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NEWS

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Red Shift

And welcome to the second year of my reign of terror, although I shall have to begin with an apology and explanation of sorts. I've been sporadically unwell over the last year, and although Matrix has always gone out, I've not been as organised about letters, review material etc as I should have been. I'm not one to curvy sympathy or stuff like that, and I wouldn't want to embarrass people, but the fact is that I have an interesting set of depressive and anxiety complexes which sometimes convince me that it's much more fun to stay in bed, so I do. As I now no longer have the job which exacerbates the situation things will doubtless improve fairly steadily, especially as I am planning to take a few months off to get myself fit and healthy in mind and body. So, if there are any signs of haste or flurry about this Matrix, I apologise, but it was done at very short notice. If you were expecting to hear from me, you will be now, and if you have my work phone number, I really wouldn't bother ringing - they might be even ruder to you than they were to me.

One or two small hiccups - Paul Kincaid's name has been inadvertently left off the article about the applications of Science Fiction, Mike Moir's name likewise from the Albacon report, and we should have said that the item about the International Science Policy Foundation is a companion piece to the article in last issue about the Science Fiction Foundation, our partners in the Arthur C Clarke Award.

But on with the show. This is a special extended edition of Matrix, produced for the Worldcon, in the hope that lots of eager new members will snap it up. If you are reading for the first time, welcome to the BSFA, and welcome to the first barangue from your friendly neighbourhood Matrix editor. You will be contributing, won't you?

You will be able to write me letters about issues in the magazine, or perhaps write a piece for Soapbox, about anything under the sun which concerns you deeply, enough to fill an A4 sheet of typescript, although I don't mind handwritten stuff. In fact, I'll be constantly thinking up new ways of encouraging people to participate in this magazine. I'm very inventive when I'm at a loose end.

In fact, you will be able to do all the things the long term members seem to have forgotten about. I thought it was the fact that the postal strikes have been widespread and unpredictable, or perhaps it's just that everyone is on holiday, but the post is such a dismal trickle. I wondered if I'd given up the editorship without noticing. Not good enough, must try harder, must swap editor with lots of post. It's very therapeutic if nothing else.

Of course, I hope to see a lot of you at the BSFA AGM during Worldcon - see the BSFA page for further information and if anyone wants to help with the daily newsletter, come along to the Repro Room adjacent to the Fan Room, and ask for me. I will be pleased to see you, and will certainly have something for you to do.

A few general points - please don't tell me to just stick a few extra pages on, next time I have an abundance of material. I know it happened in the last Vector, due to a misunderstanding, but we have budgets and page allowances to stick to, and they need to be adhered to in order to stop us all going bankrupt. In the future, who knows, I'll be able to expand, but only at the say-so of the rest of the committee.

There also seems to be some confusion about who does what in the magazine at present. Paul Kincaid and Stan Nicholls provide the majority of the news between them, although any contributions would be most welcome. Stan also provides a good deal of material for the Store Vars column, but does not compile the listings, which are my province. Ron Gemmell takes care of Clubs liaison, so that information goes to him. Media reviews currently come to me, and everything else is my responsibility. And please, those people who seem to think I'm some vast, departmentalised publishing emporium, there is only me running this thing, so one letter to me can deal with everything you have to say about Matrix. For those who seem confused, Maureen is a female name, and I don't go a bundle on being addressed as Dear Sir. Besides, it makes Paul nervous.

A lot of general queries also come my way, and I am happy to deal with them. I don't like the financial queries however. They should go to either Joanne Raine or Keith Freeman, depending on the nature of the problem. I'm prone to sitting a stuff which isn't mine at present, so speed things up by referring to the correct person to begin with. Much appreciated.

I think I will draw this editorial to a close in that case, look forward to seeing lots of you during Worldcon (I'll be the harassed looking one in the print room, with a taste for tasteless earrings) and start planning the next year of Matrix. Don't forget to write will you! Your deadline will be 11th September. Be there!

Maureen

Walking On Glass

BSFA AGM

Following the announcement last issue, I can confirm that the BSFA AGM is as follows:

Date: Sunday, 30 August.

Time: 11 am.

Place: The Bedford Hotel, Brighton

The AGM is actually scheduled for one of the Worldcon's small function rooms in the hotel. It will be listed in the Worldcon programme book, and in the daily newsletter. Although part of the Worldcon, the Bedford is not the main convention hotel, so it is possible to attend the AGM without having to be a member of the convention.

BSFA Publishing

Since the announcement last issue about our association with George Hay to republish long out of print books, we've received several letters with suggestions for books to seek out. That already gives us quite a long list, but we're still looking for more titles. If there are any books you would like to see back in print, do write to me at the editorial address.

Incidentally, if any of you are curious about how this venture will work, then look up your back issues of *Paperback Inferno*, where you'll find an article by George on precisely this subject.

BSFA Award - Help wanted!

Mike Moir and I have been trying to compile a complete record of the BSFA Awards, only to find that no such record seems to be possible. We have a complete record of all winners and nominees since Mike took over the administration of the Awards, but before that we only have a list of winners (and even that may be incomplete).

If any of you know any of the nominees, particularly in the short fiction category, from 1984 and before, please let us know.

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

BSFA - The who, what, why, where and when

This is a special issue of *Matrix* that will be available at Conspiracy 87, the Worldcon. If things go as we hope they will, then a lot of people are going to be picking up *Matrix*, and the other BSFA publications, for the first time at the convention. For the benefit of those of you new to the BSFA, therefore, I thought I would devote this column to introducing you to this strange organisation you've just encountered.

The BSFA, in case you haven't guessed, is the British Science Fiction Association, a body devoted to the study, promotion and enjoyment of science fiction in this country. But that doesn't really tell you a lot about who we are and what we do.

Like most such organisations, the origins of the BSFA are lost in mists as murky as those which surround the builders of Stonehenge. We may not be as venerable, but we can damn well be as mysterious. And with that aim in mind the nature and function of the organisation has shifted constantly since it was founded. Nearly 20 years ago, when the whole rignarole started, a group of fans got together with the idea of creating an organisation to bring together British fandom. For a while it was viewed as being a way into fandom, at another time it was supposed to be supporting the organisation of, and even to an extent underwriting, British conventions. Well both those purposes have slipped away with time. Our only link with conventions these days is that our AGM is traditionally held at the largest British convention of the year. We do still serve as a conduit into fandom, but that seems to be more a by-product than a deliberate aim.

What we do instead is serve as a central body for everyone involved in science fiction in any way - those who read it, those who write it, critics and students, fans and those who have no interest in fandom whatsoever. Our rôle is as diverse as the interests of our members, and so we fill them in many different ways.

Most obviously and most actively we work through our four publications. *Matrix* is our newsletter, and strives to provide news of every aspect of science fiction, including comprehensive listings of forthcoming conventions, book shops, current fanzines, and fan groups, plus media reviews, convention reports, articles, and, of course, information on what is happening in the BSFA itself.

Vector is our critical journal, providing a serious though non-academic examination of science fiction by way of articles, interviews and book reviews. This is supported by *Paperback Inferno*, a review magazine which provides a fairly comprehensive survey of new and reprinted paperbacks and magazines.

Each of these magazines is published six times a year and is included in every one of our bi-monthly mailings. The fourth magazine, *Focus*, appears three times a year - every other mailing - and features articles aimed at the new and would-be writer, as well as short stories.

But if the four magazines are the most visible work of the BSFA, they are far from being the entire extent of our interests. We operate a magazine chain. There is a postal writers' workshop. The BSFA library is housed at the Science Fiction Foundation. Our information officer handles all sorts of queries from members, and from other bodies. The BSFA is, in fact, well on the way to being recognised as a central reference house where science fiction is concerned and we have dealt with requests for information from publishers, other organisations, and television. Our latest project is a scheme to find and republish long out-of-print books in conjunction with George Hay who has considerable experience of this sort of endeavour.

The BSFA also presents an annual award, voted by the members, to the best novel, short fiction, dramatic presentation and artwork of the year. In addition, Arthur C. Clarke is our President and it was therefore inevitable that the BSFA should be one of the three bodies involved in judging the £1,000 Arthur C. Clarke Award.

If all of that presents an image of an active, vital organisation with all sorts of attractions whatever your involvement in science fiction, well, that's exactly what we are. What we are not is a vast, wealthy, professional body. All the work done by the BSFA is done on an amateur basis by volunteers. We are always on the look out for new ideas about what the BSFA should be doing, but we are even more keen to find volunteers to put those ideas into practice, or to help in keeping our current activities up to scratch.

Every so often I get letters from members who, for some arcane reason or another, have decided that the BSFA is in dire straits. It's true we've had our ups and downs, and the last time there was a major influx of new members in 1974 the organisation just wasn't able to cope. For some people the image of those times has stuck. But it could not be further from the truth today. We have never been in a better state in terms of finances, organisation and activities. In 1987 the BSFA will be able to cope with the new members we are actively seeking at the Worldcon, and they should provide an organisation that is even stronger and better. If you are one of those new members, welcome to an organisation that, I think you will agree, has a lot to offer you. I hope that you have something to offer in return.

Paul Kincaid

NEWS

Compiled by Paul Kincaid and Stan Nicholls (with a little help from *Locus* and other sources)

AWARDS

The *Ditmar Awards* were presented at Capcon, the 26th Australian National Science Fiction Convention. The winners and runners-up were as follows: (NB, the officially published results given in the Australian newszine *Thyme* do not include the authors of either the novels or the short fiction; they do not even give the full titles of the short fiction):

NOVEL

Bard III
No Award
Oasis
Taronga
The Black Grail
Adventures of CR Cross

SHORT FICTION

'Man ... Red'
'Shut the Door ...'
'Time of Star'
No Award
'A Dragon ...'
'Man ... Everything'

FANZINE

Thyme
Space Vastrel
Motional
Larrikin
Metaphysical Review
No Award

ARTIST

Craig Hilton
Nick Stathopoulos
Kerrie Hanlon
Betty de Gabriele
John Packer
No Award

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO AUSTRALIAN FANDOM

Carey Handfield
Jessica Aldridge
Peter McNamara
Michelle Nuijseert
No Award
John Foyster

WILLIAM ATHELING JR AWARD

Blackford's
Lockett's
No Award
Winch's
Tolley's

Dave Wolverton has been named the latest *Writers of the Future* Grand Prize winner. He wins a cheque for \$4,000.

The nominees have been announced for the *Caspars*, the Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards for 1986. They are:

BEST WORK IN ENGLISH

Michael Coney - lifetime achievement
Charles de Lint - *Yarrow*
Guy Gavriel Kay - *The Wandering Fire*
Robert Charles Wilson - *A Hidden Place*
Crawford Kilian - *Lifter*

- WORLDCON GOH'S MISS CON
- PUBLISHING MERRY-GO-ROUND
- NSTF SHORT STORY CONTEST
- LANDIS TRIAL VERDICT
- BAYLEY TRIAL UPDATE
- TIPTREE OBITUARY

BEST WORK IN FRENCH

Alain Bergeron - 'Bonne Fete Univers'
Claude-Michel Prevost - 'Salut le Monde'
Eliether Kochon - *Cocquillage*
Elisabeth Vonarburg - 'La Carte de Tendre'

FAN ACHIEVEMENT

Robert Ruete
Fran Skene
Elisabeth Vonarburg

The \$500 Compton Cook Award for best first novel of 1986 went to Thomas Wren for *The Doomsday Effect*. The award is presented by the Baltimore SF Society and was presented at Balticon.

The judging panel for the second Arthur C. Clarke Award has been announced. This year it has been decided to streamline the process, so initially there will be a team of three to draw up the shortlist. This team will consist of Paul Kincaid representing the BSFA, Dr Maurice Goldsmith of the International Science Policy Foundation, and Dr Edward James of the Science Fiction Foundation, who will also act as the administrator of the award. These three are empowered to call on others for suggestions for the shortlist. Once the shortlist has been decided, the panel will be expanded to at least six to make the final decision. The second BSFA representative on the final judging panel will be Andy Sawyer.

PEOPLE

Not much to add to our report last issue of the suicide of Alice Sheldon (James Tiptree Jr.). Her husband had been diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's Disease (senile dementia), and it is now known that the couple have previously spoken of a suicide pact. Sheldon killed her husband when he turned the gun upon herself on May 19th.

Alfred Bester, Guest of Honour at Conspiracy 87, is not going to be attending the Worldcon. After an accident at home he is unable to travel. Instead he is to record a message on video for the convention, and there is even talk of a satellite link-up.

Another Worldcon Guest of Honour, Doris Lessing, has just shocked the committee by declaring that she will not be able to attend the convention after the Saturday. This despite an agreement drawn up when she first agreed to be Guest of Honour which specified that she should attend the entire convention.

After that, there is at least some good news for the Worldcon committee. Arkady and Boris Strugatski will be attending the convention after all. For a while it looked as if official obstacles were being placed in the way of the Russian writers, but it has since emerged that the official invitations were sent via the Writer's Union, and were not being passed on to the Strugatskys by the head of that Union. The brothers have now been

approached directly, and as a result their visit to Worldcon has now received official blessing.

That, unfortunately, is not the end of the Worldcon's difficulties. Greg Benford is unable to attend because of his wife's illness. She has suffered kidney failure and is on a dialysis machine. Benford, meanwhile, has had problems of his own. He smashed his shoulder following a game of squash and has had to have surgery to put it back together again.

Another writer to withdraw is Jerry Pournelle who, after agreeing to take part in one of the key items planned for the convention, has now simply declared that his schedule does not permit him to attend.

The best excuse for failure to attend the Worldcon, however, must go to Somtow Sucharitkul. He has got to write the music for the King of Thailand's birthday party, and since the musicians in Thailand are not good enough the music will have to be recorded in Czechoslovakia and then taken to Thailand.

