THE COMPASS ROSE by Ursula K. Le Guin.  
Best Australian Short Fiction: THE BULLET THAT GROWS IN THE GUN by Terry Dowling.  
Best Australian Fanzine: Metaphysical Review.  
Best Australian Fanwriter: Leigh Edmonds.

Best Australian Fanartist: Nick Stathopoulos.  
 William Atheling Award for best Australian criticism: George Turner.

\*\*\* Although the GB books were treated quite comprehensively in the last few issues (special thanks to Gamma and Mike Don), I don't see why we can't have some June and July US releases:

ACE: June: THE DORSAL COMPANION by Gordon Dickson, \$5.95 trade paperback collection;  
 LIAVEK: THE PLAYERS OF LUCK edited by Will Shetterly and Emma Bull \$2.95 p/b - another one of those shared world fantasy things along the lines of Thieves World, the first volume featured Gene Wolfe amongst others; BARD III: THE WILD SEA by Keith Taylor - this month's compulsory fantasy trilogy installment; GILPIN'S SPACE by Reginald Bretnor.

July: THE ARCHITECT OF SLEEP by Steven R. Boyett, \$2.95 p/b; THE MACHIAVELLI INTERFACE by Steve Perry, \$2.95 p/b; THE HIDDEN LAND by Pamela Dean, \$2.95 p/b;

LIFTER by Crawford Killian, \$2.95 p/b; HEROIC VISIONS II ed. by Jessica Amanda Salmonson, \$2.95 p/b anthology.

AVON: June: SHINING STEEL by Lawrence Watt-Evans, \$2.95 p/b.

BARN: June: THIEVES WORLD: BEYOND WIZARD WALL by Janet Morris, \$15.95 h/c - the third novel based upon the shared world series that started the whole fad; A CHOICE OF DESTINIES by Melissa Scott, \$2.95 p/b; SHARDS OF HONOR by Lois McMaster Bujold, \$2.95 p/b; WOLFbane by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth - an expanded and revised version of the 1959 novel; M.E.D.U.S.A. by Chris and Janet Morris, \$3.50 p/b.

July: REBELS IN HELL ed. by Janet Morris - sequel to Heroes in Hell which featured Greg Benford, this volume has Robert Silverberg, C. J. Cherryh and Martin Caidin; yet another shared world series; THE DOOMSDAY EFFECT by Thomas Wren; MINDSPAN by Gordon Dickson, \$2.95 p/b collection.

BERKLEY: July: A BAROQUE FABLE by Chelsea Yarbro Quinn (hold on, hold on, that's the other way round - Quinn Yarbro), \$3.50 p/b; CALLAHAN'S SECRET by Spider Robinson, \$2.95 p/b.

BLUEJAY: June: DOUBLE NOCTURNE by Cynthia Felice, \$16.95 h/c; THE LAST KNIGHT OF ALBION: PERCIVAL'S FINAL QUEST by Peter Hamratty, \$8.95 trade paperback.

July: AVARTON RISING VOLUME 1: THE HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING by Judith Tarr - another fantasy trilogy, but this one has had some damn fine reviews so it might be worth looking at; WORLDS OF IF: THIRTY YEARS OF INNOVATIVE SCIENCE FICTION ed. by Frederik Pohl, Martin H. Greenberg & Joseph D. Olander, \$10.95 trade paperback anthology.

DAM: June: TALES FROM THE FLAT EARTH BOOK I: NIGHT'S MASTER, BOOK 2: DEATH'S MASTER, & BOOK 4: DELIRIOUS MISTRESS all by Tanith Lee (remarkably not a shared world series), \$3.50 for the first two and \$3.95

for book 4; THE 1986 WORLD'S BEST SF ed. by Donald A. Wollheim, \$3.50 p/b; THE REALM BENEATH by B. W. Clough, \$2.95 p/b. July: QUESTAR'S ENDGAME by Jo Clayton, \$3.50 p/b; WORD-BRINGER by Edward Llewellyn, \$2.95 p/b.

DEL REY: June: THE RINGS OF THE MASTER BOOK 1: LORDS OF THE MIDDLE DARK by Jack L. Chalker - another fantasy trilogy and this guy is one of the worst offenders, even the titles sound all the same; THE ARMPIT...sorry, ARMLET OF THE GODS by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach - more fantasy, do you realise that if I was doing this column for the BFS Di Wathan wouldn't let it be printed?

July: THE TROLL'S GRINDSTONE by Elizabeth H. Boyer, \$3.50 p/b; BLAZE OF WRATH by Ward Hawkins - this guys books have cover paintings depicting lizardsmen, humanoid insects, etc.

QUESTAR: June: THE SILVER MOUNTAIN by Esther M. Fiesner, \$3.50 p/b; THE BLUE ICE PILOT by Lou Fisher, \$3.50 p/b.

July: SPIDER PLAY by Lee Killough, \$3.50 p/b; GOING TO SEE THE END OF THE SKY by William John Watkins, \$3.50 p/b.

TOR: June: THE STARRY RIFT by James Tip-tree Jr., \$14.95 h/c; THE PLANET ON THE TABLE by Kim Stanley Robinson - hardcover collection by one of the bright new pennies of SF. KSR is currently in Switzerland and will be visiting Britain soon with a possible signing at Forbidden Planet in London; THERE WILL BE WAR VOLUME VI: WARRIOR! ed. by Jerry Pournelle - five vols. and there still only WILL BE war. Bloody Americans' could never start a war properly!

July: TIMESHADOW RIDER by Anne Maxwell, \$2.95 p/b; SCHIMMELHORN'S GOLD by Reginald Bretnor, \$2.95 p/b.

Some other book releases from the US that might be of interest are AN EDGE IN MY VOICE by Harlan Ellison, a mammoth collection of criticism of just about everything by SF's chief whinner, the second Starblaze trade paperback edition costs \$10.95 and CHROMA: THE ART OF ALEX SCHOMBURG, compiled by Jon Gustafson with introductions by Harlan Ellison (gets around a bit), Stan Lee (the disputed co-creator of the Fantastic Four, Spiderman, etc - sign the Jack Kirby Petition and help get a master craftsman his work back!) and Kelly Freas.

\*\*\* Howard the Duck, the comics character wrangled over by creator Steve Gerber and copyright owners Marvel, is being adapted into a live action comedy film by the Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom scriptwriters Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz.

\*\*\* Dan Aykroyd is still working on the script to GHOSTBUSTERS II.

\*\*\* Jerry Lewis is to star in a follow-up to the 1963 comedy THE NUTTY PROFESSOR, due in March 1987.

\*\*\* The film adaption of Stephen Kings' PET SEMATARY, directed by George Romero, is due for April 1987 release.

\*\*\* The remake of THE FLY is nearing completion and reportedly bears only a passing resemblance to the 1958 original. Director/script-writer is David Cronenberg.

\*\*\* FASA, the games company, have just released a role-playing game based upon the film GHOSTBUSTERS.

\*\*\* Why is artist Dave Carson, renowned for his Lovecraftian illustrations, walking around with his arm in a plaster cast? Simple, after a night out partaking of the frothing ale he tried to flag down a tube train. Also present was pre-eminent drunkard Paul 'Gamma' Gamble of Titan Distributors fame, which might go some way to explaining it...

\*\*\* Robert Price's excellent Lovecraft fansine CRYPT OF CTHULHU has a British agent and will be available for subscriptions as of £42. The agent is Dave Hodson...shem!!! S.A.E. please if you happen to be interested.

\*\*\* Michael Moorcock's new ETERNAL CHAMPION novel, THE DRAGON IN THE SWORD, has been put back from an August 1986 release to early '87.

\*\*\* The new Keith Roberts novel from Gollancz is THE UNLIKELY ONES. The Bob Shaw novel reported from Gollancz last issue has had its name changed from THE MAGIC MOUNTAINS to THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS and is the first of a trilogy.

\*\*\* ALIENS, the sequel to the film ALIEN, has finished filming and it seems that Ripley, after floating through space for fifty-odd years is found only to be told that the planet on which John Hurt was originally 'infected' has been pioneered. The ship that finds her is the one being sent to said planet to find out why all contact has been lost...

\*\*\* To celebrate the centenary of Olaf Staledon's birth, the University of Liverpool are organising a conference for philosopher critics and science fiction enthusiasts. The dates are 26-28 September 1986 and further details can be obtained from Professor Stephen R L Clark, Department of Philosophy, PO Box 47, Liverpool L69 3BX

\*\*\* Not just an SF Mail Order Catalogue, the new booklet produced by SPFF Books includes small ads, news items and promises a letters column in the future. For your copy, write to SPFF Books, PO Box 712, 65 Dumbreck Road, Eltham, London SE9 1XF.

\*\*\* Science for People Magazine announces its first science fiction

short story competition. Entry is free, stories should be no longer than 2,500 words and typed if possible, and more information can be obtained from Tony O'Connell, Science for People, Dept W, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL (Tel: 01-607 9615)

\*\*\* Are we the only planet to support life? If not do we have regular visits from outside? For a possible answer, write to The Fact or Fiction Exhibition, 64 Nightingale Lane, Hornsey, London N8.

#### PAN FUND NEWS

##### PICKERSGILL WINS TAFF

The 1986 Transatlantic Pan Fund race is now over. For those of you who haven't heard of it, TAFF is, as its name implies, a fan fund established to promote transatlantic contact. Last year it brought Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden over from New York, and now we're sending Greg Pickersgill as European representative. The race was between Simon Ounsley, Judith Hanna, Greg and Hold Over Funds. Below are listed the detailed voting figures.

	FIRST BALLOT	SECOND BALLOT
Simon Ounsley	84	114
Judith Hanna	61	-
Greg Pickersgill	98	125
Hold Over Funds	2	-
Write-ins	4	-
No Preference	-	3

No-one obtained a majority of the votes cast on the first ballot. Judith Hanna and the Write-ins failed to get 20% of the total vote on each side of the Atlantic, so their votes were redistributed according to second preferences. In the second ballot Greg obtained a clear majority and will be European TAFF representative at this summer's Worldcon in Atlanta.

Greg now takes over as European administrator, and can be contacted at: 7A Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W5

\*\*\*\*\*

##### GUFF GETS GOING

Like TAFF, GUFF aims at promoting contact by exchanging fans, but this time between Australia and Europe. Last year, Europe sent a representative to the Worldcon in Melbourne (as you know if you read last Matrix). The race is now on for an Australian to come to Britain in 1987 for our worldcon. The candidates are Valma Brown, Irwin Hirsh and Jean Weber. Ballot forms are now available containing the candidates' platforms, as are copies of GUFFSTUFF 1 and 2 (the GUFF newsheet) from:

UK Administrator: Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3QH, UK.

## WHAT FUTURE FOR

## MATRIX?

Maureen Porter

What is Matrix? There seem to be as many answers to this question as there are members of the BSFA. Everyone expects something different, and in the past, I feel Matrix has tried too hard to be all things to all people. As a result it has drifted aimlessly on a sea of unfulfilled expectation, with not even a clear statement of editorial policy to act as a lifeline. As the new editor of Matrix I am taking this opportunity to set down what I intend to do in order to put this magazine on a firm footing, and then encourage its future development.

First of all, I must say that anyone who expects overnight miracles is in for a disappointment. I have a lot of plans for Matrix, a lot of ambitious plans, but I recognise that I am not going to put them all into practice immediately, and I expect you, the readership, to do the same. Having said that, I hope that a little patience on your part will be rewarded shortly.

Matrix is supposedly the newsletter of the BSFA; as such I feel it has been seriously lacking in news about the organisation it claims to represent. In future, each edition of Matrix will contain a full list of committee members, their various functions, and also their addresses. Thus, you will all know who to contact about any particular matter. I also intend to investigate precisely what services are available through the BSFA and these will also be listed, along with the relevant point of contact. Further to that, I will be asking each committee member to provide an account of his or her duties, and also provide a potted biography, in order to give the membership some idea of who runs their association. This series will also include in-depth descriptions of the services available. I shall also be running a regular report from the Chairman, once elections have taken place, and regular reports from the rest of the committee.