Meanwhile, just to remind us that writers sometimes do things other than attend or fail to attend conventions, the anthology that Alex Stewart has been hawking around publishers since the last Milford has finally found a home with NEL. (Hurrah! declares one of the contributors) When the book finally appears, however, it will not carry its working title: *Sex in Space*, its new title is to be *Demon Lovers*.

There seems to be a sudden and welcome flowering of anthologies in this country. *Other Edens* edited by Robert Holdstock & Christopher Evans has just appeared from UNWIN in time for the Worldcon. Its contents list reads like a Who's Who of contemporary British writers: Ianthe Lee, Christopher Evans, M. John Harrison, Ian Watson, Brian Aldiss, Graham Charnock, Robert Holdstock, Michael Moorcock, Garry Kilworth, E.M. Lanning, David Garnett, David Langford, Keith Roberts and Lisa Tuttle. So pleased does everyone seem to be with their handiwork that the two editors are already sounding out potential contributors to the second volume.

Another book that is out just in time for the Worldcon is *Ancient Light* by Mary Gentle, her slightly delayed sequel to *Golden Womb*. Meanwhile she already has a contract with SIMON & SCHUSTER UK for another children's novel which is due to be delivered by the end of the year, and negotiations are already underway for her third adult novel.

The first two SF titles to come from SIMON & SCHUSTER UK are *Interzone*, *The Second Anthology* edited by John Clute, David Pringle and Simon Ounsley which will contain stories by J.G. Ballard, Gregory Benford, Scott Bradfield, Thomas M. Disch, Neil Ferguson, Garry Kilworth, Rachel Pollack, Ian Watson and seven others; and a new collection of stories by Theodore Sturgeon chosen and introduced by David Pringle. One imagines that it is pure coincidence that *Interzone* editor David Pringle is now sf adviser for SIMON & SCHUSTER UK.

One writer who has not timed his new novel to appear at the Worldcon is J.G. Ballard, whose *The Day of Creation*, a contemporary novel set in Africa, will be published by GOLLANCZ in September.

Another SF writer who has turned to the mainstream is Garry Kilworth. His new novel, *Spiral Winds*, is due out about now from BODLEY HEAD who, to judge from the dustjacket, seem to regard him as having written nothing other than his previous mainstream book, *Witchwater Country*.

The new novel from Diana Wynne Jones is *A Tale of Time City* which features "a city outside time and history" and is due from METHUEN in October.

The latest author to follow editor Liz Calder from troubled CAPE to the newly established BLOOMSBURY is Leigh Kennedy. Her latest novel, *Saint Hiroshima*, comes from them in October.

Worldcon Toastmaster, Brian Aldiss, has a new book out from KEROSINA, hopefully in time for the convention. *Cracken at Critical* is a revision of *The Year Before Yesterday* which appeared from FRANKLIN WATTS in America earlier this year, and which incorporates two of his fledgling works, *Equator* and 'The Impossible Smile'. The KEROSINA edition includes illustrations by SMS, and features that publisher's first full-colour dust wrapper. As before there will be a special Collector's edition which will be accompanied by *The Magic of the Past*, which includes two short stories by Aldiss; and this will also be available as a separate paperback.

Iain Banks drops the newly acquired M. for his new mainstream novel, *Esperday Street*, due from MACMILLAN this autumn.

Russell Hoban's long-awaited new novel, *The Medusa Frequency* has finally appeared from CAPE. Those of you with long memories will recognise this as the work in progress described by Hoban during his interview at Mexican I (reprinted in *Vector* 125/6).

An extract from this novel has just been published as a Summer Short Story in *The Listener*, who followed this up by reprinting Gregory Benford's 'Freeze-frame' from *Interzone* and the second *Interzone* anthology.

More news on Barrington Bayley's court victory as reported last issue.

As a result of the judgement in Bayley's favour on 31 October 1985, ALLISON & BUSBY paid him £5,360 representing royalties and £2,495 in interest. However A&B were uncooperative in agreeing costs. Consequently there was a hearing for taxation of the bill of costs on 29 April 1987. Costs were assessed at around £2,000 but A&B's subsequent liquidation means Bayley will probably have to bear this himself.

Barrington Bayley writes (28 May 1987):

"The hearing in May, for assessment of damages: I was represented not by my solicitor but by a barrister, John Bowers.

"I am going to have to pay the costs of the first case out of its proceeds. The Law Society has agreed to bear the costs of the second case, but it seems I'm lucky to get away with this. They could easily have been taken from the proceeds of the first case also. The £7,000 I mentioned consists of - costs: about £2,000; damages: £5,000. Without the limit set on the court, the sum vanishing before my eyes could have been even greater. Incidentally the Receiver has written to make it clear that as an unsecured creditor I'm not going to get anything out of the assets."

The book trade press reports that publishers WH ALLEN have expressed an interest in buying the ALLISON & BUSBY name and back-list. No decision has been reached at the time of writing, and in any event it is doubtful if ALLEN would be obliged to take on responsibility for A&B's debts.

OBITUARIES

Alice Sheldon, who wrote under the pseudonyms James Tiptree Jr and Raccoona Sheldon, died of self-inflicted gunshot wounds on 19 May 1987. She was 71.

Her first story, 'Birth of a Salesman' appeared in 1968, and from then on her work appeared frequently, and rapidly attracted considerable critical acclaim. At the time little was known about the author, and as snippets of biography began to filter out - a spell in the army, involvement with the Pentagon and the CIA the apparently male writer earned praise for 'his' sensitive and perceptive treatment of female protagonists. Feminist themes, a satirical displacement of what we would consider normal sexuality, a condemnation of the 'world machine' all became powerful and familiar features of her work. They found voice in what, by any standards, must be considered among the finest stories to have been produced during the 1970s. 'The Women Men Don't See', 'Painwise', 'And I Awoke and Found me here on the Cold Hill's Side', 'The Last Flight of Doctor Ain' all make effective points about the pain of sex, the plight of the underdog, the violence we do to ourselves, to others, and to our world. The novella which is possibly the best of Tiptree's early work illuminates these themes and concerns perfectly: 'A Momentary Taste of Being' turns the expansion of humanity into space into the headlong flight of spermatozoa rushing to fertilise some alien ova.

Tiptree's early collections - *Ten Thousand Light-years From Home* (1973) and *Warm Worlds and Otherwise* (1975) - only confirmed 'his' reputation. Tiptree won the Hugo Award for 'The Girl who was Plugged In' (1974) and 'Houston, Houston, Do You Read?' (1977), and the Nebula Award for 'Love is the Plan, the Plan is Death' (1973), 'Houston, Houston, Do You Read?' (1976) and 'The Psychologist who wouldn't do Awful Things to Rats' (1977).

By this time rumours about the identity of 'Tiptree' abounded, and they were further fueled by the appearance of stories by 'Raccoona Sheldon' which bore distinct stylistic similarities to Tiptree's work. Finally, in 1977, the identity of Tiptree and Raccoona Sheldon as Alice Sheldon was revealed. Following this revelation the number of stories by Tiptree that appeared declined sharply for a while, and she never recovered either her prolificity or her power. Three more collections appeared, *Star Songs of an Old Primate* (1978), *Out of the Everywhere* (1981) and *Tales of the Quintana Roo* (1986), but though they contain some excellent work they don't quite match up to what had gone before. At this time, also, Tiptree belatedly turned to novels. Her short fiction had always been notable for its dazzling inventiveness, and though this quality is present in abundance in *Up the Walls of the World* (1978) and *Brightness Falls from the Air* (1985) neither captures either the

satire or the emotional strength of her short work. At the time of her death, Tiptree had published a number of 'Starry Rift' stories in American magazines which are supposedly the constituent parts of a third novel.

Gardner F. Fox, scriptwriter for *Batman*, *Superman*, *Hawkman*, *The Flash*, *Green Lantern* and many other comics, as well as a prolific pulp novelist, died on 24 December 1986, he was 75. As an SF writer he was mostly known for the competent and entertaining space operas that appeared in *Planet Stories* between 1945 and 1952. His novels were mostly fast-moving space adventures such as *Escape Across the Cosmos* (1964) *The Arsenal of Miracles* (1964) and *Conehead* (1973) as well as epic fantasies such as the five books about *Kothar* - *Barbarian Swordsman* (1969-70) and the four about *Kyrk*, *Warlock Warrior* (1976). He wrote under a variety of pseudonyms, including Bart Somers and Simon Majors.

PUBLISHING

A new report, *Book Retailing in the 1990s* by Alex Turner and Arthur Young, is to be published in September. Commissioned by the Booksellers' Association, it shows that overall prospects for the industry are good, though people in Britain are reading fewer books than was thought. A survey published in May revealed that only have the population over 16 was reading a book.

The biggest problems for the publishing industry, the report reveals, are that more titles are being published than the market can stand (a record 57,845 new books were published in Britain last year), and prices have been gradually rising above the rate of inflation.

Meanwhile the musical chairs that is the current publishing scene continues.

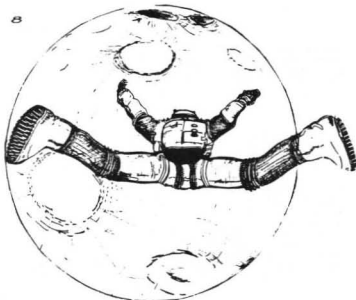
VIRAGO have successfully completed their management buy-out which enabled them to escape the take over of the CHATTO, BODLEY HEAD, CAPE group by RANDOM HOUSE. But they retain some links with the group to help with things like distribution and publicity. Meanwhile, VIRAGO are planning to expand their list next year.

Robert Maxwell's attempt to take over HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVIICH has finally floundered. Maxwell's British Printing and Communication Corporation offered \$2 billion for the American publisher on 18 May, but this was rejected and HBJ recapitalised which sent their share price surging to \$10 above Maxwell's offer. Maxwell withdrew the offer and on 1 June BPCC filed a lawsuit against HBJ, however after considerable toing and froing during the next month HBJ finally retained its independence.

At the same time another takeover battle had broken out when SIMON AND SCHUSTER made an offer for ASSOCIATED BOOK PUBLISHERS. This sparked bids by a number of other companies, including PEARSON whose interests include PENGUIN. In the end, however, the battle was won by the INTERNATIONAL THOMSON ORGANISATION with a bid of £210 million.

It is not expected that the takeover will have any significant effect upon the publishing activities of ABP. ABP includes METHUEN, currently one of Britain's leading publishers of paperback science fiction, as well as being one of the most important publishers of children's science fiction and fantasy, with Diana Wynne Jones one of the biggest names on their list.

Finally one of the biggest takeover deals of the



year came at the beginning of July when REED INTERNATIONAL paid £528 million for OCTOPUS. REED's previous publishing involvement was mainly as the owners of the IPC magazine group, whereas OCTOPUS is Britain's fastest-growing general publisher. OCTOPUS includes HEINEMANN, HAMLYN, SECKER AND WARBURG and MITCHELL BEAZLEY, and every one of the imprints has published work of interest to the science fiction and fantasy world. HEINEMANN, for instance, is the publisher of Douglas Adams.

The takeover deal is intended to give OCTOPUS greater financial muscle, and the opportunity to realise its full creative potential, so it is most unlikely to have an adverse effect upon the output of any of the imprints.

And after all these changes, what next in the game of publishers' musical chairs? Well, if Rupert Murdoch decides to dispose of his 40% stake in COLLINS (which includes GRAFTON), then they could be a possible takeover target. But other than that there are so few British publishers of any real size who are not already part of a global publishing corporation that it is unlikely that any great takeover battles will be fought here. However, publishing is now clearly big business, and it is unlikely that there won't be more such buy-outs and takeovers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Having mentioned Robert Maxwell's BPCC above, there's news from one of the BPCC companies. MACDONALD have been producing an increasing number of hardback science fiction and fantasy titles over recent years, and they have at last decided to recognise the fact with their own 'Macdonald SF & Fantasy' line. The first six titles are launched this month in time for the Worldcon, and it is encouraging to note that MACDONALD are doing their bit to encourage new British writers. Two of the six books are first novels by British writers. *The Hub* by Chris Beebe and *The Enchantments of Flesh and Spirit: The First Book of Wraeththu* by Storm Constantine. Another British writer who has been silent for too long also makes it onto the list with *Archon!*, the first part of a trilogy by Stuart Gordon. The other three titles are: *The Smoke Ring* - Larry Niven, *Chains of Gold* - Nancy Springer and *Hardwired* - Walter Jon Williams.

Dr Edward James, editor of *Foundation*, hopes to have his next issue out in time for the Worldcon. It is, appropriately enough, a special issue devoted to world science fiction. The following issue is due out in December and will be a special issue devoted to Arthur C. Clarke in celebration

of his 70th birthday.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

ABACUS *A Dream of Vespex* - Christopher Priest.

ARROW *Warrior Women, Darkover Landfall and The Bloody Sun* - Marion Zimmer Bradley, *Interstellar Empire* - John Brunner, *The Labyrinth* - Robert Faulcon, *Come, Hunt an Earthman* - Philip E. High, *Pillar of the Sky* - Cecelia Holland, *Redwall* - Brian Jacques, *The Timeliner Trilogy* - Richard C. Meredith, *Starhammer* - Christopher Rowley, *Bloodshow* - Guy M. Smith, *Spinneret* - Timothy Zahn.

BANTAM *The Stainless Steel Rat gets Drafted* - Harry Harrison, *Little Heroes* - Norman Spinrad, *The Uplift War* and *The River of Time* - David Brin, *The Unicorn Creed* - Elizabeth Scarborough.

CENTURY *Wolf in Shadow* - David Gemmell, *The Stalking and The Ghostdance* - Robert Holdstock (as 'Robert Faulcon'), *The Quest for Saint Camber* - Katherine Kurtz.

CORGI *Guardians of the West* - David Eddings, *The Centre of the Circle* - Jonathan Wylie.