Apart from this, I am planning to include reports on any BSFA meetings, including a detailed report of the AGM, and anything else that might be considered to be of interest to BSFA members. I am also hoping to open up a forum for serious and constructive

discussion on issues concerning the BSFA, particularly discussing issues which are to be raised at meetings. In the past Matrix has been cited as a place for discussion but this has never happened. Many people cannot attend the meetings for one reason or another, and I expect them to make full use of this opportunity to air their opinions, and bring their views to the notice of the committee. Utilised properly, this forum should provide a chance for a great deal of stimulating discussion, to let the membership at large have its say. It's up to you all to take advantage of this opportunity.

The primary role of Matrix is to provide information, not only about the BSFA but also for the BSFA. For many people, it will be their only point of contact with the SF community, and as such Matrix will have to provide a comprehensive news service. I am planning to expand the news section as much as I possibly can; this will happen slowly whilst a network of contacts is built up but I hope eventually to carry a much wider range of news concerning every aspect of SF, including news about authors, forthcoming books, forthcoming films, general events, literary awards, anything which might be relevant to Matrix.

I am also planning to include a series of overviews of various areas of interest from time to time, for example fantasy role-playing games, comics and anything else which is shown to be of interest to a large number of people. I do not intend that these areas should be covered in too great a depth - there are plenty of specialist magazines in existence - but as a pointer to what is available, and also as general interest to passing readers.

Reviews of media events will continue, and I hope, expand, including a greater coverage of regional events where feasible. As much as anything I hope this will emphasise that the Association is not simply a London-based organisation. I am also hoping to expand the convention diary as much as possible and publish as many convention reviews as I possibly can. The clubs feature will also be returning, with regular

updates on new and reformed clubs, and also those which have died. I hope also to spotlight various regions from time to time, and include reports of particular events at particular clubs. Tied in with this I am going to institute a 'What's On' diary so that clubs can advertise major events in advance.

Fanzine reviews will also continue, but I shall be altering the format of this, organising it along similar lines to Vector and Paperback Inferno, employing a stable of reviewers and sending out fanzines for review. I plan to keep the fanzine directory but expand it to include media zines, anything which is available and might be of interest to someone.

There will also be more in the way of articles, one-off pieces, in Matrix. I'm looking for original work but also intend to reprint work from fanzines and apas where permission can be obtained. I'll include anything which may be of possible interest to anyone in the BSFA. I'd like to continue the practice of including transcriptions of GOH speeches and absolutely anything else which might have a place within the pages of Matrix. I am also planning a Soapbox, providing an opportunity for anyone to sound off about anything under the sun, anything that you feel strongly about. Call it a chance to show that BSFA members are not entirely preoccupied with science fiction but are also aware of what else is going on in the world, fannish or otherwise.

I also want to continue and expand the letters page as much as possible, give people the chance to have their say, and perhaps set up some useful dialogues.

I hope to have the opportunity to revamp the appearance of Matrix, bring it up to the standard of Vector, whilst creating an individual identity for this magazine. Among other things I hope to include more artwork and alter the layout where possible.

As I said, I have a great many ideas and plans for Matrix, but I don't intend, or expect to institute all these changes immediately. They will be brought in over a period of time, providing a gentle but constant shift towards my idea of what Matrix should be. I expect the readership to be patient whilst this is going on and to accept that massive changes cannot happen overnight.

Now, I bet you lot think that Matrix just happens. I sit here in front of a word-processor and it magically appears on the screen, without any outside

assistance. Well, let me disabuse you of that idea immediately. Matrix is not going to rely on the good offices of a small handful of people that I press into service. Naturally, I will be asking all the people I know to help where they can, but that is not enough. I cannot be expected to edit a magazine for the membership of the BSFA if the membership sits on its collective backside and does nothing. This is your news magazine and I am relying on you to help me. There are a great many things that you can do to make life that little bit easier.

You can write letters. If every member of the BSFA writes one letter a year that's nearly a thousand letters. Divide it by six and that's approximately 167 letters per issue. Obviously I'm not going to use all of them should that happen, but just think what sort of letter column we could have if everyone wrote just once during a year. It doesn't cost you much to write a letter and post it - so do it, and participate in your magazine.

You can write articles for me. I shall be soliciting articles but don't wait to be asked. Unsolicited material will always be considered, though I would be grateful if an SAE could be enclosed if you want the material returned, otherwise I assume it is mine to do with as I wish, in the name of Matrix. In the case of both articles and letters, I reserve the right to edit and shorten as necessary. I may ask you for a rewrite in the case of an article. I intend that the writing in Matrix will be of the highest possible standard, but nothing will be rejected if it is sufficiently interesting, and I am a kind editor.

Are you artistic? Could you produce artwork for Matrix? I'm looking for black and white line drawings. Further details will be forthcoming when I have finished investigating the production processes open to me, but I would like volunteers now. I am particularly looking for work which is a little out of the ordinary, avoiding the clichéd rockets and bug-eyed monsters but nothing will go unconsidered. Return postage should be provided if you want your work returned.

You can supply news for me: news of happenings in your area, in your local or university society. You can tell me that your local or university society exists and let me know what you do, when meetings are, whether you have guest speakers, provide me with brief reports of successful events. You can give me any news you think might be of interest, and worth a mention.

Do you belong to a society? Any society with SF leanings? Good, tell me about it. I am planning to appoint a contributing editor to deal exclusively with keeping clubs info up to date. That person's name and address will be announced in the next Matrix.

All contributors will receive an acknowledgement within the pages of Matrix whether or not their material is eventually used.

Fanzine editors - all copies of fanzines that you wish to be reviewed for Matrix, please send to my address marked 'For Review'. If either Paul Kincaid or myself features in your mailing list would you please send TWO copies. I'd prefer not to have to use our personal copies for review. I am interested in receiving any 'zines for review, including any zines covering comics, media interests. My aim is to expand the review section as much as possible, likewise the fanzine directory.

Are you running a convention? Send me the details and I'll include them in the con diary. If you don't tell me, you can't rely on me hearing about your convention somewhere else. This is FREE publicity - use it.

Are you looking for that one vital book to complete your collection? Is there something you have been looking for for years? Do you want to make contact with other people in your area? I am going to drag the Members Noticeboard from the corners in which it tends to hide these days. If you want to advertise for something I will include a short advertisement FREE OF CHARGE. I reserve the right to edit advertisements as I see fit.

Most important of all, I want to know what you want to see in Matrix. It's no good moaning to me that I should have done this, should have done that and so on. Tell me what you want to see in the pages of your magazine and no reasonable request will go unconsidered, though I may not be able to institute a particular change immediately. There is only so much that any editor and a group of helpers can achieve. If the membership won't take an active part in shaping their own magazine then the effort becomes pointless after a while. I personally have no intention of putting myself through hoops whilst you all sit and watch, so I shall be expecting my post to increase markedly from the publication date of this Matrix.

This is your magazine - use it!

MP

# CONFAN

## CONVENTION NEWS

From the northwest comes news of a bid proposal for the 1988 Eastercon. A group of fans including Bob Shaw, Ron Gammel and Alan Dorey are planning to offer a central Manchester hotel as the venue. With recent hotel developments in Manchester there should be plenty of choice. Details are very much in the planning stage at the moment but one thing is certain the convention will not be called Mancon! Watch these pages for more news.

## CONVENTION ROUND UP

### BALLCON

- The Eleventh European Science Fiction Convention  
10 - 13 July 1986 - Zagreb, Yugoslavia

Membership - Attending 25 US\$

Supporting 12 US\$

Send cheques to - Ballcon, c/o Generalist, Congress Dept., Praska 5, 41000 Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

The flier for the con gives very little info on the what or who of the convention, still if you are into Eurocons there will be plenty there to entertain you.

### FIFTEENCON

- A Convention to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Brum Group.  
11th to 13th July 1986 - Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham

Membership : £6.00

Send cheques/POs/etc. to Pauline Morgan, 321 Sarehole Road, Birmingham 28

Guests of Honour : Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison

Believe me that is the best double act you'll see on the con circuit! More info. on the con from Bernie Evans, 7 Grove Rd., Acocks Green, Birmingham 27.

### CONSEPT

- Unicon 7 (Un7con)  
8th to 10th August 1986 - University of Surrey, Guildford

Membership : Attending £8.00

Supporting £4.00

Send cheques/POs/etc payable to "Consept:Un7con" to 9 Graham Rd., Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 5RP

Guest of Honour : Tanith Lee

**FANTASYCON XI**

- The British Fantasy Society Annual Convention  
26th to 28th September 1986  
The Midland Hotel Birmingham.

Membership : Attending £10:00  
(£9:00 BPS members)  
Supporting £2:00  
Send cheques/POs/etc. payable to  
"Fantasycon" to Fantasycon XI, 15  
Stanley Rd., Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE

**NICON 86**

The First Northern Ireland Science Fiction Convention  
26th October 1986 - Queen's University,  
Students Union, Belfast.

Membership : Attending £2:00  
Supporting £1:00

Guest of Honour : Anne McCaffrey  
Fan Guest of Honour : to be announced  
Send cheques etc., payable to "Queen's  
Clubs and Societies", to Thomas Ferguson  
Science Fiction Society, c/o Q.U.B. S.U.  
Building, University Road, Belfast  
BT7 1PE

**NOVACON 16**

31st October to 2nd November 1986 -  
DeVere Hotel, Coventry

Membership : £8:00 attending  
(£10:00 on the door)

Send cheques/POs/etc to Graham Poole, 86  
Barwood Farm Rd., Wyde Green, Sutton  
Coldfield, West Midlands.

Guest of Honour : E.C. "Ted" Tubb  
Special Guest: Chris Evans

Progress Report 1 is now out and reveals  
that the room rates are £21:50 single  
per night and £16:50 per person per  
night twin/double. Following certain  
unsociable activities (vandalism and  
unauthorised multiple occupation of  
rooms) by some members of last year's  
Novacon the hotel and committee are  
promising to get heavy on offenders  
this year!

**CONCEPTION**

- A celebration of the 50th anniversary  
of the 1st ever SF convention, held in  
Leeds in 1937.  
13th to 15th February 1987 - Grand  
Hotel, Leeds

Membership : £6:00  
Send cheques/POs/etc. payable to  
"Conception" to 12, Fearnville Terrace,  
Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 3DU.

**BECCON '87**

- The 1987 Eastercon  
April 1987 - Metropole Hotel, NEC  
Birmingham

Membership - Attending |10  
Supporting |5  
Note that these rates will  
be going up at the end of  
September, or thereabouts,  
by |1.

Send cheques/POs/etc., payable to  
"Beccon", to Beccon'87, 191 The Heights,  
Northalt, Middx.

Guest of Honour - Keith Roberts  
Fan Guest of Honour - to be announced

After running three successful Beccons  
already the committee look set to bring  
the same efficient level of organisation  
to Eastercon. It will make a welcome  
change to have a new venue and some new  
ideas?

**CONSPIRACY '87**

- The 45th World SF Convention

22nd August to 1st September 1987 -  
Metropole Hotel and The Brighton Centre,  
Brighton

Membership : Attending |25  
(Child aged 8-14 |12.50)  
Supporting |10.  
Note that these rates will  
be going up on 2nd  
September so book early!

Send cheques/POs/etc. to Conspiracy '87,  
PO Box 43, Cambridge CB1 3JJ and make  
them payable to "Conspiracy '87".

That great SF circus, the Worldcon,  
doesn't come to the UK very often, the  
last time was 1979 and who knows when  
the next will be? So if you want to  
experience it, book now before the price  
goes up.