FONTANA *The Sword of Calandra* - Susan Dexter, *The Mirror of her Dreams* - Stephen Donaldson.

FUTURA *Steven Spielberg's Amazing Stories* - Steven Bauer, *Star Rebel* - F.W. Bushy, *Darkside* - Dennis Etchison, *The Pet* - Charles L. Grant, *Man of Two Worlds* - Frank & Brian Herbert, *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* - Patricia McKillip, *The Planet on the Table* - Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ragged Astronauts* - Bob Shaw, *Lightwings* - Robert Silverberg, *Drowtide* - Sydney J. Van Scyoc, *Knight Moves* - Walter Jon Williams, *Soldier of the Mist* - Gene Wolfe.

GOLLANCZ *Tuf Voyaging* - George R.R. Martin, *Dangerous Visions* - Ed Harlan Ellison, *Star Gate* - Andre Norton, *Journey Beyond Tomorrow* - Robert Sheckley, *To Live Again* - Robert Silverberg, *The Brave Free Men* - Jack Vance, *Wizardry and Wild Romance* - Michael Moorcock.

GRAFTON *The Best Mysteries of Isaac Asimov* - Isaac Asimov, *Daughter of the Empire* - Raymond E. Peist & Janny Wurtz, *Wielding a Red Sword* - Piers Anthony, *Foundation and Earth* - Isaac Asimov, *What Mad Universe* - Fredric Brown, *Cold Print* - Ramsey Campbell, *The Glass Hammer* - K.W. Jeter, *In Yana*, *the Touch of Undying* - Michael Shea, *Finishing Touches* - Thomas Tessier, *Trullion*: Alastor 2262 - Jack Vance, *Slow Birds* - Ian Watson, *The Sword of Rhesu* - Lawrence Watt-Evans.

HEADLINE *Talking Man* - Terry Bisson, *Wreck and Roll* - Bradley Denton, *Shadows* - Ed Charles L. Grant, *The Ivanhoe Gambit* - Simon Hawke, *Song of Kalif* - Dan Simmons.

HOGARTH *The Dream* - H.G. Wells.

KEROSINA *Cracken at Critical* - Brian Aldiss.

MACDONALD *The Hub* - Chris Beebe, *The Enchantments of Flesh and Spirit* - Storm Constantine, *Archon!* - Stuart Gordon, *The Smoke Ring* - Larry Niven, *Chains of Gold* - Nancy Springer, *Hardwired* - Walter Jon Williams.

METHUEN *Voyagers II* - Ben Bova, *Victim Prime* - Robert Sheckley.

NEL *Into the Out Of* - Alan Dean Foster, *Survivalist 14: The Terror* - Jerry Ahern, *The Bachman Books* - Stephen King, *Threshold* - David R. Palmer, *Kingdom of Fear: The World of Stephen King* - Tim Underwood & Chuck Miller.

NEW ERA *Fortune of Fear* - L. Ron Hubbard.

PALADIN *Puttering About in a Small Land* - Philip K. Dick.

PAN *The Bridge* - Iain Banks, *Byzantium's Crown* - Susan Schwartz.

PENGUIN *The Stone and the Flute* - Hans Bormann, *Test of the Twins* - Margaret Weiss & Tracy Hickman.

PUFFIN *The Hounds of the Morrigan* - Pat O'Shea.

ROBINSON *The Mammoth Book of New SF* - Ed. Gardner Dozois.

SPHERE *The Destroying Angel* - Bernard King.

UNWIN *The Deep* - John Crowley, *Other Edens* - Ed. Christopher Evans & Robert Holdstock, *The Silent Tower* - Barbara Hambley.

WOMEN'S PRESS *A Door into Ocean* - Joan Slonczewski.

MEDIA

David Brin has declared that he is very upset by the new Warner Brothers screenplay of *The Postman*. Not only do they not include any characters, dialogue or scenes from the novel, but they have also reversed the moral subtext so that characters Brin considered evil become the heroes of the film.

One hopes we can expect something better from the new film being made of Margaret Atwood's *Arthur C. Clarke Award* winning novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. The script is by Harold Pinter.

William Gibson has been signed to write the script for *Alien III*, which is due to go into production next year. Gibson, author of *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero*, will base his screenplay on an outline by Walter Hill and David Giler, who co-produced the first two films in the series. Despite rumours that Ridley Scott will again direct, a firm decision has yet to be taken. Only one question remains: shouldn't the title be *Aliens III*.

The release of the new Superman film, *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*, coincides with the 50th birthday of the Man of Steel. Superman was created by two schoolboys, writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster in Cleveland in 1937, and is said to have been based on Philip Wylie's 1930 novel *Gladiator*. He first appeared in *Action Comics* in 1938, before gaining his own title the following year. The new film was premiered in Cleveland at a celebration attended by 250 Superman experts, including some of the actors who have played the role on radio, television and film in the 50 years since then.

Julius Schwartz, editor of the Superman comics for 17 years, revealed the slightly less than noble origins of Superman's *bete noir*, green Kryptonite. During the first radio series the actor who played the Man of Steel, Bud Collier was due a fortnight's holiday. Kryptonite was therefore invented so that during the following two weeks Superman could be locked in a vault with the stuff and all the audience would hear would be pre-recorded groans.

One of the early scriptwriters at DC Comic, Jay Morton, recently took issue with the way Superman has been portrayed in recent times, particularly in the screen versions. "He is not sexy, that's ridiculous," he says. "He was not a ladies' man.

Whoever could possibly imagine Superman being horny?" Perhaps Mr Morton has read Larry Niven's 'Man of Steel, Woman of Kleeenex' ...

Meanwhile the troubled Cannon Group are hoping that the \$30 million *Superman IV* will turn the tide for them. They obviously see the comics world as a fruitful source of material. They have *Captain America* and *Spider-Man: The Movie* lined up for later in the year.

John Landis and his five co-defendants were cleared of all charges relating to the deaths of Vic Morrow and two child actors. The judgement, delivered in a Los Angeles court on 29 May, relates to filming of *Twilight Zone* when Morrow and the children were killed as a helicopter swerved into them during the shoot. The prosecution claimed negligence on the part of the film makers. The acquittal, however, may not be the end of the story, as relatives of the deceased are still considering whether to take civil action against the defendants, although this seems unlikely in view of the trial outcome.

Ken Dodd will appear in the new series of *Dr Who*, to be broadcast in September. In a desperate attempt to inject some life into the series, the BBC has also lined up Richard Briers, Don (Bulman) Henderson and Kate O'Mara.

The series celebrates its 24th anniversary in November, and BBC Controller Michael Grade hopes the new 'humorous' look will help boost its flagging ratings. The last run had an audience of around six million, as compared to over twelve million at the height of its popularity. It seems, though, that if anything's going to do the programme in for good, this is probably it.

American production company Beyond Infinity Films, a shoestring outfit to say the least, has announced two productions for late '87 which are unlikely to feature among this year's Oscars. They are *Space Sluts in the Slammer* and *Assault of the Killer Bimbos*. Can't wait!

And while we're on the subject ...

American parents and moral pressure groups claim there is a sharply increasing trend in the popularity of video 'naasties' among children. There are approximately 42 million video cassette recorders in the States, supporting 30,000 tape outlets, and opponents of violent films claim controls are lax. They cite examples of kids as young as 12 and 13 freely renting such titles as *Bloodsucking Freaks*, *Psychos in Love* and *Microwave Massacre*. This despite most of the films having an 'R' classification. ('R' stands for *Restricted* and stipulates that under-17s be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian.)

Organisations such as the Junior League, a women's group based in Bronxville, NY, have taken a strong stand against the easy access to violent films. The League is helping other concerned groups around the US to urge the introduction of laws restricting rental and sale to minors. Such laws have already been passed in Maryland, Tennessee and Georgia; similar legislation is proposed in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Ohio. The idea is to make the 'R' classification legally enforceable as opposed to merely advisory. Even if successful this move would not affect a large number of cassettes which do not go through the voluntary rating procedure. A popular example of this category is the *Faces of Death* series. These are documentaries containing actual footage of

executions, violent death, cannibalism, autopsies and animal slaughter.

Los Angeles film critic Gene Siskel has joined the crusade, using his weekly TV show to attack the trend. "I think a lot of parents who hear their kids screaming in the family room may think they are looking at a horror film like they saw 20 years ago," he says. "But these movies are really in a different category. The mutilation of animals and human beings in unending, non-story form, presented as entertainment, is a terrible confusion to place in the mind of a youngster."

However former film director Herschell Lewis doubts that fantasy violence twists young minds. Lewis is credited with being a pioneer of graphic violence on a low budget with his 60s cult classics *Blood Feast* and *2000 Maniacs* - which some contend was the inspiration for Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. He says, "I was called the 'Godfather of Gore' and the same accusations were made against me as the ones made today against producers of the 'slasher' films. It has been demonstrated that these kinds of movies provide a release for teenagers and don't incite them to go out and kill someone."

MISCELLANEOUS

The British Council is staging a major exhibition of British science fiction and fantasy illustration as part of a festival of fantasy and science fiction literature to be held in Germany. The exhibition opens in Munich on November 5th and lasts until December 31st. It will then tour the rest of Germany throughout 1988, and after that will go around the world as one of the British Council's highly acclaimed touring exhibitions.

The Festival will be attended by British writers including: Alan Garner, Josephine Saxton, Brian Aldiss, Christopher Priest, Leon Garfield, Emma Tennant and Angela Carter. It will also include a number of British science fiction films, including *Company of Wolves*, *Dream Child*, 1984, *Brazil*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Draughtsman's Contract*, possibly *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and hopefully Ken Russell's *Gothic*. Philip Strick has also been approached to give a lecture on British fantasy and science fiction films.

The Exhibition, accompanied by a text written by Tom Hutchinson, will include the best part of 180 illustrations portraying the whole history of British fantasy and science fiction from *Beowulf* to the present day. The exhibition is divided under six headings: Gothic, Ghosts and the Supernatural, Children's Fantasy, Satire, Epic and Allegory, and Science Fiction. The range these cover is quite amazing: the Children's Fantasy section, for instance, covers everything from the manuscript of *Alice in Wonderland* to recent pictures by Chris Foss.

October 3-10 is Children's Book Week, the biggest ever event of its kind. The theme this year is Adventure, and 'Adventure in Space' is the theme running through the promotional material. 50 books have been selected for the event, including several works of science fiction and fantasy. For instance, among the five books featured on the poster that accompanies the event are: *Elidor* - Alan Garner, *King Death's Garden* - Ann Halam and *The Hounds of the Morrigan* - Pat O'Shea.

The National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F) has announced its 1987 Amateur Short Story Contest. The entry fee is \$2, or \$1 for members of N3F or the BSFA. The first prize is \$25, second prize is \$15, third prize is \$10; honourable mentions and

semi-finalists receive a choice of paperback books available, and all entries receive critiques.

The contest is open to all amateur writers who have sold no more than two stories to professional science fiction or fantasy publications. Entries must be original, unpublished, and no more than 7,500 words long, and must be SF or fantasy in the opinion of the judges. Entries may submit any number of stories provided each is accompanied by a separate entry form and the fee, plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of the story at the end of the contest. Entries must be submitted to the contest manager, Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91606, USA, to be received by December 1st, 1987.

For a copy of the Entry Form, please contact Maureen Porter.

The Wainwright Arts Centre at Llanfawr, Llangefni, Isle of Anglesey, is running two writing courses on Fantasy and Science Fiction. One is a week-long course from September 5-12, the other is a weekend from October 30-November 1 (with a fancy dress party on Halloween Night, October 31). I have no details of the tutors for these courses.

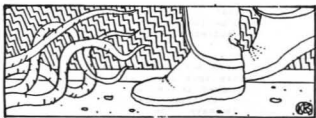
Superannuated hippies treasuring hoards of underground magazines may be sitting on a fortune. At the Antiquarian Book Fair, held in London at the end of June, SF bookdealer George Locke of *Ferret Fantasy* was offered a set of *Oz* for £650. Locke described the run as "... an exceptional example, typographically and artistically, of the 1960s underground press - part of an age that is gone." Whether they were sold or not is unclear. Other dealers have been offering complete sets of *International Times* for £1,500 plus.

Researchers at Siemens in West Germany claim to have made a major advance in robotics. They have developed a vision system which recognises objects on a grey scale rather than pure black and white. It also recognises a variety of geometrical features. The device takes between half a second and 2.5 seconds to identify objects, depending on their complexity. Nevertheless, this may be a short cut to robot vision, which, it is estimated, will be worth \$11 billion a year by 1992. Nevertheless, many researchers believe only artificial intelligence will make a robot superior to a human five-year-old at picking objects out of a box. And other researchers believe robots need a sense of touch as well as vision, and still more intelligence to combine the two senses.

Finally, a word of warning to fans.

Iraq's ruling Ba'ath Party keeps strict control of the means of information, including issuing licences to own and operate a typewriter. Foreigners carrying portable machines into Baghdad have the fact noted on their passports. Duplicating machines are even more restricted.

It couldn't happen here. Could it?



COMPETITION CORNER

by Elizabeth Sourbut (with the assistance of Lee Rider)

Welcome once again to the BSFA brain-teaser. First of all, I'd like to clear up the controversy over *Rebeld the Man*. Several people have written to me assuring me that I got it wrong, and that the first line is: "The time machine is a sphere full of milky fluid ...". Having checked several editions, I discover that this is usually the case. However, the novella and my edition of the novel both begin as quoted in the competition. So all you had to do was locate the same edition of the book as lurks on my shelves - I never said I set easy competition! Several people did get it right, and the result stands as all 5 top placed entrants were stumped on that one alone. Now, back to the present.

There were 22 entries for the film quiz, slightly down on the books. Does this mean more BSFA members read books than watch films, or just that the readers are more likely to get as far as my column in *Matrix*? Thank you to all those who entered, especially to the new names. Welcome aboard; please keep those entries coming.