The guest list runs as follows:

Guests of Honour - Doris Lessing,  
Alfred Bester,  
Arkady & Boris  
Strugatsky,  
Jim Burns  
Fan Guests of Honour - Ken & Joyce Slater  
Dave Langford  
Toast Master - Brian Aldiss

The first Progress Report is just out  
and to say the least the production puts  
to shame many convention programme  
books. The current membership level is  
reported to be 2160 - it's going to be a  
biggie!

## 1986 BSFA AWARDS: FIRST BALLOT ANALYSIS

MIKE MOIR: Awards Administrator

This article, and its companion next Matrix, is strictly for those of you who like detailed breakdowns, statistics and lists etc.. My apologies to those of you who do not, but last year's versions of them received enough favourable comment that I have persuaded to do them again.

There were actually slightly less nominations this year than last. This was probably due mostly to the considerably reduced period available for voting. The mailing session was a week late, which was the BSFA's fault. Also as Easter was almost a month earlier than last year, any late ballots could not be included. I do not believe access to the novels is a very limiting factor because the short story category was voted on even less, and surely there is no problem in getting Interzone etc.. Come on everyone, vote next time please!

As last year I have included here all the nominated items for each category that received more than one vote. Please note the positions given here are from the first ballot only and not from the final ballot. An analysis of the final ballot voting will be given in the next Matrix.

Novel

- |       |                              |                         |
|-------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1st   | The Warrior Who Carried Life | - Geoff Ryman           |
| 2nd=  | Kiteworld                    | - Keith Roberts         |
| *     | Helliconia Winter            | - Brian Aldiss          |
|       | Anubis Gate                  | - Tim Powers            |
| 5th   | Free Live Free               | - Gene Wolfe            |
| 6th=  | Hawksmoor                    | - Peter Ackroyd         |
|       | Startide Rising              | - David Brin            |
|       | On A Pale Horse              | - Piers Anthony         |
|       | Native Tongue                | - Susan Elgin           |
|       | The Book Of Being            | - Ian Watson            |
| 11th= | The Wild Shore               | - Kim Robinson          |
|       | The True Game                | - Sherri Tepper         |
|       | The Artificial Kid           | - Bruce Sterling        |
|       | Enders Game                  | - Orson Card            |
| 15th= | Code Of The Lifemaker        | - James Hogan           |
|       | Demon                        | - John Varley           |
|       | The Damnation Game           | - Clive Barker          |
| 18th= | A Rumour Of Angels           | - Bradley Kellogg       |
|       | The Planet Dweller           | - Jane Palmer           |
|       | Chapterhouse Dune            | - Frank Herbert         |
|       | The Wishsong Of Shanana      | - Terry Brookes         |
|       | Galapagos                    | - Kurt Vonnegut         |
|       | The Dragon Waiting           | - John Ford             |
|       | Software                     | - Rudy Rucker           |
|       | Peace                        | - Gene Wolfe            |
|       | The Twilight Realm           | - Christopher Carpenter |

- |                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Voyager In Night      | - C J Cherryh   |
| The Walls Of The Air  | - Barbara Hanby |
| Nightrider            | - David Mace    |
| Millenium             | - John Varley   |
| The Continent Of Lies | - James Morrow  |

Listed like that it looks like a close race, but fifth place received almost twice as many votes as sixth and second equal almost three times as many as sixth. There seemed to be no doubt about who the top five were. Last year was much closer with about 12 books in serious contention.

It was a much better year for female writers and soft (paper and trade) back books. Five women made it on the list and four of the top ten titles were available in a softback. Simultaneous trade paperback and hardback publishing seems to have seriously hit the market for the first time this year. This seems to be a solution that suits most people (as long as you do not mind your hardback falling apart after a year or so, because it's Perfect bound).

Gollancz still holds the top publisher position but less easily than last year. Allen & Unwin and Chatto & Windus both made strong showings, next year one of them may topple Gollancz.

Americans are much more in evidence this year with two in the top five and ten in the top sixteen. I am not saying there is anything wrong with American SF, it is just a shame the British could not manage a better showing.

As for the "But is it SF?" arguers, there is a lot of fantasy up there and a bit of horror, but not really anything else. Some of you may argue that Hawksmoor is too mainstream to be included, you had better take that up with Paul Kincaid. I must, sadly admit to not being able to finish it. Anyway you voted for it, that's what decides what gets in.

I almost expected next year to see Geoff Ryman in the Artist category, since he has managed to get nominated in all the other three categories so far.

Short Fiction

- |       |                                     |                  |
|-------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1st * | Cube Root                           | - David Langford |
| 2nd   | Kitemistress                        | - Keith Roberts  |
| 3rd   | Oh Happy Man                        | - Geoff Ryman    |
| 4th=  | A Young Man's Journey To Viriconium | - M J Harrison   |
|       | The People On The Precipice         | - Ian Watson     |
| 6th=  | Richenda                            | - Keith Roberts  |
|       | The Man Who Walked On The Moon      | - J G Ballard    |
| 8th   | When The Time Gate Failed           | - Ian Watson     |

- 9th= Apples In Winter - Sue Thomason  
 Finn - Sue Thomason  
 The Bob Dylan... - Michael Bishop  
 Jaguar Hunter - Lucius Shepard  
 Little Ilya And Spider And Box  
 - Paul McAuley  
 If The Driver Vanishes  
 - Peter Garrett  
 The King Of The Hill  
 - Paul McAuley

Voting was very quiet in this category this year. It received many less nominations than last year. Keith Roberts almost managed the double of two stories into the short list. Unlike last year British authors (born. or naturalised) dominated the list.

#### Media Presentation

- 1st= \*Brazil  
 Max Headroom  
 3rd Tripods  
 4th Mad Max III  
 5th Terminator  
 6th Starman  
 7th Dr Who - Vengeance On Varos  
 8th= Lifeforce  
 Cocoon  
 10th= Timeslip  
 Edge Of Darkness  
 Repro Man  
 13th= Subway  
 The Purple Rose Of Cairo  
 Space Ship Milton Keynes  
 Dr Who - The Two Doctors  
 Morons From Outer Space  
 Dr Who - Timelash  
 1994

Perhaps the most interesting element in this list is the very strong showing of the Tripods and Dr Who. We seem to have a 'Grade' factor, since there is a definite sympathy vote for those SF TV series cut by the BBC. I have have had a few letters suggesting the award should be split into two awards 'Best Film' and 'Best Other Media' as usually only films get a look in. This year two TV programmes got to the short list so I am not yet persuaded.

#### Artist

- 1st \* Jim Burns  
 2nd Tim White  
 3rd Rodney Matthews  
 4th= Peter Jones  
 Ian Miller  
 6th= Pete Lyon  
 Bruce Pennington  
 8th= Judith Clute  
 Patrick Woodruff  
 10th= David Hardy  
 Chris Foss  
 Roger Dean  
 Geoff Taylor  
 Keith Roberts  
 Chris Achilleos  
 Mike Van Houten

It is encouraging to see Pete Lyon nearly make the short list but apart from that there is little change from last year.

This category is really getting rather boring. I am going to change it completely next year and would welcome (polite) suggestions of how an art award might be organised. I think a best artwork of the year could work well.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### SOME AWARDS THOUGHTS

from Terry Broom

The awards were discussed at the AGM and some thought given towards their value. Not many members are voting. This could be altered by having awards for original paperbacks and hardbacks (in different categories - "original" paperbacks if it's a first publication in paperback, regardless of previous hardback publication), and combining votes for imports and British editions, counting a vote for both editions by the same person as one, but separately if it's for paperback and hardback (so that the same book can win one award for paperback, and a second for hardback, or vice-versa). It is because hardbacks are so out of many BSFA members' reach (it's a real financial depression out here), that so few of us vote; we simply haven't read the books (libraries occasionally stock the books in time, but I like to POSSESS a book as my own, so rarely visit libraries).

A decision was made to keep the awards running for a few more years to compare them with the new A. C. Clarke award, but after that, the continued existence of the BSFA awards are in some doubt. I think it would be er... a touch difficult defining what IS sf, seeing as how the question was first put a number of decades ago and there still isn't a satisfying answer. So though I may personally disagree with many of the choices for nomination, I would rather have this than put restrictions on what is or is not eligible, and do an injustice to writers who are attempting to widen the genre's definition, explore previously unexplored ideas with a little more subtlety than readers of DOC SMITH would be accustomed to, increase its appeal to a larger audience, and improve its literary quality.

The Hugo awards have the whole of the USA (and the rest of the world - ed.) from which to receive votes. Britain isn't quite as big as the USA. If the Hugo awards only received three times as much as the BSFA, then either the Hugo's

aren't doing so well, or the BSFA awards are. The time of the awards doesn't make a lot of difference, so long as the 'voting year' is clearly defined, and reminders of early books in this 'year' particularly given, so as to ensure they are not overlooked because of a misconception they are now ineligible.

There is no such thing as 'quality' votes. To think so is a conceit the awards, sf publication and the BSFA can ill afford. It's also insulting anyone who casts votes with which you don't agree. All voting is done subjectively: what YOU think is deserving of the award may not be what a hundred to three-hundred other people may think. For example, from what I've heard of MYTHAGO WOOD, THE GLAMOUR and NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS, I would certainly classify them as SF. I can't recall what NEUROMANCER is about, but I'd say EMPIRE OF THE SUN is a mainstream work, and as such isn't eligible. I disagree with you, and there are many who would disagree with us both. Asking to define sf BY COMPARISON, is a crazy endeavour. It's like comparing peaches and apricots and deciding, from the taste, which one is fruit and which isn't.

I disagree that if the membership can't recognise YOUR definition of sf, then they're in the wrong organisation, but I'm left wondering if even YOU can. Like I said, THE GLAMOUR, or, for example, THE ADVENTURES OF ALEX (which I've read) to me, is sf, but to you it isn't or may not be. Now, since I'm 100% certain I'll know an sf book when it hits me, or when a review of it contains other-worldly elements that I've read, then using your logic, I say that you, Nicholas Mahoney, don't know an sf novel (or a short story for that matter) when you read one - and thus I conclude, again using your logic, that you are in the wrong organisation. Insulting, isn't it?

Subcategories would still suffer the same problems as a simple main category - what is sf? What is fantasy? A story with borderline sf, horror and fantasy elements - is it mainstream? A fantasy? Or can it be described as sf by everyone? Members would vote the same book in different categories from the confusion and this would lessen the voting impact for that book, and thus its chances of winning an award.

Another point which was made at Albacon, though not during the AGM, is that some votes may be slightly less than honest. Members may recognise a certain author among the nominees and vote for that author no matter if they've read the book or not.

Hardback publication reflects the state

of the more literary and more popular books on the market - they reflect the state of sf and sf publishing, and so can be used to make guarded opinions or predictions on the future of the genre. For these reasons, a hardback award is very important, as it reflects the other side of the coin - the readers' tastes, opinions and judgements as opposed to publishers'. Though that is true, and hardback awards are useful for this comparison, paperback sales are more indicative of likely publishing trends and more representative of the sf readership.

Finally, I heard somewhere that publishers generally recognise sf awards do not appreciably increase sales, though I suppose a few enquiries would not harm matters. Have you written to them, putting forward your question re the awards?

\*\*\*\*\*

#### MEMBERS NOTICE BOARD

WANTED: Contact with an expert on surgery. How do you invent a disease that doesn't exist? And how do you surgically cure it?  
Nicholas Mahoney, 275 Lonsdale Ave.,  
Doncaster, S.Yorks, DN2 6HJ

NIEKAS 34 now available. Piers Anthony, John Brunner, The Tree of Life, NASA News, Memories of Philip K. Dick, Dungeons & Dragons and the Fundamentalists, Reviews, LOCs, all crammed into 54 3-column pages. £1.50 from:  
Roger Waddington, 4 Commercial Street,  
Norton, Malton, North Yorks, YO17 9ES

URGENTLY WANTED: Boxed LP set "The Legendary Jimmie Rodgers 110 Collection" on Japanese RCA RA5459/66 - offers, please, or would pay to borrow to tape it. Contact Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AY.