Once again, the standard of entries was pleasingly high, but I'm still waiting for someone to beat me. Come on, if I can find the answers, surely you can too. Runners-up this time were: on 68 points - Mark Ogier, S C Hatch and John Fairley; on 70 P J L Ellis; on 71 - Alasdair Montgomery; and on 72 Rob Freeth & Mark Hewlett, and Roger Robinson. But the winner, by a short head, was Elizabeth Brown, with 75 out of 80. Congratulations! A £5 book token is on its way to you.

The complete answers were:

1. Han Solo: *Star Wars*, 1977, Harrison Ford
2. Moribus: *Forbidden Planet*, 1956, Walter Pidgeon
3. Rotwang: *Metropolis*, 1926, Rudolph Klein-Rogge
4. Miles Bennell: *Invasion of the Body snatchers*, 1955, Kevin McCarthy
5. Ilia: *Star Trek - the motion picture*, 1979, Persis Khambatta
6. Pinback: *Dark Star*, 1974, Dan O'Bannon
7. David Kessler: *An American Werewolf in London*, 1981, David Naughton
8. Frau Blucher: *Young Frankenstein*, 1974, Cloris Leachman
9. Kilaatu: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 1951, Michael Rennie
10. Dr Who: *Dr Who and the Daleks*, 1965, Peter Cushing
11. John/Oswald Cabal: *Things to come*, 1936, Raymond Massey
12. Thomas Jerome Newton: *The Man who fell to Earth*, 1976, David Bowie
13. Zed: *Zardoz*, 1974, Sean Connery
14. The Gill Man: *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, 1954, Ben Chapman or Ricou Browning
15. Andy Rusch: *Soylen Green*, 1973, Charlton Heston
16. Fireman Montag: *Fahrenheit 451*, 1966, Oscar Verner
17. Hal 9000: *2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968, Douglas Rain
18. Billy Pilgrim: *Slaughterhouse 5*, 1972, Michael Sachs
19. Charles Forbin: *The Forbin Project*, 1969, Eric Braeden
20. Roy Neary: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1977, Richard Dreyfuss

I gave some leeway on the dates as different reference sources often vary by a year or two.

MATRIX 71 PUZZLE

TV Trivia Quiz. Below are 24 questions on popular TV series. Points will be awarded at the Judge's

discretion, taking into account such factors as accuracy, completeness, originality, and wit. the entrant with the most points wins.

DR WHO

1. What does the acronym TARDIS stand for?
2. What is the name of the character who created the Daleks?
3. In what 6-part story is the Master seen watching the Clangers on TV, under the mistaken impression that they are an interesting alien species?
4. Name all the seven actors who have already played Dr. Who on TV?

BLAKE'S 7

5. Who were the original 7?
6. Which episode features an android equipped with a ball of deadly plague?
7. Who played Servalan?
8. When and how does Gan die?

SPACE 1999

9. What was the name of the base?
10. What was the chief medical officer's name?
11. What strange powers does science officer Maya possess?
12. What was the Space 1999 version of a communicator called?

STAR TREK

13. Who played Yeoman Janice Rand?
14. In what episode does Scott say: "Aye, the haggis is in the fire for sure", and in what context?
15. Which two episodes were scripted by Theodore Sturgeon?
16. On which deck of the primary hull are Kirk's quarters located, and how close are they to Mr Spock's?

THE PRISONER

17. What was the number of the prisoner?
18. Who played the prisoner?
19. What devices were used to capture would-be fugitives?

OUTER LIMITS

20. Who wrote the episode "Demon with a glass hand", and what was the glass hand?
21. How many episodes were made altogether?

TWILIGHT ZONE

22. Who introduced all of the episodes and what did he say?
23. What was the title of the pilot episode?

GERRY ANDERSON

24. Name 6 Gerry Anderson puppet series, and suggest what might have happened if he'd combined them all into one ...

Answers, by next mailing deadline please, to Elizabeth Sourbut, 31 Barfield Road, York, YO3 9AW

Black Hole

Brian Rolls spotted this gem in a recent Sunday Times paperback review column produced by Nigella Lawson reviewing Margaret Atwood's novel 'The Handmaid's Tale' (winner of the first Arthur C Clarke award).

"Margaret Atwood's futuristic novel has nothing to do with the feeble excesses of science fiction".

Brian comments: 'You might have thought that the good old days of 'if it's good it can't be science fiction, if it's science fiction it can't be good' were over. Not at all ... gives a certain sense of continuity doesn't it?'

Any more contributions for Black Hole feature, illustrating unacceptable attitudes to SF would be gratefully received. Please send to Maureen Porter at the editorial address.

Store Wars

COMIC SHOWCASE

On 30th August 1985 - while Michael Moorcock was engaged in a strenuous signing session at Forbidden Planet - just across the way in trendy Covent Garden, Comic Showcase was celebrating its sixth anniversary by moving into new premises, making it the biggest comics outlet in London. Wine flowed and a large crowd gathered to launch the venture amid a colourful display of several thousand new and old comic titles, original artwork, badges, posters and art books. With 750 sq ft of sales space and almost 1000 sq ft for offices and storage, Comic Showcase is now firmly established among the capital's ever-growing pantheon of specialist SF and comics stores.

Paul and Salli Hudson, Comic Showcase's owners, have a well-deserved reputation for fairness in pricing and knowledge of their subject. (setting an example some others in the field could profitably follow), and they certainly needed to expand out of their previous venue in Monmouth Street. The question is, are we approaching the Specialist Shops Event Horizon in London? Apart from the aforementioned Forbidden Planet's two shops, it's but a short walk to both Josh Palmano's Gosh! and the Virgin Comic Shop. And although unconfirmed, rumour has it that we can expect further contenders for a share of this lucrative market in the near future. All this has relevance to science fiction retailing as some of the other shops rely on comics and graphic art sales to underwrite the book side. Things could get interesting as the battle heats up. But is it too much to hope that the customers may be the beneficiaries of all this competition?

Comic Showcase, 76 Neal Street, London WC2 (Tel: 01-240 3664) Hours of business: 10am-6pm, Mon-Sat

GOSH!

Are fans necessary? Not as far as a lot of specialist shops are concerned, the larger of which couldn't hope to survive if they didn't attract the general public. As the kind of stuff we like finds an ever-wider audience fandom becomes increasingly marginalised. This is inevitable, given the assimilation of SF and comics into the mainstream. The interesting thing is most established dealers didn't foresee this, although the more flexible have adapted very nicely, thank you.

Something else few saw coming was the pace at which new outlets would spring up. What's happening now, particularly in high cost central locations, is the advent of specialists who know they can't rely solely on fans. Apart from mail order, the age of the dealer as hobbyist is dead.

Gosh! The London Comic Shop opened in February 1986 and counts as a fourth generation outlet. (Depending on your starting point ... I work on the assumption the current crop has its origins in the late 60's with *Dark* they were *Golden Ears* and *Andromeda* leading the trend in this country.)

Owner Josh Palmano, when joining the "golden triangle" of fantasy shops in London's West End, decided the best way to compete was by appealing to enthusiasts as well as fans. This is not to split hairs. Enthusiasts know what they want and usually have a good working knowledge of their subject without being slavish about it. They rarely get involved in fanish activities beyond attending the occasional convention. They probably collect runs of certain titles, but have other interests too. Fans collect everything, but read

little because they believe eyeball tracks might damage their valuable comics. Which they keep in acid-free bags and store away from direct sunlight at the earliest opportunity. They display a passion for the minutiae of the field bordering on the obsessional and have no other interests. Fortunately, the majority of them wear green anoraks and are easily spotted.

There are nine or ten comic shops in London, and Josh (yes, the alliteration was intentional, but I wonder if he's sick of it yet) compares his with its main rivals as follows - "If *Forbidden Planet* is Woolworths, and *Comics Showcase* a corner shop, then *Gosh!* is a boutique." This is not to say Palmano and his staff are any less involved or knowledgeable than any other dealer. They know what they're doing but are realistic enough to understand that London overheads are unlikely to be met by fan patronage alone. A good percentage of their customers fall into the casual reader category and, situated opposite the British Museum, they get a lot of tourists.

Gosh! has around 100,000 comics in stock, mostly American, with a selection of the top end of the UK range. They also carry graphic art books - Asterix, Tintin, etc - and some peripherals like badges, but are careful not to stray too far in this direction. Their sales ratio reflects the probable norm among comics dealers: 30% new, 65% old (ie collectors items) and 5% miscellaneous. Average age of the clientele is 18-20.

Josh says the market is still on the up, with no sign of it peaking yet. He thinks a lot of interest is being generated by *Fantasy Books*, both in terms of product and their policy of distributing it via non-specialist retailers. The black and white boom continues, and Japanese comics - put together in the States and ultimately imported here - are very hot at the moment. He's also noticed that, as with science fiction, comics are becoming so diverse fragmentation is starting to show itself. The mass of material being published means people tend to concentrate on particular artists and series more than in the past.

In common with other people in the business Josh is concerned about the prevalence of censorship, often taking the form of Customs interference with shipments from the US. He cites the recent examples of *Electra* and *Grendel*, held up as far as anyone knows because previous issues of these popular strips drew criticisms from the prudenes. In America comic books and related material are catching flak from "moral majority" groups. The fear is this fashion will take hold here.

Despite the growing popularity of comics, Josh feels there may be already too many shops selling imports, and saturation point could be reached soon. "Then we'll see a price war." As he describes the pricing policy of many dealers as "ridiculous", with competitors buying stock from each other at retail and still adding ample profit margins, there's obviously room for cuts when it comes to the crunch.

Gosh! has a good reputation for customer relations and fair prices - borne out in lengthy undercover investigations by *Store Wars* operatives. Service - one of this column's favourite words as regular readers will know - is part of the shop's philosophy and seems to be paying off. Our agents were also impressed by the fact that the temptation to fill all 600 sq ft of the place had been resisted. A regard for the customer's ability to move about is refreshing. Gosh! provides a mail order service although no catalogue has been issued yet, and will reserve new comics on regular basis. Where feasible they also do their best to fill wants lists.

GOSH! The London Comic Shop, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1. Tel 01-636 1011

MUSICAL CHAIRS

The last few months have seen a spectacular shake-up in publishing. In March Rupert Murdoch's News International bought *Harpur & Row* for \$300 million. The Americans reciprocated in May when Random House paid \$20 million for the Jonathan Cape group. (Cape, Chatto, Bodley Head, and Virago.) June saw the launch of Robert Maxwell's attempt to secure control of New York based Harcourt Brace Jovanovich with an initial bid of \$1.2 billion. The same month Associated Book Publishers went for \$210 million to the International Thomson Organisation following an auction in which at least ten other publishers expressed interest. July had Paul Hamlyn selling his Octopus Group to Reed International for \$540 million, and the directors of Virago buying back the company from Random House for an undisclosed sum.

What seems to be happening in the hitherto staid world of publishing is being drawn into the efforts of multinationals to build global communications empires. (Needs' buy-out of Octopus for instance makes them a billion pound plus company.) Attractive economies of scale are one factor in all this. Another is the growing demand for leisure and educational products, making publishers' back list as attractive to predators as the valuable film libraries of the studios they've been buying up. There is also the potential for spin-offs from printed material into other media - magazines, video, etc - which the mega companies are in a position to fully exploit.

Arthur C Clarke once said if you were looking for the ultimate information storage and retrieval device - requiring no power, easy transportation and simplicity of access - you ended up with something very much like a book. Perhaps Big Business has finally caught on to the marketability of this convenient form of knowledge and entertainment. One outcome of the current concentration of power in this area - and it's probably not over yet - will be books being marketed in much the same way as other consumer goods. It may be possible to sell books like washing powder, but if the same methods are applied to the creative end of process we'll be all the poorer.

VATMAN SPEAK WITH FORKED TONGUE

During the election campaign government officials, including the Prime Minister, pledged they would oppose any EEC imposition of VAT on food and fuel. They were rather more ambiguous about whether it would be levied in other areas. On 2nd July, three weeks after the election, Lord Cockfield, one of two British members of the European Commission, proposed a plan whereby VAT would be charged on food, fuel, children's clothing and printed matter. Under Cockfield's plan, presented at EEC headquarters in Brussels, VAT would be standardised throughout the Community with the aim of creating a unified market between the twelve member states. Several countries, notably Denmark, Greece and Spain, are unhappy with the proposal and the British government is likely to have a fight on its hands.

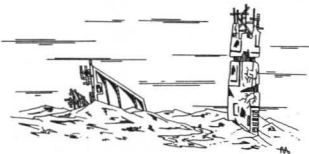
Apart from the absurdity of a system which would ensure the price of brandy and cigars would fall while costs of essentials rose - an accepted result of the plan - we are again faced with the possibility of VAT being charged on books, and not just books - magazines, comics and newspapers would be included too.

Since the introduction of VAT, and SET before it, there has been a general consensus that it shouldn't apply to printed matter, as it would constitute a tax on knowledge. It was also felt that an indirect tax of this sort should be restricted to luxury goods. Of course, it's

impossible to differentiate between a printed item designed to entertain (a "luxury") and one that sets out to educate. Any attempt to do so would result, for instance, in a novel by Tolstoy being taxable and a car repair manual being zero-rated. If VAT is introduced it would be a blanket measure.

Taxing printed matter would be an administrative nightmare for booksellers as well as increasing prices for readers. Its effects on small businesses, mail order companies in particular, would be catastrophic. It would also create anomalies. Retailers importing American material could be faced with having to pay state purchase tax in the US and VAT here. Libraries, already hard pressed, would have that much less to spend on acquisitions. And what about groups like the BSFA? Presumably, membership fees would have to be increased to cover the VAT due on its publications.

We expect politicians to be mealy-mouthed about their real intentions, particularly at election time, so the government's apparent about-turn shouldn't surprise us. They may not be successful in pushing through their proposals this time if there's enough opposition in Europe. If they do, everyone who loves literature and believes in free access to ideas should stand up and be counted.



FACE TO FACE

Any bookshops wishing to advertise future signings please send information to Maureen Porter at the editorial address, bearing in mind that any signing scheduled within the month after the editorial deadline are unlikely to be advertised in time, so please plan ahead.

FORBIDDEN PLANET - Denmark Street, London

15th August, Annual 2000AD Signing
1-3 pm

22nd August Ben Bova 1-2 pm

" " Harry Harrison for The
Stainless Steel Rat Gets
Drafted 2-3 pm

12th September Alexei Sayle, for Geoffrey the
Tube Train and the Fat
Comedians 1-2 pm

* Most of the above preceded by a short talk

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP - 84 Suffolk St, Birmingham

August 22nd (prov.) Adrian Cole, for A Place Among
the Fallen

5th September Graham Masterton, new
paperback due

" " Iain Banks, for Epsdair
Street

" " (prov.) Jonathan Carroll, new novel

Added bonus! Crack the dealer's code! Be one of the in-crowd! With ...

A CYNIC'S GLOSSARY TO BOOKSELLING TERMS

THEY SAY	THEY MEAN
It's out of print	I've never heard of it
We sold the last copy this morning	I've never heard of it
Our copies have been held up by Customs	We forgot to order it
We've sold a lot of these	It's unreadable
Of course he is rather an acquired taste	Among turnip heads
If I were you I'd grab a copy now	It's being remaindered next week
I quite enjoyed it	I haven't read it
He's back on his old form with this one	I've read the blurb
It's a very ambitious idea	I've read the review in Interzone
It's their lead title this month	The author's sleeping with his editor
They had an auction for the rights	The author's sleeping with his agent
I think it's the best thing of its kind I've ever read.	The author's sleeping with me
I think you'll be pleasantly surprised by this one.	If you can find someone to read it to you
They've finally persuaded him to write a sequel	I can hardly contain my indifference
Perhaps it isn't quite up to his first book	In a race of one it comes a poor second
You say it's a pseudonym for Stephen King?	Like hell it is
It's a pseudonym for Stephen King	Like hell it is
You think it's the 2nd volume of the trilogy	How dare you imply you know more than I do
Yes, you're right, it's the 2nd volume of the trilogy	I'll get you for this
We didn't stock many because he isn't very popular	We haven't paid our bill
It was a very interesting signing session	Nobody came
It was a very lively signing session	The author was drunk
It was a very successful signing session	Nobody came but the author didn't pass out
Our imports are priced according to the current exchange rate	We think of a number and double it
We're only going to bring in a few copies	We'll think of a number, double it and add 20%

I can't honestly recommend It's on sale or return it

I can highly recommend it It's on firm sale

This is a very rare item We have 200 copies in the basement

This is a very sought-after item We have 300 copies in the basement

This is bound to become a collector's item Providing everyone doesn't dump their copies on the market at the same time

This is bound to become a very valuable collector's item Providing you don't try to sell it back to us

Your books are in the post Please go away

I expect they've been held up by the Post Office For God's sake please go away

I can't offer you much more because there's not call for this kind of stuff I'm going to Marbella again this year

No, really, there's nothing I'd rather do than chat with customers Except walk a tightrope over a pit of starving wolves

Oh, ticking over, you know We're all on tranquillisers

Thank you, and I hope you enjoy reading it Adios, sucker

[Any resemblance to any bookseller, alive, dead or planning legal action is entirely unintended -Ed.]



The International Science Policy Foundation

The International Science Policy Foundation (ISPF) was established in 1964 to promote the systematic investigation of science and technology as a social phenomenon. It is this that has brought the ISPF into close contact with science fiction, since the literature does, in fictional terms, examine exactly the same grounds. Thus Arthur C. Clarke is a member of the Advisory Council of the ISPF, and it was through the foundation that the Arthur C. Clarke Award was set up. The ISPF's involvement with science fiction does not stop there, either, for it is currently setting up a conference to discuss the practical applications of science fiction.

Such a conference is only the latest in a string of seminars, colloquia and conferences that the ISPF has organised covering all the broad range of its concerns. Thus previous conferences have dealt with such varied topics as 'Technical Innovation and the Growth of the National Economy' (1969), 'Community Care for the Vagrant' (1970), 'A Strategy for Resources' (1975), 'Public Understanding of Science and Technology' (1976) and 'Limits of Science' (1984), in collaboration with the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Even such titles provide only a suggestion of the ISPF's wide-ranging remit. Their own definition of 'Science Policy' as it is used in their name is: "A deliberate and coherent attempt to provide a basis for national or international decisions influencing the size, institutional structure, resources and creativity of scientific and Science Fiction and its Applications".
Burgh House, London - 9 July 1987

About 25 people in total attended this discussion meeting, jointly organised by the SF Foundation and the International Science Policy Foundation. And most of those were flotsam still drifting around after the AGM of the SF held in the same place that morning. The event was poorly promoted, and any publicity seems to have gone out only in the last week or two before the meeting. Hardly indicative of the academic seriousness that an event such as this is meant to claim for science fiction.

The meeting opened with the chairman, Dr Maurice Goldsmith, telling us at great length that our time was limited, a performance he was to repeat more than once during the afternoon. These constrictions on time, and the formal structure of the whole thing, meant that the afternoon produced a series of interesting papers, but the discussion that was meant to be the point of the thing never had a chance to develop. A pity really, since two of the papers in particular demonstrated what a fertile source of ideas science fiction can be.

The first paper by Duncan Lunan was the weakest, partly because it was considerably less focussed than the others, and partly because he retrod long familiar ground. His subject was the exploitation of near space, and of course he ranged far and wide over the whole history of SF as a result. But for a few amusing anecdotes, however, and the odd 'throwaway' reference to show how familiar he is with the inner workings of Sasa, he actually told us little of interest. SF has written interminably and space exploration, but apart from some very rare examples - he quoted Heinlein's *The Man Who Sold the Moon*, Caiden's *Narcotised* and Lee Correy's *Shuttle Down* - it has had little or no application to the mechanics or the politics of the space programme.

Alice Coleman who spoke next had a far more interesting tale to tell. She is Professor of Geography at King's College, London, and her pioneering work has done much to highlight the design flaws and social problems of high rise flats. She explained that it was J.G. Ballard's *High Rise* which gave her the clues she needed to identify and quantify the social problems of high rises. Ballard's prophecies concerning litter,

technological research in relation specially to their application and public consequences."

Over the years this intent has attracted to the ISPF some of the most highly regarded scientists and politicians from around the world. At the moment their Honorary Fellows include Sir Peter Medawar, Lewis Mumford, Gunnar Myrdal and Joseph Needham, while the members of their Advisory Council include Sir Hermann Bondi, Lord Avebury, Lord (Asa) Briggs, Sir Alan Cottrell, Sir Montague Finniston, Lord Flowers, Sir John Kendrew, and Magnus Pyke. In addition the ISPF's annual lectures have been given by such people as HE Shridath Ramphal (Secretary General of the Commonwealth), Sir Hermann Bondi, Heinz Wolff and Neil Kinnock.

With this wide scientific and technological knowledge and experience of its members and associates, the ISPF has established itself as a unique centre for multidisciplinary scrutiny of social and economic problems arising from the impact of science and technology on people and institutions. This is expressed not only through its annual lectures, and the conferences and symposia which are attended by representatives of government, industry and the universities, but also through three regular publications. *Science and Public Policy* is a bi-monthly journal, *Outlook on Science Policy* is a monthly newsletter, and *Change* is a quarterly paper for the Third World.

Further information about the International Science Policy Foundation can be obtained from 29 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NT.

pollution, violence and crime have come disturbingly true, and his novel provided the basis she needed for research which has been fundamental in changing official policy on high rise flats.

Another writer whose work has had a profound effect on modern research and development is John Brunner, as we were told by Tim Kindberg from the department of computer science at the Central London Polytechnic. Brunner's idea of 'worm' programs which wreak such havoc in the computer controlled world of *The Shockwave Rider* has set scientists off in search of just such a program. We are now seeing the development of 'worm' programs which use unused workstations on a computer network, and activate segments on more than one computer to ensure the survival of the program.

The final paper was delivered by David Brin, whose premise was that SF dystopias can warn us of possible dangers. He exemplified *Dr Strangelove* which, at the time, was claimed to be an impossible scenario by American military. We have learned since then, however, that they changed their whole psychological testing programme to decide who had control of the buttons as a direct result of that film. *Dr Strangelove*, therefore, prevented its own fruition. He went on to examine the way archetypes and myths, which form the often unseen bedrock of our society, can become visible in SF. The two most powerful mythic images in this respect are Frankenstein and Faust, and he wondered whether bio-engineering was not now being approached with such caution as a result of the Frankenstein myth.

After these papers, which provoked a self-congratulatory view of science fiction and its applications, John Clute provided a welcome dose of realism in his brief concluding statement. Most SF writers, he pointed out, write poppycock most of the time. It is not SF's job to make the science in our fiction as accurate as possible, nor to tell the scientist what to think, but to give an imaginative shape to the future. SF, he said in a telling image, is the opening of windows - it is not analysing the glass or describing the view. And upon that plea for the human qualities of our literature, we opened the doors and emerged into the reality of a hot, still London afternoon.

Fire & Hemlock

And welcome to an extensive listing and review section, catching up on everything received here in the last few months. Apologies if you go missed out. You may have disappeared into my personal collection by mistake. Of course, it may be that you didn't send me a review copy like you were going to, or even just the information about your zine. But you won't forget next time, will you? I'm also keen to receive media-oriented zines, gaming zines, anything like that. To the editorial address please, marked for review. If either Paul Kincaid or I feature on your mailing list for any other reason, please send two copies! Thanks.

In a search for something a little different, I thought about a few reviews of foreign fanzines. Well, it's Worldcon year, and I do think it does us all good to remember that fandom in all its diverse forms doesn't actually cease at the white cliffs of Dover. So I asked Chuck Connor to do a piece for me, little realising that this man seems to be in touch with the entire fanish population of the world, let alone the UK. This may turn out to be the first serialised fanzine review.

AMERICA

Hard times hit us all, and this is shown from the size of Frank Denton's Rogue Raven #35 (Trade/usual/small stones smoothed by a river - 14654-8th Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98166) which only runs to 6pp. But, in those few sides, Frank gives a nice, laidback conrep of V-COM 14 (Vancouver yearly con), a scan through his recent reading, last year's World Cup 'futbal' aka 'soccer' as seen on cable TV, and general 'letter substitute' style natter. Pleasant reading for a warm weekend.

Not so Luke McGuff's LIVE FROM THE STAGGER CAFE, and especially #4 (Trade/usual/\$1.00 - LPTSC, PO Box 3680, Minneapolis, MN 55403), which cuts it hard and fast with fiction from Rudy Rucker (WHITE LIGHT is still his strongest novel, despite Virgin Publishing hashing the printing) and a slice of fiction in progress from John Shirley (apparently publishing again, which is nice to hear). Top this off with Sally Gwyllan's response to issue #3's NO MORE RAPE AND REPRESSION, which says that rapists are responding to the social/emotional wasteland of life in our societies. Deb Benedict junking McDonalds junk food, McGuff on media control/presentation, and the like, political material reprinted from FOIST MAGAZINE, and a cutting little letters section. Blow your brains and help clean up your face with this little goodie. UK rep somewhere but no address is given, alas.

From there we go off-planet into the world of John Thiel's long running Pablo Lennis (whim/LOC - 30 N. 19th St. Lafayette, Indiana 47904). Fiction abounds, and so does LaJoilette's distinctive artstyle, which I findboth attractive and repulsive at the same time, side by side with crosswords, reviews of books, games, zines, poetry, all done with a kind of majestic chaos that lifts Pablo out of the cruderie and into a heaven of its own.

There are very few reviewzines, and thankfully there's only one FACISHEET FIVE (4 for 1 trade, or \$2 plus some IRCs for postage to Mike Gundericy, 6 Arizona Avenue, Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502). Mike reviews anything (ANYTHING) that comes his way, be it punk, new-wave, dadaist, SF Gaming, S&S, radical, politico, record, tapes, poetry, fiction - hell, if it's printed or recorded in some way and he gets a copy of it, it gets reviewed. There are a few people who are putting together 'directories of Small Press Magazines', and charging the earth and then some for a copy of it. Don't waste your time with that sort of crap, get it straight from

FACTSHEET FIVE. You won't understand half of it, but it can be an awful lot of fun finding out what's happening around the world.

Going back to the outfield, there's been a trickle of mini-comics, though one batch has been coupled with bad news. Mini-comics are normally a sheet of A4 paper, fided down to A6, with a short story (or non-story) put on the 8 faces. These are quick, cheap and easy to mail out. They also allow the budding artist to develop a style, as well as allowing artists a chance play around. Most, if not all, revolve around humour, though some do come over with a message, be it politico or the like, which helps to dispel any disappointment over the lack of artistic (high grade) quality. Some of the more recent material comes from Eric Mayer (1771 Ridge Road East, Rochester, NY 14622 - 25¢ each, though send a couple of IRCs in lieu of dollars for each one). BAD CAT, and THE STICK DICK are both self-contained works, with complete stories in each (most loved one for me was STICK DICK - Mike Dick in I,STICK, a Spillane spoof par excellence), while THE REMARKABLE RUTUBAGA, and KING COTTON, are on-going stories. Of those two, I have to admit to preferring RUTUBAGA for the sheer surrealism of it all. Eric also does GROGUY, one of the few remaining fanzines to use ditto/bandaspirit (though these are short run, and may now be fully taken on printing). Multicoloured effects/artwork is possible with this system, though it is time-consuming. Of a higher artistic standard (that's not being derogatory to Eric but Kev Atherton is a professional) comes TKA COMICS from T Kevin Atherton (3021N Southport, Chicago, IL 60657) and UNFUNKY BUNNY. There's two Unbunny comics I've seen recently, both showing to a good degree what a warped and twisted mind his creator has. Get TORTOISE 'N' THE UNBUNNY first, and follow it with SALON. IT'S BIN GOOD T'KNOW YA! (25¢ and 66¢ respectively) or just go for T, A PERSONAL ESSAY, which is one way of explaining what his first initial stands for, (or maybe stands for). Free with that bundle came MR FLA in 'URINE TO BE FREE', a tiny A8 or A9 sized comic. (Or for those not quite so adventurous, SKATE PRESS (alias Chuck Connor - Ed.) has done the three parts of TKA's Docto Decimo strip, which are available for three stamped addressed envelopes from Silvan house, Chediston Road, Wissett, Near Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0NF (these are definitely worth reading - Ed.)