FOR EXCHANGE: Two editions of Omni and one edition of Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction (December 1984), all in excellent condition, for the May 1985 edition of Omni in mint condition. Wanted urgently for an otherwise complete collection. Contact Stephen Ealey, 9 Glasven Road, Northwood, Kirkby, Merseyside L33 6UA.

FOR SALE: "Dragonriders of Pern" board game, in excellent condition, £10. Contact Stephen Ealey (address above).

# MEDIA REVIEWS

AN OVERVIEW OF RECENTLY TELEVISED  
SPECULATIVE FICTION AND A 'LOOK' AT THE  
RADIO

## THE AFTERNOON PLAY: "THE STORYTELLERS" SEASON

**CANDIDE** by Voltaire  
Translated & Adapted by Jonathon Myerson  
Directed by Gordon House  
April 5th, Radio 4, 1hr

## SATURDAY NIGHT THEATRE

**THE WEIRDSTONE OF BRISINGAMEN**  
by Alan Garner  
Dramatised by David Wade  
Directed by Caroline Smith  
April 5th, R4, 2hrs

## WHITE SUIT BLUES

by Adrian Mitchell  
'based on Mark Twain's writings and his  
adventures in the after-life'  
Music by Mike Westbrook  
Music adapted for radio by the  
Musical Director Trevor Allan  
Directed by Jeremy Mortimer  
April 9th, R3, 2hrs

## VENOMOUS CORRUPTION AND THE EVIL EYE

Written and Presented by Peter Hogarth  
Produced by Deborah Cohen  
April 6th, R4, 30mins

Reviewed by Terry Broome

SF, fantasy and horror have had a good deal of screen time on the box recently. As well as the old regulars and films dating from the 1930's, the tube has seen five good film premieres (EXCALIBUR, THE TIME BANDITS, THE THING, BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET and STAR TREK: THE WRATH OF KHAN), the excellent MR PYE and several new teleplays (OVERDRAWN AT THE MEMORY BANK, and two of the three current RAY BRADBURY THEATRE productions: there are three more in the making). THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER, the series OTHERWORLD, and the one-off short TIMESLIP were new but execrable.

Of the good, new material, EXCALIBUR, MR PYE, and OVERDRAWN AT THE MEMORY BANK are worth watching at least twice. BROTHER is, for the most part, uninspired, and TIME BANDITS often extremely slow going. The trashiest were OTHERWORLD (American) and TIMESLIP (British) which was worrying not only because it was self-consciously modelled on the American TWILIGHT ZONE. The most pleasing and hopeful sign that SF hasn't been completely forgotten as a vehicle

for intelligent drama was Channel 4's MR PYE. So, British TV SF has shown both the best and the worst, and overall, new SF on the telly has maintained a similar balance. Whether the sheer number of such features is seasonal (for Spring and Summer), or more permanent, is still unknown, but perhaps the coverage can be seen as a reflection of an upswing in interest in popular SF, Horror and Fantasy.

On Radio Four, in the week between the 5th and 12th of April, we had Voltaire's CANDIDE and the WEIRDSTONE OF BRISINGAMEN, a new adaption of Alan Garner's work, and on Radio Three there was WHITE SUIT BLUES. Additionally, VENOMOUS CORRUPTION AND THE EVIL EYE (R4) was a study on mythical beasts in medieval society. A month later, on the 7th May, Radio Four's AFTERNOON PLAY, "ORIGAMI" by Jill Hyem, which I won't go into here, was a tale of the supernatural. It required the assistance of a pronunciation advisor, Masatoshi Tobita.

Jonathon Myerson's version of CANDIDE is a borderline fantasy, set around the time of the Spanish Inquisition. It would probably appeal to Monty Python fans, and anyone who has enjoyed Power's "The Drawings of the Dark", and "The Malicia Tapestry" by Brian Aldiss. This adaption is extremely witty, a fine black comedy with some slapstick humour thrown in to please continental audiences - and surprisingly, even that works.

Narrated drily by Benjamin Whitrow as Voltaire, we're led into the world of Dr Pangloss (Alan Bennett), whose metaphysicotheologicocosmonigology (it's extremely easy to pronounce with a bit of practice) simply means that he believes Everything is True. The result is that he thinks he must live in the best of all possible worlds, even when he experiences misfortune after misfortune. Cunegonde (Helena Breck) and Candide (Mark Payton) are his main pupils, Cunegonde getting Candide into trouble after attempting to copy Pangloss's and the lady, Pacquette's, achievement in proving cause-and-effect in regards the act of sex. From there on, young, naive Candide is on the run from someone-or-other, narrowly escaping death on numerous occasions, and his friends fair just as badly. Coincidence is rampant, as is the beautiful Cunegonde, the woman he is searching for and loves. His travels take him through the legendary Eldorado, and along the way he is witness or victim to various atrocities everyone takes with great unconcern. Various characters keep returning after death, apparently none the worse for wear, and upon finding the now ugly Cunegonde,

Mark Twain, alias for Sam Clemens, always wore a white suit on his lecture tours, and he led a very unhappy life, which explains the title, though Mitchell claims Twain was a great stand-up comedian. The Musical, supposedly a black comedy, isn't very linear. At two hours long, it is 1 1/2 hours too long: it rambles and digresses, and there are incredibly long sequences when it manages to go nowhere. It opens with the burial of Twain and his subsequent trip to heaven, a skyscraper almost entirely inhabited by white, English, men.

Once in heaven, Twain (Harry Towb) is given a kind of holy medical which is a cue for the first of many flashbacks and another musical number. Due to a computer error, he is judged unfit for heaven and escorted to its "black hole" beneath the marble floor, where he meets reconstructions of cripples and beggars from his past - ordinary people who have been forcibly genetically altered (to pick its nearest equivalent), so that they resemble these people. He is told by the angels that it's been a mistake, that he's been vouchsafed by Kipling, and that his real destination is the Celestial Tower Block, reserved for people who, on Earth, had a high social status or were financially very rich - the higher the status, or the richer, the higher up in the skyscraper.

Entertaining a crowd (a tedious and understandably archaic endeavour - Twain may have been a great stand-up comedian in his time, but he wouldn't be now), he decides to finish his performance by reading a ghost story, Susie Clemens (one of his dead daughters) has always begged him not to read. The Angel of Death appears and forces him to recount each of the four extremely unpleasant deaths in his family - his wife and three daughters. Speakers on another occasion, on the 7000th floor, "Zion's Golden Penthouse", he upsets the audience and is thrown out of the window. Susie Clemens jumps after him and they land in a heavenly, romanticised version of the Mississippi, where they are pulled onto a boat by Jim and Huckleberry Finn. After this, he is rather too quickly reunited with the rest of his family by singing to them. It gave me the impression Mitchell either rushed the last fifteen minutes of the play, or had to end it abruptly due to time restrictions.

The musical numbers, which cover blues and jazz for the most part, are generally far too long and say little at all, the lyrics concentrating on trivial matters like apples and apple-pie that doesn't advance the plot. The result is that they are usually a distraction and not a necessary part of the play, which

Candide's love for her dies. The blend of humour and anachronistic detail isn't always smooth, but on the whole, it works very well and the acting is brilliant.

Moving on, now, to THE WEIRDSTONE OF BRISINGAMEN, a "juvenile" which I read when I was still at Primary School: Cadellin (Robin Bailey) loses the Weirdstone, the object that contains the power to keep the sleepers and the King Under The Hill asleep. If the Weirdstone is destroyed, the sleepers will awake prematurely and die, leaving the world to be ravaged by the forces of evil. However, the Weirdstone has come into the hands of Susan (Andrea Murphy), and with Colin, her brother (Mark Kingston), she finds herself hunted and haunted by various evil factions who want the power the Weirdstone can give them.

Sometimes the sound-effects are excellent and sometimes they leave a lot to be desired (crossing the plank in the mineshafts, for example, or the crows). Andrea Murphy's acting is slightly better than Mark Kingston's, but they are not helped by limp dialogue: a pity as this often means they are upstaged by the more experienced actors and actresses who all have far more interesting things to say. If you can forgive Murphy's and Kingston's poor dialogue, this adaptation can be seen as, not only being well executed, but extremely frightening. It gave me nightmares when I read it, aged ten, and if I was still ten, this play would give me nightmares now. Broadcast, as it was, between 7 and 9pm, it made a good bed time story. It does have two two-minute interludes, but I think these help to keep up the suspense. They also allow parents and children alike to make last-minute preparations for bed.

The Radio Times tells us Adrian Mitchell enjoys "celebrating" the lives of the famous: "Tyger" on the life of William Blake; a stage biography of the composer, Erik Satie; and Richmal Crompton's Denis Waterman-immortalised school-boy "hero" William. WHITE SUIT BLUES was first performed at the Nottingham Playhouse, and has been extensively adapted for this radio production, the chief reason for the changes being that radio allows far more scope for the play's fantasy elements at a very small cost. I would argue the worth of including fantasy elements for their own sake, and suggest it could even be interpreted as padding, but, then again, perhaps the radio version needed the extension of the fantasy. However if this is true, what does that say about the worth of the original stage-play?

wouldn't have been harmed by their removal and may even have benefitted by it. The quality of the singing, is however extraordinary, so if the music appeals to you, you may not be disappointed.

Mitchell paints a very cynical view of a corrupted heaven, unless you'd prefer to interpret the skyscraper as hell, populated by a bunch of deranged, misinformed lunatics. Though he makes some sharp comments on society, particularly religion and prejudice, it isn't however even mildly funny. Not one to listen to if it's rerun in the future, unless you're a masochist.

**VENOMOUS CORRUPTION AND THE EVIL EYE** started with a description of an incident involving a north Italian peasant who ran across a dragon, but was puzzled because, instead of having four legs, it only had two. A debate followed: was the dragon a migrant? Or a hybrid? Or was it generated by putrefaction, as mice were? Hogarth asks the question why people believed not only in dragons, but in all manner of mythological beasts, and why that belief eventually died.

Dragons, he explained, are the oldest of such creations, and were first vanquished by gods (the Great Babylonian Creation Epic is given as an example that predates a similar dragon story told in the first chapters of GENESIS). Sightings of medieval dragons often presaged disaster, Hogarth explains, and dragons were an especially rich source of alchemical materials. Amongst other things, they helped in the cure of epilepsy, prolonged life, banished nocturnal apparitions, dissolved gold, and could be used in fireworks. Dragons and basilisks were given the most coverage in the programme, with other mythological beasts getting little mention, which makes me wonder why this wouldn't have better been described as a focus specifically on dragons and basilisks.

**VENOMOUS CORRUPTION** not only provides fascinating facts, such as these, but there are recounts (by four readers) of many bizarre incidents and the whole programme is delivered with a keen wit and a gentle sense of irony. For example, in 1474, a cockerel was prosecuted on the capital charge of having laid an egg that may have hatched out into a basilisk (these creatures were generated by the laying of an egg, by a cock, in a dung-heap, the egg then being incubated by a toad). Elephants were depicted fighting dragons who sought their blood because it was supposed to be cold, so they could cool themselves down. One of the many ironies of belief in Medieval society,

ironies of belief in Medieval society, Hogarth reveals, is that elephants were thought not to exist, despite drawings and occasional appearances, because their noses were too long. The giraffe and the platypus were also doubted. The same people, however, believed wholeheartedly in dragons and unicorns.

The reason for the decline in such beliefs, is itself, not without its unexpected turns, and with the various readings (all very well delivered), the presenter has done an entertaining job on a fascinating subject.

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#### **THE QUESTOR TAPES (1974)** ITV, 17th MAY

Reviewed by Phil Nichols

This TV movie is the "busted pilot" to a proposed series created by Gene Roddenberry. Robert Foxworth - whose performance as Questor the android is something of a revelation after his more recent employment as star of a minor soap - the film depicts the construction by a five-nation consortium of a complex android from ill-understood plans left by the mysterious Professor Vasilovik. So much for the plot. What the film is really about comes down to two familiar themes from Roddenberry's more famous creation, Star Trek.

The first theme is the question of what it is to be human. Like Spock, Questor is used to observe and comment upon human behaviour, usually for the purpose of light relief; like Spock, he is emotionless - due to a flaw in his programming tapes; unlike Spock, he is aware of his shortcomings, and relies on his human companion to guide him in the areas of morality and human feeling. The second theme is the search for God. There is always the tension, here and in Star Trek, between man's need for independence (including the right to destroy himself if need be) and his need for meaning. Roddenberry tackled this in the grandest scale in the later Star Trek: The Motion Picture, where the V'ger craft sought its creator, and where Spock, seeking his own answers, discovered the value of "this simple feeling." Questor's search is the same: "I seem to have no explanation of myself."

In The Questor Tapes the religious undercurrent is perhaps made too literal, when it is revealed that Questor's creator is to be found inside Mount Ararat, but there is a charming irony in the resolution, which is intended to establish the format for the ensuing series: Questor discovers his purpose is to guide the destiny of

mankind, and yet, because his programming is incomplete he needs the personal guidance of a human mentor. Man is both leader and led.

Certain aspects of this film are far from impressive. In particular, it has all the hallmarks of a Universal TV movie: bland, flat photography; stock footage; featureless, cardboard sets; and a laughable attempt to simulate London by the excessive use of taxis, red buses, and outdated cars and police uniforms. But despite its inability to approach realism and break out of the confines of the studio which created it, *The Questor Tapes* is surprisingly inventive, and vitally human.

#### FAHRENHEIT 451 (1966)

Directed by Francois Truffaut  
Channel 4, 30th April

Reviewed by Phil Nichols

As a fan of both Ray Bradbury and the late Francoise Truffaut, I have for many years awaited an opportunity to see this 1966 feature film. I hoped for the best, but - in light of so many less-than-generous reviews - I feared the worst. To be sure, the landscape and decor of Truffaut's film take some getting used to: in place of Bradbury's gleaming world of superhighways and fast cars, Truffaut offers us a somewhat featureless suburbia and a 'quaint' red fire engine. But this tinkering with the facade of the fireman's world is of little importance, for more serious changes to Bradbury's tale are responsible for the central failure of the film.

Perhaps Truffaut's boldest move is the casting of the same actress, Julie Christie, in the dual roles of Montag's wife and Montag's book-reading girl friend; this makes clear the complementary nature of the two characters. But Truffaut also uses Montag's wife (who, significantly, is renamed: in the book she is Mildred, in the film she is Linda) as the centrepiece of his shift of emphasis. Where Bradbury's Mildred is in a mindless state for most of the time, inspiring Montag to seek in Clarisse what he cannot find in his own wife, Truffaut's Linda is given the extended appeal of sensuality. Thus in Truffaut's story, Linda comes to represent a hedonic ideal, and Clarisse an intellectual one.

This shift of emphasis is important, for Truffaut's characters, much more so than Bradbury's, are unable to break free from the pressures and pleasures of the moment. At various times we are shown people touching themselves in an effort

to stimulate self-pleasure; when Montag forces his wife's friends to hear him read from a book, the act of imagination this requires on their part causes resentment in some - and tears from another (although it must be said that this scene is one of the most unconvincing and stiff in the film). A corollary of the inability of the characters to engage in the imaginative act of 'displacement' is their inability to communicate: demonstrated best in Montag's rushing from telephone to telephone when trying to unravel the cause of his wife's overdose; the diagnosis goes no deeper than the colour of the pills responsible.

Having set up an uncommunicative, introverted, self-indulgent world, Truffaut is then unable to deliver a satisfactory resolution. Montag joins the colony of people-books - each member has learned an entire book by heart - and the film closes with a series of shots of the people wandering around, each one quoting his memorised lines to himself. Thus the people-books, far from being the saviours of Bradbury's novel, are reduced to a reflection of the very society against which they have rebelled.

Several critics have suggested that this ending is unfeeling; that if Truffaut had been dealing with film-burning, not book-burning, he might have been more positive. I suggest, however, that Truffaut has merely painted himself into a corner. By emphasising the inwardness and self-obsession of the world portrayed, he has created a story fundamentally different from his source material, as a result of which the poetic, beautifully-photographed denouement no longer fits. Though there is much to praise in this movie, it remains a failure.

MR PYE CHANNEL 4; 2, 9, 16, 23  
MARCH 1986

When Mr Pye travels to the island of Sark he does so with a mission in mind, to reform the people and lead them towards a life of goodness. Harold Pye is very good. He is on familiar terms with God, the Great Pal, and believes that if only other people were the same then the world would be an altogether more wholesome place. God apparently thinks otherwise. It isn't clear whether giving Harold an external guide to his spiritual state should be regarded as a reward or a punishment, but if he is good he has wings, otherwise he has horns. The four-part serial follows his progress in attempting to achieve a balance between the two states, or rather in getting rid of both sets of protrusions.

The serial was, for the most part, fairly faithful to the book although it didn't sufficiently convey the grotesqueness of even the favourable characters. In some cases a considerable embellishment was apparent. In the book Ka-Ka is simply an ancient, decaying, and incapable woman. Nowhere is it stated that she is Albanian; she is simply a typically decrepit Peake character. At the same time other events were unnecessarily exaggerated to the point of surrealism, as if the dramatist recognised that Peake's view of the world was unusual but felt that it should be rendered in more accessible terms.

On the other hand the major characters maintained fidelity to their original portrayals, which is as it should be. The development of the relationship between Harold Pye (Derek Jacobi) and Miss Dredger (Judy Parfitt) was well-handled although perhaps in a slightly softer focus than Peake might have allowed and Pye's tragedy in being unable to confide in his friend and all the harm this ultimately causes was very well observed. The parallels with the life of Christ were not overtly stated, but were more obvious than in the book. I don't regard this as a fault. I found it a little more frustrating that the idea of each person being a blend of good and bad was skated round rather than confronted, and that Pye's predicament came over more as a comedy because of this.

My major criticism of the actual production, indeed my only criticism, was with the handling of the last scene. Harold Pye, having accepted that he must either live with wings or horns, finally escapes from the wrath of the Sarkese, who can no longer tolerate this man tampering with the balance of their daily existence, and flies away. In the book this scene is little short of poetry; on film it was an embarrassment. Derek Jacobi looked as though he was hanging from a crane, the wings added as an afterthought, which was a pity as they'd looked so good up until then. It was a small but important scene and the production crew blew it, destroyed the carefully-developed suspense of four hours with sheer ineptitude. Apart from that I thought it was an excellent production, beautifully filmed - the shots of Sark itself were breathtaking - and mostly well conceived.

THE WEIRDSTONE OF BRISINGAMEN  
ALAN GARNER, DRAMATISED BY DAVID WADE  
RADIO 4, 5TH APRIL 1986

To say that I was disappointed in the

Radio 4 production of The Weirdstone of Brisingamen is an understatement. Frankly I thought it was appalling. Attempting to present it on radio was a brave undertaking but a serious mistake. The Weirdstone is either a very visual book, or else a book of the imagination, and in this case, for all its merit as a creative medium, radio was not an appropriate vehicle for such a dramatisation.

Criticism must inevitably start with the casting. Garner originally wrote the Cheshire characters in strong phonetic dialect, and though he later admitted this was a mistake, the BBC apparently hadn't heard and portrayed the rustic characters with almost comic Mummersey accents. The actress playing Bess was particularly at fault. The children playing Colin and Susan were actually worse - ham was not the word to describe them. At times I thought I'd accidentally strayed into a mediocre school play. In fact none of the actors were particularly well-cast, even Robin Bailey as Cadellin, apparently under the misapprehension he has playing Gandalf, an understandable mistake as he was surrounded by generic dwarf voices in a plot that bore a certain similarity to Lord of the Rings.

More than that the sound effects appeared to have been salvaged from the radio production of Lord of the Rings. The magical creatures took on no form, no shape, and remained nothing more than ill-defined slitherings and crackle, about as menacing as static on the radio. Although the play was reasonably faithful to the original, occasional liberties were taken with it. When the children escape through the tunnels of the Eridelving, an intensely atmospheric section in the book, their progress is narrated by eldritch voices which have no reference to the novel itself, and which destroyed the suspense entirely, apart from being rather silly.

I suppose it was a bold experiment on the part of the BBC but on the whole it was unsatisfactory, and rather embarrassing to listen to, especially for anyone with a real interest in Garner's work. My only worry now is whether the Beeb will turn its dubious talents to the sequel, The Moon of Gornath. After this ambitious failure it hardly bears thinking about.

(The above reviews are not credited because I'm afraid I don't know who wrote them. They were sent to me by Mark Greener who forgot to say who they were by! So if the author would like to own up there will be a belated credit in the next Matrix.)

# THE COMICS PAGE

DAVE HODSON

Following 'flavour of the month' comics creator FRANK MILLER on DAREDEVIL will be past fan fave Steve Englehart, who is also slated to write the BATMAN strip in DETECTIVE COMICS with MARSHALL ROGERS providing the art. Englehart's and Roger's first stint on Batman from ten years ago was recently reprinted in THE SHADOW OF THE BATMAN +++ Thanks to large doses of publicity from sources such as Rolling Stone, Frank Miller's DARK KNIGHT has become America's best selling comic, out-selling even the X-MEN which is over \$2.00 cheaper. Issue 1, THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS has gone to a third printing with first printings already selling at over \$15.00; issue 2, THE DARK KNIGHT TRIUMPHANT has gone to a second printing and issues 3 & 4 have been put back two weeks on their original schedules. There is talk of the series being kept in print permanently and a 4000 limited hardcover edition, signed and numbered by Miller, is already being printed at a price of \$39.95 (about £26.00) +++ The third of MICHAEL MOORCOCK's ELRIC novels, THE WEIRD OF THE WHITE WOLF, is to be adapted for comics by First Comics +++ WILL EISNER has had to reink two pages of the 1947 SPIRIT story SAREE FALLS IN LOVE for reprinting by Kitchen Sink after the original pages were found to be missing. Eisner supposedly inked over blown-up photocopies of the original pages +++ X-MEN CLASSICS represents marvel's third opportunity to print the first appearance of the new X-Men but also includes new work by JOHN BOLTON and ART ADAMS +++ Following on from the SHADOW limited series by HOWARD CHAYKIN is a graphic novel by DENNY O'NEIL, MICHAEL KALUTA (the artist on the 1970's DC Shadow series) and BERNI WRIGHTSON, to be released by Marvel. Chaykin has the AMERICAN FLAG SPECIAL released in July and this will serve as an introduction to his new series TIMES2 (read TIMES SQUARE) +++ WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY is the last issue +++ MEGATON MAN is discontinued at creator DONALD SIMPSON's insistence as of # 10 in order that he can devote more time to his new series BORDER WORLDS +++ The TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES appear in a MUNDEN'S BAR episode in the back of First Comics GRIMJACK # 26 +++ SWAMP THING # 53 will be another double size issue +++ DC will be releasing a special edition of MAN OF STEEL # 1 (the debut issue of the new SUPERMAN by JOHN BYRNE) to the direct sales market which will depict Supes' chest (?). News stand and direct sale re-orders will feature a cover with Krypton exploding.