Cmg back to the semi-pro publishing world, though more into the macbre/Weird Tales style of the latest THE 39 SCREAMS (ed Kevin Urick, Thunder Baas Press, PO Box 1614, Baltimore, MD 21203 - \$13 for six issues, includes postage overseas). Kevin's not new to the publishing game though from the side of the writer, noted for his SNOW WORLD from WHITE EVE PRESS. I have to admit that sometimes a hint of purple prose does creep into the storyline now and then. If your tastes for the unusual and/or the more traditional run to 30s style horror then give this a look-see, about \$3.00 for a single/trial issue.

CANADA

Despite its size, Canfandom seems to be small, and a little insular, even among themselves. This leads to an awful lot of one-shot zines being fired off, only to disappear off the face of the earth. Others have established themselves firmly, but, of late, even they have become more and more infrequent. **NEOLOGY** (ESFACAS, PO Box 4071, Edmonton, Canada, T6E 4S8 - Trade/usual) is the clubzine of the Edmonton SF and Comics Art Society, which, sadly, seems to have attracted only a few British readers, having seen it change editors twice now over a span of a few years. I might add, it seems to be taking a more gentle approach to things. Heavy on the artwork (they have some excellent fan-artists, seldom seen outside **NEOLOGY**), and always keen to play with design and layout, it is not above spits and spats. Vol 11 #6 and Vol 12 #1 having comments about viruscon/virusen - impromptu cons-with-cons as far as I can gather, though without any recognised leadership. Good consperts and cons news, along with (sadly) infrequent comics reviews, zine reviews, updates on the Worldcon at Myles House/Worldcon '89 bid that may well backfire, and a lettercol that is well edited. After an issue or two you should find the threads starting to come together, and you can grasp what's going on.

Keeping on clubzines, the revived SF Association of Victoria has also led to a revival of both **FROM THE ASHES** (the club newsletter) and **PHOENIX** (the clubzine itself), though it has to be said that from an initial spurt of activity, it has been a little too quiet in the SFV camp. General club information, though, with a zine review section that looks interesting for new names/zines. Write first with IRC to see if it's still going.

There seem to be some troubles with Garth Spencer's output, namely the newszine **MAPLE LEAF RAG**, and his diary-styled personalzine, **THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH** (both from Garth at 1296 Richardson St, Victoria, British Columbia, V8V 3E1 - trade/usual/information/news). The last issue of MLR was a double number co-produced with Georges Giguere over in Edmonton. Now GG has since decided that he's had enough of fandom and has gaffiated (Get Away From It All, ie leave fandom - Ed.), which puts MLR (and apparently \$400 of a grant accepted by GG) in doubt. MLR is the newszine that had wanted to go semi-pro, but seemed to lack the backing of the rest of Canadian fandom to make it so. The sad thing is that all this is recounted in **World According to Garth**, sparking off some feuds already. Write first to see what's going on now.

And there we call a halt to Chuck's magnum opus. Next time around, look out for fanzines from Australia and Europe.

Chuck also drew my attention to the following, which might be of interest to anyone interested in their post, and in particular, in Mail Art. That is, address stamps, rubber stamps with pretty pictures on them, shop markers, company stamps, etc - even the art involved in most junk mail is sometimes preserved. Ryosuke Cohen (1-6 Hiyoishicho, Moriguchi City, Osaka 570, Japan) has started what he calls the Braincell Project. It's an attempt to collect every rubber stamp/mail art marker, and he's already produced 41 A3-sized 'collections' which are printed in vivid multi-colouring, though these are limited. If you can help with this project, then please do so.

The nomination for the Best Fanzine Hugo were published last issue, but if you want to know what the nominees have done to deserve their nominations, here are their addresses for further information, although I can't always help you with availability.

Ansible - Dave Langford, 94 London Rd, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Newszine, now on issue 48 and with some doubt whether it will live beyond issue 50 (it better had, Langford). However, #2 buys you five issues and the chance to jump up and down on Dave if Ansible does cough.

File 770 - Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Ave #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401, USA. A newszine, but it's never floated through here so I can't tell you much more. Try contacting Mike for further info.

Lan's Lantern - George Laskowski, 55 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI48013, USA. We think this is a media zine, but try writing to Lan.

Texas SF Inquirer - Pat Mueller, 2309-A Montclair, Austin, TX 78704, USA. This is a clubzine, though you might be forgiven for thinking you're reading the accounts of an oil company. Probably attractive if you know the people involved, but not a lot of help unless you've a burning interest in Texan SF writers or in proving the existence of Dennis Virzi.

Trapdoor - Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442. Has the rare distinction of being the only fanzine as opposed to newszine in this category. A genzine available for the usual.

Working on the same idea with the Fan Writer category **Mike Glycer**, I've already covered, so first we have **Arthur Hlavaty** who produces **Lines of Occurrence** as well as writing numerous articles (8194 Markham Ave, Durham, NC 27701, USA - if fanzine available for the usual) followed by **Dave Langford** as fan writer. As well as **Ansible**, try **The Transatlantic Hearing Aid**, probably the funniest TAFF Winners report ever. **Patrick Nielsen Hayden** is currently in the fanish eye with **Izzard** (75 Fairview #2D, New York, NY 10040, USA) co-produced with **Teresa Nielsen Hayden**. **Simon Ounsley** (21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR) is perhaps best known for **Still Life** (try ST4 for the article on his liver biopsy) whilst **D. West** is best known for **Performance**, an upstee page epic con report. If requests would doubtless sell, here's a copy of **Fanzines in Theory and Practice** which contains this article plus much more (87 Bradford St, Keighley, W Yorks).

Following my announcement of the **Asimov Author**, **Author** newsletter from **Steve Tidey** in the last **Fire & Hemlock**, I've heard from Steve to say that he's had to cease publication. I hope it wasn't something I said.

As usual, before the listings, the definitions, for the new hands, and for those who didn't pay attention last time.

A **genzine** is general, usually more than one contributor, could include articles, reviews, fiction, letters, anything someone might want to read, depends on the editor. A **perzine** usually has the one author, but contents again variable, subject to the whim of said author. A **clubzine** is produced by a group or society, again a mixture of any of the above, although some American examples I've encountered recently chronicle business meetings minutely. **Pictionzines** should be reasonably self-explanatory by now, as should **critical journals** such as **Foundation**.

The usual? - it seems to vary from a promise of a letter of comment (loc), a contribution, the right sort of begging letter, a stamp - be creative. You'll soon find out the best way to get zines, and if you start locating people see your name, and may send things anyway. Trade means their zine for yours, though this isn't necessarily always

successful. Money can be an inducement, though some faneds prefer locs and articles.

ABATTOIR Vol.1 No.2 Bryan Barrett & Lucy Huntzinger, PO Box 6202, Hayward, CA 94540, SF 2215-R Market St, San Francisco, CA 94114, USA. Available for the usual, not quite so um but helps if you know some of the names.

CHALKDUST #3 - Frances Jane Nelson, Spanish Wells, Bahamas. Perzine.

CIVILISATION REVIEWED #2, #3 - Michael R Gould, 10 Braybrook, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, Cambs, PE22 0SH. Available for the usual.

CRYSTAL SHIP #13 - John D Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, MK16 9AZ. Genzine available at editorial whim, so get whimming. Contents always thought provoking, production makes me feel madly jealous.

EAGLE OF THE NORTH Easter 1987 - David Bell, Church Farm, North Kelsey, Lincoln. Perzine, available for the usual.

FREE LUNCH #1 - Mike Christie & Sherry Goldsmith, 38 Gloucester Rd, Acton. London W3 8PD. Genzine available for the usual?

FUCK THE TORIES #4 - co-produced by Valma Brown, Leigh Edmonds, Judith Hanna, Joseph Nicholas. Available from 22 Denbigh St, Piccolo, London SW1V 2EF for trade, loc, contribution, etc. Genzine with political overtones. If you love Maggie, you'll probably not care over much for this.

HOLIER THAN THOU #25 - Marty Cantor, 11565 Archwood St, North Hollywood, CA 91606-1703, USA. Very thick genzine, available for the usual, and including another column from Steve Green on everything you felt you needed to know about the Brum Group and Novacon 16.

NEW TOY 2 - Tara Wayne, 1812-415 Willowdale Ave, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada, M2N 5B4. Perzine: available for \$3, trade, the usual, arbitrary whim of the editor.

PULP #5 - quarterly zine from now on, available for the usual from Vince Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2EN

SECONDHAND GOODS #1 - Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Rd, Wissett, Mr Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0NF. Perzine. The usual.

SEVEN KINDS OF MADNESS - Steve Davies, Vraidex, 18 Pell St, Reading, Berks, RG1 2NZ. Perzine with genuine leanings. The usual?

STRANGE PERVERSIONS AND LITERARY LUNCHEONS #1 - Ivan Towlson, New College, Oxford, OX1 3EN. Genzine.

THINGY #7 - Thomas Ferguson, 306 Melrose St, Lisbourn Rd, Belfast BT9 7DN - perzine

WHISKY #6 - Jeanne Gomoll, Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-14343. try the usual. Described as the fanzine serious about good conversation. Meet Jeanne during Worldcon as she will be here as TAFV winner.

WORMS - an internal memo - Bob Shaw (not the author) 3/2 226 Woodlands Rd, Glasgow, G3 6LR. Probably the most personal perzine you will ever encounter, not for the faint hearted.

* NEWSZINES *

INSTANT MESSAGE #24 - published twice monthly by the New England Science Fiction Association Inc, Box G, MIT Branch Post Office, Cambridge, MA 02139-0910, USA. Subscribing Membership costs \$15 for one year. I actually found this issue quite

interesting with its discussion of the shape of future Boskones but convention angst is not everyone's cup of tea.

* CLUBZINES *

HYOSPACE #32 c/o Hatfield Polytechnic Students Union, PO Box 109, Hatfield Polytechnic, College Lane, Herts, AL10 9AB - available for the usual.

RANCHMAN Vol.1, no.1 - newsletter of The True Game Society, the UK Sheri S Tepper fanclub. #4 for 6 issues.

STROOM Nr 0 alias Rune #75, for reasons best known to the Minnesota SF Society Inc, PO Box 8297, Lake St Station, Minneapolis, MN 55408, USA. Available for the usual, etc

* FICTIONZINES *

CASSANDRA ANTHOLOGY #12 - Bernard Smith, 8 Vansford Walk, Thorplands Brook, Northampton, NN3 4YF. £1.00 per issue.

DREAM MAGAZINE 11 - Trevor Jones, 1 Ravenshoe, Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE16 8DE. £1 per issue, 6 issues £5, 12 issues £10.

FROM THE SUN TO THE WORLD - available from Sean Friend, Mill House, 177 Challymead, Melksham, Wilts, SN12 8LR. Free but donations, and an A4 sase appreciated.

OPUS QUARTERLY #1 - Mike Hearn, House 2, Broxbournebury School, Broxbourne, Herts, EN10 7PY. £3.25 for a 4-issue subscription.

SPIXY New Series 4 - Oxford University SF Group fan magazine. Contact: Neal Tringham, Exeter College, Oxford. 70p plus 20p postage.

* OF RELATED INTEREST *

GHOSTS & SCHOLARS #9 - Rosemary Pardoe, Flat 1, Hamilton St, Chester, CH2 3JQ. £1.45 per issue. Subscriptions of a minimum of £6 entitle subscriber to a 20% discount on the full price.

For those unfamiliar with this publication, it's devoted to the work of M R James, the ghost story writer, other writers of the same period also producing ghost stories. Generally, it contains a mixture of Jamesian-type stories, some modern, others reprinted for the first time in years, and some very interesting scholarly articles. Worth getting, and not just because I'm reviews editor.

Members' Noticeboard

A disappointing show of advertisements as well this time. It must be the holiday. Advertising is free, and at the discretion of the editor, to whom all ads should be sent.

WANTED * Penfriend (male/female) for 17 year old male whose interests/hobbies include reading (mainly SF, fantasy and horror), collecting and breeding exotic animals, and bodybuilding. Contact: M Angelides, 185 Main Road, Ravenshead, Notts, NG15 9GW

Fam Wells has asked me to convey her thanks to everyone who responded to her advertisement in Members Noticeboard over the last few issues.

SAUCER STORY



NATO EARLY
WARNING
STATION.

INTRUDER
SECTOR ALPHA
9: COURSE 67-
134 LAUNCH...

OSCAR FOXTROT
ROLLING; CHARLIE
ECHO CONTROL.



IT'S NOT RUSSIAN.



PLEASE REPEAT
OSCAR FOXTROT.

ETA 1 HOUR
23 MINUTES



YES MINISTER
IT HAS LANDED.
YES THE...



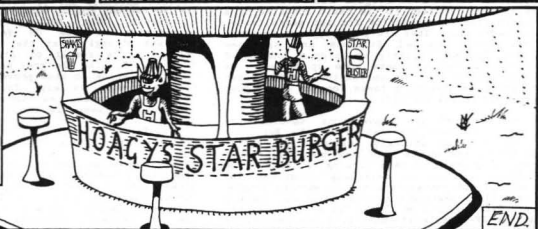
FORCES HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED.

THE LANDING



SITE IS SURROUNDED.

YES THIS
COULD BE
A MOMENTOUS
OCCASION
FOR ALL
MANKIND.



END.

UPDATE ON CASSANDRA

By Elizabeth Sourbut

The Cassandra Anthology has now seen twelve issues, and has helped many brand new writers to see print for the first time. It has taken a lot of effort, but we have felt that this effort was worthwhile. However, as with many amateur magazines run on a shoestring, there have always been problems. Problems of finance, of finding cheap and reliable printers, of the editors finding the necessary time to devote to the magazine, and lastly, of attracting sufficient high-quality manuscripts.

We've had a good run, but at last all these problems have caught up with us at once. Two printers folded, and the school we are currently using is establishing a long block period for 1988 (April-September) when no outside material will be printed. This makes it impossible for us to stick to our quarterly schedule as we simply don't have the finances to print and stockpile a whole year's magazines before April.

Added to this, the supply of good manuscripts has dried to a trickle. Too few authors seem prepared to rewrite and resubmit. It was decided on day one that we either published good work, or we didn't

publish at all. Bernard Smith and Dave Clements have done a marvellous job of editing, typing and distributing the magazine, but the burden of effort has really become too much.

We were originally set up as a workshop, with the emphasis on the improvement of skills through mutual interaction and discussion. We now find ourselves to be a publishing house, trying to do more than we have the resources to do. It has therefore been decided that there will be one more magazine - a double issue of numbers 13 and 14, due out in late September - and that thereafter the Cassandra Anthology will cease to be.

However, phoenix-like from the ashes will arise a new, revitalised Cassandra Workshop, concentrating once again on the central workshoping idea that was our original motive force. We hope to continue the annual workshop and the monthly meetings, and anyone who is interested is welcome to join us. For those who cannot travel to the meetings, Mercury will be continuing unchanged.

For details of the workshop, please contact: Bernard Smith, 8 Vansford Walk, Thorplands Brook, Northampton, NN3 4YF

and of Mercury: Elizabeth Sourbut, 31 Barfield Road, York YO3 9AW

The Periodic Table

DIFFERING CONVENTIONS: Or A Very Social Darwinism

by Stanley Clear

The social genus of conventions is most unusual and hence deserving of detailed research. However, it is almost impossible to assess it impartially as it is undoubtedly an acquired taste.

Before performing any kind of analysis the subject must be categorised by species. It is comparatively simple to make an initial split across the lines of SF, Fantasy, Horror, Gaming, Media and Nonaligned. Also important are the national variations, British, American, Dutch, Belgian, French, German, Eastern European etc. Ideally some national splits should go even further: definitely England, Wales and Scotland, possibly even Southern, Central and Northern England too. However, the realisation of this is confusing. As the subject is so large, it is necessary to curtail the area of study and I have considered only four species. They are the two sets of surprising pairings of Fantasy and Horror, and SF and Nonaligned.

Before going any further I must define my one unexplained term; a Nonaligned convention where there is more interest in the basic concepts of a convention than any catering for the genre tastes of its membership. They are probably best typified by the late lamented Silicons and the new Rubicons. You are unlikely to enjoy a Nonaligned convention unless you have come up through the ranks of another type of convention, on the other hand, anyone acquiring a taste for the Nonaligned is probably hooked for life.

The movement of SF conventions towards the Nonaligned is best represented by the Mexicans, but can be seen strongly reflected in recent Novacons and Eastercons. The less desirable result of this move seems to be a closing of ranks, less new converts, but no departing heretics. The emphasis of the conventions are on meeting people, and convenient meeting surroundings; bars, leaving Science Fiction to come a poor third. In Darwinian terms the SF/Nonaligned convention has reached its ecological niche far from its starting point.

Likewise, the merging of Horror and Fantasy conventions has resulted in this new species approaching its true niche. Following the tradition of 'survival of the fittest' this niche is very distant from that of the SF/Nonaligned. The emphasis is targeted directly at the genres and on 'the saleable product'. This results in a much more professional looking and equally superficial convention. The ecological niche it is heading for suggests; paid guests, a few hardened semi-pros and a high turnover of run-of-the-mill fans. They are evolving towards Media conventions.

Having defined species the next step is to see how geography has made the same species evolve separately. First, we should consider the two biggest fan populations: UK and US. (The American aspects of this research have been based on that renowned scientific journal *Locust*).

It appears that the US-SF conventions also seem to have found a niche close to their Nonaligned. Perhaps the only noticeable difference is the absence of Bars. This is probably due to their hereditary absence in the natural US habitat. However, despite this difference, it is interesting to note the ample evidence of successful mating between examples of the UK and US attendees. Perhaps, years ago, UK fans were amongst the first settlers? (A traditional convention cure-all.)

The US Fantasy/Horror species is very like the UK equivalent only better established. Closer examination of the US Fantasy/Horror merger suggests strongly that the UK variety is almost certainly the result of direct re-introduction from the US. Like the grey and red squirrels, the US import seems to have proved more dominant than the indigenous variety. This appears to be a recent development as there is still little difference between the two sides of the Atlantic. Outside of the UK and US there is little evidence of the Fantasy/Horror convention. In fact, on the Continent they appear to be extinct.

When considering Europe one, of course, has to immediately separate out France and Germany. They always have to do things their own way, even if no-one else understands a word. The Dutch and Belgian conventions seem to be amazing similar to the UK variety, although smaller and rarer. However, there are signs of an important

difference: the British variety seems to have an almost atrophied new-entrant or 'Neo' organ. The Dutch/Belgian 'Neo' organ still seems to function and care is taken to initiate novices. This suggests an introduction from the UK, but that long enough ago they started to evolve apart.

The Eastern bloc is not considered here as they seem to take the whole subject much too lightheartedly for this serious study.

Attempting the further geographical splitting of Britain into England, Scotland and Wales highlights only one more interesting result. The Scottish variety proves to have more similarities to the Dutch than the English, with, if anything, a hyperactive 'Neo' organ. The lack of interesting results in this analysis is probably largely due to the nomadic nature of the populations. This nomadic effect is more marked than, say, in Europe, as there is slightly less of a language barrier.

The inter-English variations are even less significant and require much more research before serious conclusions can be drawn. Considering the recent bidding sessions at Becon, the split is likely to show that the most significant results might be socio-economic. I intend studying British conventions, and the other European variations, in depth over the next many years. Possibly the aspect that makes this research so exciting is the impending international meet. The intercourse, both social and otherwise, at Conspiracy will be essential course material for all student of this fascinating subject.

CONVENTION ROUNDUP

1987 CONVENTIONS

CONSPIRACY '87 - The 45th World SF Convention (the first in Britain since 1979)
27 August - 1 September, Metropole Hotel & Brighton Centre, Brighton
GOHs: Doris Lessing, Alfred Bester, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, Jim Burns. FGOHs: Ken and Joyce Slater, Dave Langford. Toastmaster: Brian Aldiss
Membership: Attending £30 (children 8-14 £15.00), Supporting £10
Info: Conspiracy '87, PO Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ

CACTUSCON/WASFIC 1987 - to compensate our American brethren for the Worldcon being in Britain
3-6 September, Phoenix, Arizona
GOH: Hal Clement, FGOH: Marjil Eilers
Membership: Attending \$50, \$60 at the door, supporting \$15
Info: Cactuscon, Box 27201, Tempe, AZ 85282, USA

PRISONERCON '87
4 - 6 September, Portmeirion (The Village), North Wales
Some events will be free to the visiting public, whilst others will be open to members of Six to One (Prisoner Appreciation Society). Info: Six to One, PO Box 66, Ipswich.

FANTASYCON XIII - The British Fantasy Society's annual convention
4 - 6 September, Midland Hotel, Birmingham
GOH: J K Potter (others to be announced)
Membership: £3 supporting, £10 attending (£9 if a member of the BFS. Cheques made payable to Fantasycon.
Info: Fantasycon XII, 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE

12th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR UTOPIAN STUDIES
8-11 October, Media, PA, USA
Info: Professor Carol Farley-Kessler, English and American Studies, Penn State Univ, Delaware County Campus, 25 Yearsley Mill Rd, Media, PA 19063, USA

COMCON - 11th Eurocon 1987

29 October - 1 November, Montpellier, in conjunction with the French National SF convention
Guests include David Brin, John Brunner, Keith Roberts, Kim Stanley Robinson, Gene Wolfe, Jacques Barberi, Philip Caza, Jean-Pierre Hubert, Michel Jeury & Joëlle Vintrebert, Renato Pestriniero, Adrian Rogoz, Votjek Studmark
Membership: Supporting 80FF, Attending 150FF until 1st September, then 120FF and 200FF, cheques to be made out to Science-Fictions
Contact: Gilles Murat, 112 Avenue de Toulouse, 34070 Montpellier, France

WORLD FANTASYCON '87

29 October - 1 November, Hyatt Regency, Nashville, TN, USA
GOH: Piers Anthony. AGOH: Frank Kelly Freas
Membership: Attending \$50, supporting \$25
Info: World Fantasycon '87, Box 22817, Nashville, TN 37202, USA

NOVACON 17 - The Brum Group's 17th Annual Convention

30 October - 1 November, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham
GOH: Iain M Banks
Membership: £10 until 29 October, £12 on the door, cheques made payable to 'Novacon 17'
Room rates £20.50 single, £16.50 per person double/twin room.
Info: Mick Evans, 7 Grove Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7UY
PLEASE NOTE THAT MEMBERSHIP IS LIMITED TO 350

DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL MEETING 10 - emphasis on Marian Zimmer Bradley, feminism, occult.
27-29 November, Wilmington, DE, USA
Membership: \$17
Info: Darkover Grand Council Meeting, Box 8113, Silver Spring, MD 20907, USA

1988 Conventions

CONGREGATE

10-12 June, 1988, Peterborough
G.O.H. - to be arranged
Membership: Supporting £5, Attending £11.00
Info: Chris Ayres, 67 Ayres Drive, Stanground, Peterborough.

ALBACON '88

tentatively July 1988
Central Hotel, Glasgow, Scotland
GOH: C J Cherryh
Info: Albacoon '88, 105 Craigton Rd, Govan, Glasgow, Scotland, G51 3RQ.

MYTHCON XIX - Mythopoeic Society Conference

29 July - 1 August, Berkeley, CA, USA.
GOHs: Ursula Le Guin, Brian Attebery
Membership: \$20
Info: Mythcon XIX, 90 El Camino Real, Berkeley, CA 94705, USA

CONINE

5-7 August, Oxford Polytechnic
GOH: Terry Pratchett
Membership: supporting £4, attending £9
Contact: c/o Ivan Towilson, New College, Oxford, OX1 3BN

HUNGAROCON - The 1988 Eurocon

10-14 August, 1988, Budapest.
Info: Hungarian SF Society, Eurocon Committee, Budapest, Hungary, H-1078

WOLACON II - The 46th Worldcon

1 - 5 September, New Orleans, LA
GOH: Donald A Wollheim, FGOH: Roger Sime
Membership: \$60 until 31/12/87, \$70 to 10/7/87
Info: UK Agent, Linda Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London, W5 4XJ

1989 Conventions

WOREASCON III - The 47th Worldcon

31 August - 4 September 1989, Boston, MA.
 GCH: Andre Norton, Betty & Ian Ballantine. FGOH:
 The Stranger Club
 Info: UK Agent, Colin Fine, 28 Abbey Rd,
 Cambridge, CB5 8HQ

Supporting membership means that you will receive all progress reports of the convention, the programme book, badge etc. A progress report gives you information on how the con is developing, how to get there, and the current list of members. The more sophisticated ones will often contain articles or pieces of original work by guests, and so on. The programme book tells you about the convention, supplies a timetable of events, introductions to the guests etc. The most elaborate are almost zines in their own right, and well worth hanging on to. You pay attending membership if you are going to the convention. It is possible to convert from supporting to attending membership, generally by paying the balance between the two.

Pre-supporting memberships are somewhat different, being associated with convention bidding. If you pay pre-supporting membership you are showing your support for a particular attempt to win the bid to put on a convention. You're also providing finance to get that bid on the road, for publicity and bidding parties. If the convention you support wins, you'll find that your pre-supporting membership is deducted from the supporting/attending membership. You may sometimes find that even if your bid lost, the winning committee generously do the same, but this is not a general rule. Not all conventions involve bidding. It occurs for such things as Eastercons, Unicons and Worldcons, which are annual and peripatetic.

There is still only one bid for 1990, named Contravention

"The Contravention committee has a wealth of convention organising experience. Between us we have been involved in both Mexicons, Unicons, Eastercons, the Eurocon, and Worldcon. We know all the things that can go wrong, and we know how to make it go right.

But Contravention won't just be another identikit Eastercon. We have no intention of following dull, well-trodden paths simply because that's what everyone else has done. Right from the start we have pooled our knowledge of convention committees to create a new and more flexible committee structure which takes into account the very different jobs required while planning a convention and at the convention itself.

That flexible structure represents a new attitude towards the Eastercon. The emphasis is on fresh ideas, and on service. The fresh ideas will be most obvious in the programme, of course. After all, with the Mexican and Worldcon programmes behind us, what else would you expect? But we intend to bring the same creativity, the same dissatisfaction with everything that's old and tired, to the whole of the convention.

As for service, it's all too easy for committees to forget that their sole reason for being is you, the attendees. We don't intend to forget that, and all our energies are devoted to providing a convention that you will enjoy."

COMMITTEE

Chris Donaldson
 Jan Huxley
 Paul Kincaid
 Chrissie Pearson

John Fahey
 Rob Jackson
 Paul Oldroyd
 Maureen Porter

Information from 35 Buller Road, London N17. Pre-supporting membership is £1.