The next DC Science fiction graphic novel is an adaptation of DEMON WITH A GLASS HAND by Harlan Ellison to be pencilled by Marshall Rogers +++ DC's excellent 'MAZING MAN' is discontinued as of #12 +++ Although lots of American guests have dropped out of the UK COMIC ART CONVENTION, there will still be an impressive array of talent in attendance. Those due to appear are Frank Miller, Gil Kane, Gilbert Shelton, Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Alan Moore, Garry Leach, John Bolton, Alan Davis, Mike Kaluta (who had previously dropped out and then said he was coming again) and Bryan Talbot. The convention will be held at the University of London Union on September 20/21 and costs £7.50. Write to UKCAC86, 181 Longlands Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA15 7LB. +++ After TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES comes a plethora of similarly titled books: Death Craze Teenage Superheroes, Geriatric Gangrene Jujitsu Gerbils, Pre-teen Dirty Gene Kung Fu Kangeroos, Geriatric Glowing Gas pumping Geckos, Mildly Micro-waved Pre-pubescent Kung Fu Gophers, and, last but definitely stupidest, YOUNG ADULT HYBRID UNDERWATER SUBNUCLEAR SHAOLIN SNAKEFIST KUNG FU LEATHER SPIDERS. An April fools gag on the back of Marvel Age # 40, ADULT THERMONUCLEAR SAMURAI ELEPHANTS, is now actually being developed into an exploitive series +++ Matt Howarth, known for illustrations in various SF magazines and books, is working on a new series for Fantagraphics called PARTICLE DREAMS +++ THE SPIRAL PATH, a strip that originally appeared in the now defunct WARRIOR, is to be reprinted as a two-issue micro series by Eclipse +++ As of # 34 JUDGE DREDD changes publisher and becomes a Quality publication. There are also plans to continue the US colour 2000AD comic, and start ROGUE TROOPER, SAM SLADE and NEMESIS up in regular titles as well as plundering IPC's archives for things like STEEL CLAW which used to run in LION if memory serves me rightly +++



# WRITE BACK

## THE LETTERS COLUMN

One of the rewards of editing *Matrix* is receiving your letters, and I was particularly pleased to get so many this time, thanks to all of you who wrote. As you will see, I've included as much as possible from the letters which means a rather long column. To start with, here's a reaction to the death of a certain SF author.

MICHAEL WIPPELL    You and your friends  
10 Wrighton Place    are doing a great job  
LONDON                for SF and us rank  
NW5 2GL                and file BSFA  
                             members.

All the same, how on earth can you say that February proved to be even blacker than January this year? The death in January of L Ron Hubbard removed from this world one of the nastiest double-dyed degenerate crooks of the 20th century, and there have been plenty. I am really glad to know that that evil personality is no longer among us wreaking havoc with young minds and stealing millions of dollars from the gullible. Thank God the "man" never got anywhere near political power.

As you will realise, I do not believe criminal lunatics should be made cult heroes even if at one time they were fairly good SF writers.

I must admit I certainly didn't shed any tears at the news of Hubbard's demise. Do any of you see the man in another light?

SIMON WALKER        I'd like to echo the  
Finsbury Hall        comments made by  
Bastwick Street     David Boyce and Iain  
London                Anderson in the last  
EC1V 3PE               locol concerning the  
                             BSFA's ultra-low

profile. I had been reading SF for at least six or seven years before coming across the BSFA ad. in the back of an Arrow P/B, which I think is quite incredible given the standing of the BSFA in the SF world. (I was pleased to see a filer from Forbidden Planet in the latest mailing, but I have been continually perplexed by the absence of BSFA publicity in that esteemed establishment. Well Hodson?)

Why not run off some posters and put a couple in the mailings with a request for the membership to have them displayed appropriately - bookshops, libraries, arts centres, etc. the posters needn't be expensive - A4 with an eye-catching logo and the necessary information should suffice. I fear however that the legendary BSFA apathy would overcome the proposed method of distribution. Oh well, it's a thought.

On the subject of apathy I hear the monthly London meetings have finally collapsed under the weight of disinterest. I must admit to being one of the guilty here, my attendance was pretty minimal. I must say however, that I thought The Cooper's Arms was not the ideal venue - a real pain to get to - and that holding them on a Friday was a sure way to reduce attendance. I would like to see the resurrection of the meetings, hopefully in a form more accessible to the average member. How? God knows! Ideas anyone? Get writing. Perhaps more meetings on a regional basis would be in order, with annual bashes in London or Birmingham or wherever. I would hazard a guess that 95% of members exist in complete isolation!

There's been a lot of hot air spouted recently about the directions the BSFA should or should not be taking. Well... Vector's OK, very good in fact! PI does its job; I can't even remember what Focus was all about - never mind; now, what's left... ah yes, *Matrix*. Well I like *Matrix*, and I thought Terry Broome's whinging in M63 was way over the top. However, it could be better, there's no denying - but the improvement must come from the membership. Broome is wrong - *Matrix* should not be "foremost an SF news magazine" - that's far too narrow and boring. *Matrix* should be where the membership makes its views known - on cons, books, media, fandom, comics, on the price of fish in Vladivostok if they want! Via articles, reviews, locs, illo's, cartoons, whatever. Mr Broome is right regarding the imbalance of M62, but who's fault is that? Yours, O membership. It's no good blaming the Editor for what you lot aren't writing. So pull your collective finger out and get submitting those little gems, so that the editors don't think they're wasting their time.

P.S. The non-appearance of the crossword this mailing is not a case of blatant hypocrisy honest! I'm pleading a near terminal case of finals. BYC will be back in the Autumn - if there's room!

I can only add that I agree with

*Simon's comments on Matrix. Posters, as noted in this issue's editorial, are available - just drop Keith Freeman a line if you feel you can make use of any. I for one would love to see regular BSFA meetings being held again. A couple of years ago they were something of a focal point in London fandom. Surely this could happen again, and on a wider basis.*

KEN LAKE I must take issue with Paul Kincaid over his fanzine critique. Not with his views on any specific zine, but on the whole basis of his criticism which is that there is some standard to which zines should aspire, some definition which can distinguish between a proper fanzine and one that doesn't fill the bill.

Let's look at this briefly: fanzines go back many decades, during which period they have changed and re-changed as the many editors and contributors have changed. I just do not believe that any golden-age fan would, if he were to start pubbing his ish today, insist on resuscitating the style and content of bygone years, and I'd go so far as to say that zines which consciously seek to recreate the feel of those days are always a failure because they are bogus. Furthermore, while there may be passing fads in fanish belief and aim, there may be cliques and there may be battles, basically every fan is his/her own person, producing what he/she sees as a valid reflection and creation of his/her own ego/idea/aims/thoughts/feelings etc. The ONLY valid criticism of a fanzine is similar to that one applies to a novel or serious work: - is it literate, does it look good, does it make sense, does it appeal to me, will it appeal to others... add your own criteria, but draw the line at "does it fall into an arbitrarily defined concept of (insert class of book - in this case fanzine)?"

Let a thousand flowers bloom - but by all means seek to fertilise them, manure them, and if they're too hideous tear 'em up by the roots. But don't pretend to do it in the name of some fictitious "real fandom" for there ain't no such animal.

Other comments on M62: does a booklist really belong here? - Surely we all get booksellers' lists, which tell us something about the contents as well? Thanks to Eve for very abbreviated GUFFspiel - yes, do send me GUFFSTUFF! And may I suggest that the BSFA should've paid for this to be duplicated and sent to ALL members with the latest bundle of joy? Don't agree with Martin Hewitson about Mexican-2 but will defend to the end his right to say what he

thinks, for this IS a conrep worth reading for its content, not a bit of fannish onanism.

I do like Iain Anderson's request for POSTERS about the BSFA - send me some and I'll get 'em displayed all over. As for your argument that a double-size BSFA would prove unworkable, I disagree totally: it would throw up so much new talent and willing hands that you would more than double efficiency. Small IS beautiful, but a 5,000-member BSFA would still be small, believe me! For a start, we'd get at once the glossy, well-printed, large, informative magazines that we have the right to expect - 4,000 new members at M7 gives you M28,000 a year more to play with, which is just what we need.

While certainly excepting you, John, from this nasty attack, might it not be suggested that the failure of the BSFA has again and again been due to egoboo-seeking on the part of a small clique? They'd sooner do a job badly than get the backing to pay someone to do it well - and that brings me back to my proposal that the BSFA needs PAID top people to do top jobs properly and reliably. John, would YOU stay and do it for real money?

*My comments that a double-size BSFA would prove unworkable were based simply on the assumption that we tried to serve them with the 'machine' used for the present level. If we did you can sure that collapse would follow just as night follows day. By all means let's have 5,000 members, but we must be sure that there exists the organisational structure first. I didn't intend to dissuade the BSFA from boosting its membership to new heights, but to point out the potential dangers of doing so without the back-up. Would I like to be a paid official? Difficult question - all depends on the exact job and the pay!*

*Egoboo-seeking on the part of a small clique? To be honest I haven't really noticed this, but perhaps I'm standing too close to see. Dare I ask you to substantiate this theory?*

Ken was kind enough to send a cutting about the Government's latest brainwave to reassure us that 'Big Brother' isn't watching - the Data Protection Act. As this piece of legislation could affect many of the activities of SF fans (convention membership records or even a fanzine editor's mailing list) it's something that Matrix should try to cover. Space and time limitations have squeezed it out of this issue, but I'll be passing it on to Maureen for possible inclusion in future issues.

Maybe you thought the news was just a booklist Ken, but here's someone with a different view.

CHRIS BAILEY Just a note to  
23 Clevedon Rd express appreciation  
London for the last issue of  
SE20 7QQ Matrix - lots in it,  
readable, good to  
look at and definitely beyond the call  
of your duties. And you were terribly  
polite about Dave Hodson.

The news section was pretty good  
actually and I even referred to it a  
couple of times. Can you ask Dave to  
keep his recommendations in the books  
section to himself, though - he appears  
incapable of distinguishing between  
(shudder) David Mace and (respectful  
pause) Lucius Shepard.

We can't avoid the BSFA Award  
'controversy' any longer, so here we go.

TOM JONES Onto the BSFA Awards,  
14 Maywood a regular talking  
Bracknell point for as long as  
Berks I can remember. I  
have much sympathy  
with Nicholas Mahoney's views. During  
my time on the committee we did  
introduce the 'only paperbacks can be  
nominated' rule. I'm not sure it  
increased the number of voters but I was  
happier with it in that it does provide  
the possibility that more people will  
have read them. As I don't see the  
prime purpose of the award being to  
provide advertising for the publishers  
I'm not convinced by that argument. And  
conversely, I don't believe there's any  
evidence to show that 'BSFA Award  
Winner' on the front of a book gets us  
more members.

I've not read 'Helliconia Winter' but if  
it's as good as the first two parts of  
the trilogy then it's certainly worthy  
of an award. Whilst pleased to see Dave  
Langford get an award and 'Cube Root' is  
a good story, I fear it's not up to the  
standard of some previous winners -  
Geoff Ryman springs to mind. What I  
actually wanted to say was that I'm  
worried the award is becoming parochial,  
for instance by far the majority of the  
short story nominations came from  
'Interzone' and this certainly isn't a  
true reflection of this magazine's worth  
compared to 'F & SF', say.

It's nice to see the same advice on  
increasing membership being proffered  
again. If that sounds a snide remark  
it's not meant to be, it's good that the  
members are interested in the  
organisation and wish to see it expand.  
My views on membership have changed a  
number of times over the years and I now  
support your view, 800 to 1000 is just

about manageable with our current  
organisation. Old time members are  
aware that in the late 60s/early 70s the  
mention in "SF Monthly" and subsequent  
thousands of enquiries contributed to  
the temporary demise of the BSFA. (I  
hope that story is true and not a piece  
of folklore, I have no first-hand  
knowledge of the events.)

I fully support your response to Terry  
Broome's letter. MATRIX is not just a  
newsletter, whatever it might say on the  
front cover, and there is no reason why  
it should not print some fancish  
material (providing it's still  
accessible to most of the members). For  
some reason I used to reprint humorous  
pieces from fanzines (mainly by Dave  
Langford I seem to remember). Not only  
does this introduce members to fanzines  
and fandom, it also breaks up the chunks  
of news, reviews and other serious bits.

Tom's comment about the mid 70's  
collapse of the BSFA is just what I am  
preaching caution about. Like Tom I've  
no first-hand knowledge of what happened  
except from a consumer's viewpoint. I  
was one of those innocents who never  
received a response to an application  
for membership following mention of the  
Association in SF Monthly, but legend  
has it that the membership secretary  
'suffocated' under the weight of the  
mail!

Talking of Terry Broome, here he is.

TERRY BROOME You're right about  
23 Claremont St the inclusion of the  
Lincoln James White speech.  
Lincs But though I agree it  
LN2 5BN wasn't so much Dave's  
concep that was to  
blame, but a lack of a second report, I  
still think his report ON ITS OWN wasn't  
of much use. I recognise Dave had good  
intentions to begin with and that it IS  
a risk the BSFA must take with any new  
editor, that's one reason I bothered to  
write, because the foul-ups CAN, to some  
extent, be easily cured and a  
reassertion of those good intentions  
introduced. That doesn't make me any  
less angry, but it's not and never was a  
blind anger.

The earliest nominations list, if I  
understand correctly, and it's a point  
often stated by the MATRIX editor, is  
only a SAMPLE list. If Nick Mahoney is  
indicative of the misunderstanding  
concerning the purpose of that list (as  
a rough memory jogger), perhaps this  
should be pointed out in BIG TYPE so  
that no-one will get it wrong next  
time. SHARRA'S EXILE is part of the  
on-going 'Darkover' series, which is set  
a long way into the future, in a  
universe technologically far superior to  
our own. For anyone who is unfamiliar

with the books, the planet Darkover was colonised by an early group of explorers who suffered a series of mutations due to certain spores that enables them to harness the power of the 'matrix' contained within crystals or precious stones. Though it's basically a fantasy set-up, it IS rationalised, and a good deal of action revolves around encounters between the Darkovans, and later human expansionists. Even when the action, in any particular book, doesn't concern itself with this interaction (purely the Darkovans), events in that book shape the series, and will effect encounters with the expansionists in 'later' books. The importance of these encounters is that they offer studies on first contact between two societies, neither of which can fully understand the other, both of which doubt the other's way of life, and yet they have to come to an arrangement that will suit them both. As such, the series forms an important social commentary, it questions the worth of our own technocratic society, and recalls events like the colonisation of the Americas, Australia, or the African continent, to name a few, actions which are all morally suspect.

*I would love to run more than one conrep on a convention, but it all depends on contributors; no submissions means nothing to publish. This issue should have contained an Albacon report, but the only one I received wasn't up to scratch, so there're no reports at all this time.*

*And on with more BSFA Awards comment.*

IAIN ANDERSON I agree with what Nicholas Mahoney said about the BSFA awards. I didn't vote for best novel this year as I had not read any of them. I particularly agree that the award should be based on paperbacks - how many people actually buy hardbacks? At the moment I have 200 to 300 SF paperbacks, most of which I've read but I have only ever read 3 books in hardback. The only one in the last 3 to 4 years being Kim Stanley Robinson's *Memory of Whiteness* - a good book, better construction than *Icchenge*, which surprisingly turned up in the local library in March, which is a world first as it is usually very difficult to get the brand new books which tend to go to the big city libraries.

So I for one would be very happy to see the Novel award go to paperbacks - at least I would have a better chance to vote - if the present system is kept then I will only have read one book which can be nominated and it will not be the best of 86.

I was not overly impressed with the reply to my, and another, letter in *Matrix* 63. I do not have any experience in running something like the BSFA so I don't know how difficult it would be with a very much increased membership, but surely the whole point is to have as large a membership as possible so that as many SF fans as possible know what is going on in the genre. At this moment in time I wonder how many Frank Herbert fans in this country are impatiently waiting for his next book, not knowing there won't be one due to the lack of information in the general media about his death - information they would get through the BSFA.

Onto the point of publicity, I don't care about massive campaigns all over England - I live in Scotland. But seriously, that is the wrong attitude. What I suggested, and stand by, is a simple and surely not that expensive programme of placing simple posters, just stating the name and address of the BSFA, in libraries and perhaps bookshops. After all, that's where SF fans are most likely to be found.

*Point taken on publicity, I'm not saying any more on that subject but I trust you will use the poster in your mailing list.*

ROB GREGG I haven't located either Vector or PI as they're doing a decent job, but this letter is largely about the decline of

*Matrix* over the past year. Unlike some fen, I don't feel threatened when the odd zine fails to appear as overall the BSFA is still superb value, but I'm disappointed that *Matrix* rarely lives up to the expectations. Having said that, this issue was far better than the last one (#joke#).

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what is wrong with *Matrix*, but I guess it is the fact that the zine always seems hurried and incomplete. Dave did a good job on the news pages of 63, but I'm pleased he has quit as editor as he clearly wasn't up to the job. I only hope that you find a new editor soon before folk start leaving the BSFA in their droves. Most fen aren't as loyal as I.

Are you aware of the current situation at the BFSF? They have had the same problems regarding editors in their newsletter, and have recently announced that from now on the zine will have two editors producing alternate issues, thus giving the poor editor twice the time to get his (or her) act together. I'm sure this could work well for the BSFA too, and is worth considering.

Having criticised the current state of Matrix, I'd like to thank you for filling in as you have. It would've been even better if there had been a bit more of it. The letters, reviews, and news sections were all quite good. My appreciation of Paul Kincaid's article was weakened by the fact I'd seen it in Prevert. I wish you'd get back to a regular zine review column - for me, that was the thing that always set Matrix apart from the other BSFA zines, its uniquely fannish feel.

Congrats to Brian Aldiss and Dave Langford on their BSFA award wins. I was rather annoyed by the condescending attitude of Nicholas Mahoney in regard to the selfsame awards. 95% of fans realise quite well what is SF and what is fantasy, but quite rightly lump the two together under the all-encompassing title 'SF'. Mahoney himself is the fool if he decries the right of 'Mythago Wood' to win the award in 1985. As for 'Neurodancer', it was not the only SF title nominated for the Hugo and nebula awards. The Gibson novel won on its own merit against the likes of 'The Integral Trees', 'The Peace War', and 'Emergence'. If these three are not SF what are they? Fantasy or mainstream?

Moving onto more intelligent views in the local, it was good to read some constructive letters that weren't blindly knocking the Association. I also regret that Terry Broome isn't seen a bit more within the pages of BSFA zines. His letters are always intelligent and thought-provoking. (End of plug for the Terry Broome fan club!)

As you may be aware, a group of British fans are putting Terry Jeaves forward as special Fan Guest of Honour at the 1987 Worldcon. We feel that after publishing ERG for 27+ years, keeping UKFA going virtually single-handed for years, and his many other achievements in fandom, the guy deserves to mellow in the fannish spotlight for a bit. A special FOOHship at the British Worldcon would be the biggest tribute we could pay him. This bid is entirely independent of those involved in the organisation of Conspiracy so might well fail, but any publicity for it in Matrix would be greatly appreciated.

I quite agree regarding the use of more than one editor for a magazine, but alternate duties? I'm not sure about that, one editor/editorial team does give a sense of continuity. Nevertheless it's a good idea and one to be given some thought. Personally, I like the way Vector is being produced at present although they do seem to find it more difficult to make the printing deadlines than the single editors - Andy

Sawyer and myself. I hope you find enough Terry Broome material in this issue!

STEPHEN R EALEY  
9 Glasven Road  
Northwood  
Kirkby  
Merseyside  
L33 6UA

I agree with most of the comments made by Nicholas Mahoney in his column. However, I am not so sure about his idea of a clear cut division between SF and non-SF novels. I don't think it exists.

The recent announcement about the Arthur C Clarke Award provides an ideal opportunity to sort out the whole BSFA awards controversy. This award has the same eligibility conditions as the old BSFA novel award. Why not retain the old BSFA award title but widen the eligibility criteria in order to include all novels appearing in paperback for the first time?

It appears that the BSFA membership wants to have an award they can vote for so why not give it to us? After all, we wanted a fiction magazine and got it - at least I think so, since the announcement of 'Antares One' the magazine has been conspicuous by its absence. Any further news?

I hope this mailing answers your question!

SIMON JEWELL  
80 Britannia Road  
North  
Southsea

Although I have only been a member of the BSFA for a short time I have, like a lot of other people, noticed a marked decline in the quality of the magazine. When I received my first few mailings, I was very impressed by the overall quality, but after MS9 I began to feel increasingly disappointed. After all, 8 pages is a bit ridiculous. I appreciate your difficulties and was glad to see an improvement with the latest edition, and I hope it is not just a fluke.

One thing that I missed especially were the Paul Ward covers. I found that they added a good touch; having a distinctive front cover gives a much better impression than one which looks like an inside page in the wrong place. So is there any chance of more covers by him?

For what I got, I think that a year for membership is a bargain, and although I do not particularly want the fee to rise, I would welcome it if it went an improvement in the magazine quality, especially in the case of Matrix. In particular, a move to a permanent wrap-around format.

Apart from the increased length of the last edition, I was pleased to see that

the letters column heading had been changed, the old one was repulsive, though something a little more distinctive could have replaced it, maybe a better illustration.

My congratulations and commiserations go to Simon Walker and Chris Carne with special thanks to Simon Walker for what must be the longest crossword clue in history. Congratulations for producing a crossword that I can't put down, and commiserations because it must take a warped kind of mind to come up with some of those clues. Keep it up.

Is there any chance that the comic review could be extended, with more comprehensive information given? Although I find it very useful as it is, I would like to see more. I realise that a lot of people do not like the image that comics in this country have, but I wish that they would give them a chance to prove themselves. Too many critics talk about the mindless slapstick comedies in comics like the Brano and Dandy with open scorn, and I agree that these are not worth much consideration, but comics can be so much more than this. At their best, the stories show a maturity and literacy far beyond that submitted by some writers as 'serious Science Fiction'. If only people would read them with an open mind they would be free to see this, not being dragged down by childhood memories of Biff the Bear and Desperate Dan, they would find them far more enjoyable than they like to think.

I would just like to say that I enjoy the BSFA greatly despite obvious failings, and I intend to remain a member for a good number of years while remaining hopeful of a remedy to the more obvious ones.

If Paul Ward cares to submit some more artwork then I'm sure Laurence will be only too pleased to consider it for publication. In my view, it is important to improve the look of the publications and I hope that Matrix will switch to A3 folded format as soon as finances allow. I'm glad you like the comic reviews, Dave got some flak when he introduced this column, but knowing many SF fans read comics as well, I think it has a place. Expansion is up to the contributor, when I'm sure would like to oblige.

PATRICK LEE This is my first letter to Matrix, and in fact, the first to a BSFA magazine.  
24 Garden Drive  
Chesham  
Herts  
EN8 9RL

No offence, but Matrix and Paperback Inferno do look a little primitive, for want of a better word, but I do respect the fact that you are limited by your funds. So, even though you're nothing like Burclays

Supersavers Club (I shouldn't have expected a glossy colour magazine!), I can't wait for the next issues of Matrix, etc to come!

Anyway, here are a couple of suggestions - and please pass these on to Vector, just in case Matrix is the wrong magazine to write to.

- For one time only, this year (and perhaps it can be made into an annual event), how about one of the magazines doing a one-off special and publish a collection of science fiction artwork - in black and white if necessary - by members of the BSFA. The trouble is, besides cost of photocopying etc, who is going to contribute? Try advertising the idea in Matrix or Vector, and see what happens (no offence, but Vector seems to be the best place to present the collection)?
- Either I am dreaming, or it's just that I can't find where I read it from, but I think I read a remark about not many people entering Liz Sourbut's competitions. I have just discovered that she awards book tokens. How much are the book tokens she gives? When she is able to, how about other items such as a poster, a digital watch, or a piece of amateur artwork being given away? If she can't get any of those things, perhaps I could help out, in a small way! Anyway, try presenting the prize in bigger writing in future issues in Matrix.

At the moment I feel enthusiastic about the BSFA, and I hope it exists long enough to see the year AD 2000. Perhaps the BSFA will be a little richer by then!

Besides Yes, do the BSFA magazines ever review science fiction music at all, e.g. music from 'Dr Who' etc? Are such things ever mentioned?

Finally, has anyone heard of an American authoress called H M Hoover? What did Colin Harris (or anyone who saw it) think of the TV film 'Max Headroom'?

I'm a new member by the way, and in the words of Sandy Brown, I hope that my membership in the British Science Fiction Association will prove to be entertaining, informative and worthwhile.

P.S. Have you ever heard of a pop group (I think it's a pop group) called the Art. Of Noise? I know it's not directly connected with science fiction, but I believe that their music is based on imaginations, dreams and nightmares. What do you think of them and their music? And while we are on the subject of music, have you ever heard of the

song "Everybody wants to rule the world" by Tears For Fears? I like that song, but the point is, has anyone noticed that the tune is similar to the theme music from the film "Dune" (which I'd like to see again one day)? Coincidence?

An art annual sounds a great idea - would you like to edit it? Seriously, the only real limitations to doing one are money and an editor. I don't think members would be all that pleased if an issue of Vector (say) were dropped for it, but as a separate publication it is worth considering. I'm not sure what the book tokens are worth now, but when Dave Langford was running the competition it used to be £5. Alternative prizes are worth considering, but a book token does seem the most obvious for the BSFA.

Music does feature in Matrix when somebody contributes on that subject, although I cannot remember when it was last covered. I've heard of Art of Noise, but only their last single - The Video from Peter Gun wasn't it? Great theme. More on music follows:-

KEVIN McVEIGH  
37 Firs Road  
Milnthorpe  
Cumbria  
LA7 7QF

Iain Anderson's post script directed to me about Rush, Yes etc being excellent music to read SF to was nice in that someone read my first published piece. It also made me think, how do people read SF, in silence, to music, while watching TV or in bed? Personally, I always have music playing whatever I'm doing at home, but the type of music depends on the type of SF (or vice versa of course). What do other readers think on this subject? How does music complement fiction? For instance, Marillion goes well with Harlan Ellison because of the high emotional (particularly anger) content, whilst Janis Ian's gentle cynicism and mood fit McCaffrey's Ship Who Sang, and Crystal Singer works.

P.S. I discovered the BSFA about 18 months ago through poster/leaflets in Odyssey 7 SF Bookshop in Manchester. If someone has any of these I would like to try to advertise the BSFA in this area.

STUART FALCONER  
70 Willow Way  
Ponteland  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE20 9RG

Congratulations on the reappearance of Matrix. You had us all worried for a while. First Focus drops out of sight, then the long-awaited Antares project fails to materialize, and finally the dwindling of Matrix. I was beginning to think there would be nothing left to pay my subscription to in a few months.

Whatever did happen to Focus? There was the suggestion that it might come out

three times a year rather than twice, but this did not happen. Then nothing. I cannot remember when I last received a copy.

The one serious lack which I noticed as soon as I joined BSFA was in the area of fiction. It seems to have become an article of faith as far as committee members and editors are concerned that BSFA will not publish fiction because that is not what is there to do, a view I reject utterly. The Antares project seemed like an attempt to redress the balance a little. I submitted a story myself, but to date I have had neither acknowledgment, acceptance nor rejection. This is most discourteous and unprofessional. Is Antares to be written off to experience, to become a bad dream like Tangent to be trotted out every time someone wants to know why there is no fiction in the British Science Fiction Association? I realise I am going over well-dug ground here, but I will go on asking this apparently awkward question until there is some action.

Well, I hope that this mailing clears up the Antares problem and that Focus will reappear soon! Fiction is a highly emotive subject, and if the BSFA appears not to want to publish it, it's probably a sign of over-caution. Don't forget Sturgeon's Law!

When, on the contents page of last issue, I rather tongue-in-cheek suggested that 'abuse' be sent to me, I didn't quite expect the following.

BERNARD SMITH  
8 Wansford Walk  
Thorplands Brook  
Northampton  
NN3 4YF

There is a saying that a fish stinks from the head, and I daresay that the same applies to the BSFA.

There have been a number of references to the membership apathy, and it probably exists, but could part of the reason be the belief that this is the way of things with the BSFA? Recent events have indicated that the organisation is a total shambles, and that nobody seems to be doing very much about it. The chairman rides off into the sunset sometime last year, and there is still no replacement (wasn't that part of the function of the AGM?). Focus seems to have been allowed to die quietly, although that doesn't stop the BSFA advertising it as a regular mailing. They've been paid for, remember? There is a total lack of information as to what the hell is going on, and as Matrix is meant to be a NEWS-letter, not just a review magazine, that is not excusable. There is supposed to be a council running the BSFA (at least, I assume they do - after 3 years I still don't know what their responsibilities are. Ditto for the chairman). Isn't it about time that the membership stopped having to rely on

third or fourth-hand rumour and gossip to find out what may or may not be happening? The BSFA membership consists of everyone who coughs up their subs, not just those who attend mailing sessions and conventions, and they have a right to know exactly what's happening. The present image of the BSFA is that of an organisation coming apart at the seams, not because of membership apathy, but council inertia and ineptitude. And please, no waffle about 'we don't get paid to do it'. That's no excuse and never was. The council are either prepared to do the job for which they have been elected, or they aren't.

Reading through the letters column of 63 was a depressing experience. Iain Anderson made the suggestion of including posters in the mailing - a logical and reasonable thing, and one would think that it would be standard procedure. The reply he got was both silly and condescending, a lot of waffle about 'TV ad campaigns' that totally ignored the point he was making. Has John not heard of local radio, reciprocal advertising, local newspapers etc? On the one hand we are told that the budget is so restrictive - then that the membership lists cost a tiny amount to produce. Simple answer to that one - maintain a separate list of members done by county and send a copy off to anyone who send in the Sae (that covers fans who want to get in touch with those in their area) and use the released facilities to produce the posters and info sheets for libraries, schools, bookshops etc. Of course the BSFA needs new members, not just to replace those leaving but to introduce new people with new skills and new ideas to prevent the mental fossilization that has been the hallmark of the organisation since I've been a member. The whole editorial response to Iain's letter reeked of: I know it's a bloody shambles but that's how we like it, and that's how it's gonna stay - and when things go wrong we can always blame 'membership apathy'. Well you can't, not any more. Enough suggestions have come from people over the past couple of years, and none of them have been even discussed properly let alone put into action or attempted. The response has always been the same - either an excuse why it can't (or won't) be done or an offhand patronising dismissal. It isn't the apathetics that we need worry about, but the attitude that makes the interested, intelligent, concerned and constructive ones so thoroughly pissed off with this kind of treatment that they don't bother renewing.

And finally, the ANTARES fiasco. Remember that? The joint BSFA/CASSANDRA fiction magazine that didn't turn up last December, this February, this April.... The Cassandra team produced,

quite some time ago, camera ready copy for eight stories, plus the A5 illustration, plus the cover artwork, all of which was sent to Alan Dorey. Despite a promise to be sent the editorial and proposed stories from the BSFA (last November) I've received absolutely NOTHING, or seen or heard anything that would make me believe that the thing will ever be printed - and many people with whom I have spoken are now convinced that it was never meant to be. If Matrix, PI or Vector failed to appear three times in succession without so much as an explanation, something would have been said or done. I'm tired of giving Alan Dorey and the BSFA the benefit of the doubt, they don't deserve it. This mailing should contain either Antares or an apology for perpetrating a cynical con trick on the membership. But no feeble excuses, or promises that won't be kept. The membership have had enough of that, and it's about time someone started to do something right.

*The fact that there is no Chairman for the BSFA is as much Bernard's fault, as it is mine, as it is yours. We all are the BSFA. As I said elsewhere, how the AGM could have voted in a new Chairman when there wasn't a candidate is beyond me. Also, how can the BSFA stink from the head when there isn't a head? I did not 'totally ignore' the point Ian Anderson was making, and I did not intend to appear silly and condescending, but if you want to read my comments that way Bernard, that's your problem. However, I would be grateful if you could refrain from reading accusations of 'membership apathy' into them when none were there. Iain's point about posters was noted, acted upon and those who have asked for them should have received copies. In connection with the membership list, the point I was making is that little or no funds would be released if they were not published, so suggestions of what to do with the funds are pointless.*

*I think I've commented enough elsewhere in this issue on Antares, but as one of the handful who are always willing to put considerable time and effort into making all aspects of the BSFA work (not just those that are advantageous to my own pet project), I take great exception to the intimation that we would so broadly publicise something we had no intention of producing. I am tired of Bernard's destructive and abusive carping and am grateful I will no longer be obliged to read them.*

WAHF

*I'm sorry not to have included the letters from Paul D Morris and Carol Anne Whawell, but sadly they arrived after the letter column had been finalised. I'll forward them to Maureen, so check in M65.*

# Competition Corner

BY LIZ SOURBUT

Well, obviously BSFA members really enjoy solving anagrams. There were exactly two entries this time around: William Walker, who scored zero, but came up with some even sillier anagrams than I did (eg: CIA STOP THE ALIEN T.V. AD); and the winner this time, Stephen R Ealey, who scored 24 points, failing only to get no. 7 (which was the tricky one). He deserves the prize for that score, so a book token will find its way to him.

The answers, for all those of you who couldn't afford a stamp, were:

1. A Little Night Flying (Bob Shaw)
2. Tarnsman of Gor (John Norman)
3. "Repent Harlequin!" said the Ticktock -Man (Harlan Ellison)
4. "All You Zombies..." (Robert Heinlein)
5. The Jagged Orbit (John Brunner)
6. Lord Valentine's Castle (Robert Silverberg)
7. The Wind Beyond the Mountains (Harlan Ellison)
8. The Shadow of the Torturer (Gene Wolfe)
9. The Void Captain's Tale (Norman Spinrad)

And now the bad news:

The competition below will be my last, I fear, so please gladden my heart by entering it. I've enjoyed setting them, despite the paucity of entries, but after August I am unlikely to have a fixed address for some time, so I'll regretfully have to hand over to someone who has. Anyone out there fancy the job? In the meantime, ponder if you will the:

## MATRIX 64 COMPETITION

I note that the BSFA is finding it hard to locate a new Chairman. This seems a shame when there are so many wonderful candidates just waiting to be called forth. All we need to do is turn back to the heartland of SF - to the tales themselves. For several months now our chairman has been the Invisible Man, so why not elect another fictional character to take his place. Send me, please, the name of the SF character who you think could best run the BSFA as it should be run, along with a manifesto of not more than 200 words.

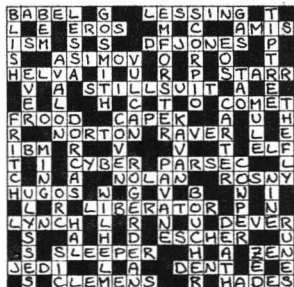
Entries to: Liz Sourbut, 8 Petersfield Rise, Roehampton, London SW15 4AE, by the next mailing deadline.

## CROSSWORD

### ANSWERS

SIMON WALKER

## Billion Year Crossword No. 4



## Billion Year Crossword No. 5