Albacon, 19-22 June, Central Hotel, Glasgow

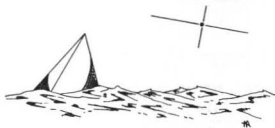
I must admit to having felt a little silly. There I was standing on a platform at Woking, about to go South on a Salisbury train and had to bump into a 'mundane' working acquaintance. "Yes, I am off to Glasgow for the weekend," and "Yes, I know I'm going in the wrong direction!" I am just very glad there wasn't time to explain WHY I was going there. If you are starting from almost the South Coast, an Albacon makes for a very long weekend. This was partly the reason I'd never been to a non-Eastercon Albacon before, (the other major reason being Harlan Ellison). We set off from Salisbury (where my lift started from) at 7am on Thursday and I was dropped off at home, in London 4am on the Tuesday. OK, I admit you can do it faster, but if you go that far, you might as well make the most of it.

I have never managed to work out why Glasgow conventions attract hundreds of local walk-ins when somewhere like Birmingham can manage only a fraction of that number. I know many a fannish snob is now saying "Ah, but they aren't true fans, they're nasty Trekkies, Whovians, Towelies and much worse still". Whoever they are it doesn't matter so long as they don't disturb others enjoying themselves. However, I will admit to suspecting that at a smaller Albacon these media fans would overrun the place and perhaps mar my enjoyment. Well, I shouldn't have been so prejudiced. This was a considerably more enjoyable convention than any of the three Albacon Eastercons.

I think it is possible to say what makes a convention fail, but it is definitely much harder to say why it succeeds. Success is a general air of enjoyment that overrides the inevitable level of cock-ups. Of course, success and failure can only really be personal opinion. I was amazed to be told after last Becon "It was great, everyone thought so", and by just as many "It was awful, everyone thought so". Anyway, I definitely enjoyed Albacon 87, I hope others did too.

I never really had a chance to notice before, but Glasgow has quite an atmosphere about it. That is if, like me, you are a city lover and not a country freak. Perhaps the most startling thing is the night, the convention was on the weekend of the longest day and to my amazement at 11pm it was not yet fully dark. This gives the city an eerie feel, a bit like London's South Bank at 5am on a summer's Sunday morning, if you can imagine that.

Finally I should say something about the actual convention. Josephine Saxton makes a charming and interesting GOH. The convention organisation varied from the precise to the disastrous (no-one told me about the GOH, Brian Stableford, where the convention was, but he got there eventually). I went to the odd programme item, they weren't bad. For me the convention programme is only there for when the conversation in the bar stalls, and it rarely did. See you there next year.



Stars & Shadows

EVIL DEAD II - directed by Sam Raimi

Reviewed by Colin Bird

This film is so outlandish that I fear Sam Raimi is in danger of becoming the Ken Russell of Horror! Evil Dead II is non-stop slapstick horror. It is an outrageous parody of the first film, with generous helpings of black comedy. Much of the gore on show is sicker than anything seen before, but Raimi is so acutely self-conscious of this that he muffs the chance to hit the viewer anywhere other than on the funnybone. On the rare occasions that tension is introduced, the atmosphere is destroyed by anticipation of the next gag. It's as if the director is sitting next to you and keeps nudging you in the ribs, whispering 'here comes a good bit'.

There is a mood of collusion between the filmmakers and the audience. The hero, Ash, played by Bruce Campbell from the first film, is constantly reacting to the camera. His performance reveals all the contrivances that prevent this cluttered film from holding together. He appears to be going insane one moment, the next he is gritting his teeth and preparing to do battle with the demon. The film has the logic of a cartoon and where the first film was influenced by EC Comics, this movie draws more from Tex Avery and Chuck Jones. At times I expected Bugs Bunny to come bursting in through a window rather than the evil dead of the title. In one surreal scene that could (and probably does) come from a cartoon, Ash falls off a chair and the furniture laughs at him!

There is much to be admired in the technical aspects of Evil Dead II. Raimi has a clear talent for getting the best out of his crew. The editing is first rate, as is the stylish use of sound. Raimi is in love with elaborate, swooping camera movements and the ferocious tracking shot through dense forest, which represents the demon's point of view, is his most potent 'special' effect. The make-up and stop-motion work retreads ground covered in the original although the considerably larger budget allows a more polished product.

The plot from the first movie returns with four fresh bodies joining Ash at the haunted cabin. It acts well enough as a framework for mayhem, and Raimi clearly delights in confounding your expectations with as many bizarre twists as possible before ending with an attempt at irony.

This is probably the messiest gore film ever. Revolting liquids of all colours and consistencies squirt in all directions. It's a big joke, and the only memorable use it is put to is a delightfully gross stunt involving a flying eyeball. If you got through The Fly without use of a sick bag, you should make it through this.

Sam Raimi has used this film to deflate some of the horror clichés which he used to such good effect in the original. There is a lot of referential humour, sometimes hilarious, sometimes totally out of place. Raimi is straining too hard for effect. Although I found this film entertaining enough, on the level of a National Lampoon film, I really expected more imagination from one of the more promising young directors. Having said that, any film that takes the piss out of Rambo must be worth seeing.

CRITTERS - New Line/Palace Pictures, 1986, directed by Steve Herek.

Reviewed by John Feetenby

From its ham-fisted advertising, I might get the impression that Critters is not even peripherally SF, but it is, honest. The opening scenes of a spacecraft approaching a prison asteroid are nicely done, an endearing oxymoron of imagination

and utter cliché. Slightly dim plotting allows us to be filled in on the story via a helpfully expository radio voice over. We learn that the ship is transporting Critters (Critters, gedit?), pestilential beasts who will eat anything, and absolutely the worst thing in the world would be for the Crites to escape and steal a spaceship.

Within a short space of time the Crites have escaped, stolen a spaceship; and if you can't guess where the little cutie are going, then go back to Lesson one of Budget Movie Plot Devices: or, Set the Story on Earth, Clyde, We Save a Lot of Dosh That Way. However, to labour the point, a stodgily episodic portrait of a one and a half horse American town is given, with specific attention paid to a family living on its outskirts. This seems a tad unnecessary at the time though it does avoid the need for exposition later. An eccentric, gruff and inconsistently characterised father (Billy Green Bush), a hubby-loving, kid-hugging, cool-under-pressure Mom (Dee Wallace Stone of *ET* and *Cujo*) and an older sister/younger brother sibling rival pair form the group that exploits the recent American film obsession with love and the nuclear family.

Meanwhile, in outer space, two blank-faced bounty hunters are dispatched to retrieve the Crites, receiving instructions not to cause too much damage this time. They are shape-shifters, which affords some halfway decent transformation effects and a couple of bizarrely humorous situations. They hit town and wreak havoc through their hopeless inability to remain inconspicuous in this alien environment. It's funny, it works in much the same way as the permanent bemusement of the Jack Deth character in *Trancers*.

They're too late, of course. The Crites are already here, terrorising our family. Dad is quickly disabled, Mom is nobbled too; it's time for the kids to settle their differences and save the earth. This is pretty much what they do, though it ought to be noted that the girl's part in this is tiny, and wholly passive. In fact, all the women in this film are treated shabbily. The most generous way to interpret this as homage to the fifties tradition of sexism. I mean, we don't have that stuff any more, do we?

Despite such shortcomings, there are things to admire about *Critters*. Off-kilter characterisations (like M Emmet Walsh's seedy sheriff), eccentrically plotted events and relentless silly attempts to plug the song written for the film pepper the movie like grape shot. A lot of the humour is pretty basic, and it must be said that the movie in-jokes are horribly coy.

Critters works best as a tribute to the films that were made in America in the late fifties/early sixties when anyone with fifty dollars and a camera could shoot a movie. It's consistently low budget in its aims, down to one of the dumbest endings ever committed to celluloid. The eighties only get a look in with the final scene which hints as the possibility of a sequel in the way that Newton hinted at the possibility of a law of gravitation.

I can't honestly recommend this film to the average BSFA member to whom art, literacy and intelligence presumably matter, but to those anal retentive completists like myself who have to see everything I give a guarantee of shortness and painlessness.

THE FLY - directed by David Cronenberg

Reviewed by Robert Matthews

The Fly is a remake of Kurt Neumann's 1950's film of the same name. Cronenberg did this was because he felt the original was full of unscientific absurdities, such as David Hedison with a fly's head but a human brain, still able to 'speak

English. So, instead of the head transfer, there is a fusion of human and insect.

Jeff Goldblum plays the eccentric scientist, Seth Brundle, who tries out his teleportation machine with, unknown to him, a fly in the same pod. Two objects in the pod confuses the computer so it fuses them at a sub-molecular level. Later, Brundle's girlfriend, played by Geena Davies, discovers she is pregnant, and finds herself wondering if the child was conceived before or after the experiment. (In fact, in a dream sequence, she does give birth to a three foot maggot baby.) This question is not resolved by the end of the movie.

Jeff Goldblum's performance is outstanding, equalling John Hurt in *The Elephant Man*, and Geena Davies is also good. The special effects are impressive and the last few stages of transformation are revolting, make-up effects being provided by Chris Valos. The film is not all serious however, and there is a lot of very nice one-line humour. David Cronenberg's direction, as always, is excellent.

THE OWL SERVICE - Script by Alan Garner, from his own novel, directed by Peter Plummer, 1967, Channel 4.

Reviewed by Maureen Porter

For those of us who remember this the first time around, Channel 4's reshewing of this children's classic was greeted with warmest enthusiasm, the videos were set, and the phone taken off the hook every Sunday for eight weeks.

Eight weeks - in that respect certainly, it showed its age. Who makes eight-part serials for children any more. Everyone knows that the attention span doesn't last beyond four episodes of fast-moving action. And this was a slow-moving piece. Each part of the action unfolded carefully and delicately, leaving the viewer time to savour the ramifications. In other respects, it creaked a little. Camera angles were used in a way hailed as highly innovative at the time, but now seeming so ordinary as to be hackneyed, and the colour coding of the characters' clothes rather crudely underlined the fact that this was an early colour production. A recapitulation of the plot so far is rather more uncommon these days, although I for one would welcome it.

But the story itself? Well, it's as fresh as ever. Ignore the clothing, the attitudes implicit in certain speeches and the story of Blodeuwedd, Lleu and Gronw Pebr is still as gripping in 1987 as it was 20 years ago or 200 years ago. A touching inventory doomed to failure, and given through literary supernatural undertones, The Owl Service is undoubtedly one of Garner's finest achievements, both as a novel and a television series. It's frightening, more for what remains unspoken or only half-understood, yet there is enough explicit mystery and magic to keep those who are unfamiliar with the legend happy as well. And more than that, the central dilemma, of two people whose situation means that their relationship can never be carried through, is still as relevant.

There were fine performances from all the cast, though inevitably Frances Wallis, Michael Holden and Gillian Hills must take the lion's share for their portrayal of the three children. Edwin Richfield was excellent as the newly married man struggling to maintain his wife's standards, when his own inclination is to live and let live, and Dorothy Edwards venomous performance as Gwyn's mother still frightened me as much as when I was eight. Raymond Llewellyn as Huw Half-Bacon, the magician, was terrifying in his portrayal of a mad and wise man. The line between the two was indeed fine.

I just hope we don't have to wait another twenty years for another reshewing.

Write Back



And by popular demand - well, two people did actually complain about the lack of a letters page - Writeback returns. A few more contributions would help, though I appreciate that it is the holiday season at present, and I can't deny that the postal services, particularly in London, are a little short of appalling so stuff is coming through very slowly. The response to the last issue though was very disappointing. Obviously I shall have to supply more controversy for you. Which is a point made by:

Tom Jones
14 Haywood, Haversham Park, Bracknell RG12 4WG

Matrix now has all the right sections to truly call itself a newsmagazine. But it lacks 'controversial' articles - not every issue but sufficient to ensure that at times a few people will write. A healthy letter column requires two main things: (1) As many letters, or parts of letters, as possible are printed - it's proof someone is interested in what you write (and it's a little bit of ego-booster); (2) You have to provide something for people to write about, seedcorn for the debate to start. I'm sure I'm teaching you how to suck eggs but the last couple of *Matrixes* haven't contained anything to stir people up.

Well I'm certainly going to try to avoid letting the letters column get squeezed out of the magazine in future. And as for controversy, Paul Brazier's 'Soapbox' in M59 has aroused quite a flurry of response.

Kev McVeigh
39 Coundon Rd., Coventry, CV1 4AR

I'm not sure that I entirely agree with Paul Brazier's views on charity and such, but he has a great deal of logic on his side and I think he may be right. I have another view regarding disaster funds, charity records, etc. Zeebrugge was a terrible thing, but as Paul says so well, money is an insult to the victims because it was money

which made them victims. Yet what of the man killed on the M1 in a pile-up, or the civilian injured by a terrorist attack? Who sets up a national fund for them, or records a song for them? Their loss is the same as any other individual, though they may not all get the same news coverage. If you give to one, it should be to all.

No, I do agree with Paul: don't give, fight to prevent any need for giving.

Others took up this point about news coverage:

Paul D. Morris
21 Burlington Avenue, York, YO1 3TF

Paul Brazier makes a lot of sense. Although not very defensible, it's not really surprising that people are more concerned over the death of 150 people at Zeebrugge than the death of millions (what a throwaway number!) in the Third World. Partly this is because the ferry was closer to home, and some of 'our people' (i.e. Britons) were involved, and partly because the media report what they think people want to hear. A ferry disaster is 'newsworthy' whereas continuing daily death isn't.

There were a number of comments about the political dimension of what Paul was saying:

Mike Gould
10 Braybrook, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough PE2 0SH

I wonder how many people would vote for a political party who stood on a campaign of solving the world's poverty at the expense of some of the luxury enjoyed by people in this country. I would say not many considering how many allowed themselves to be bribed by tax cuts offered by the current government.

James Parker
18 King William St., Old Town, Swindon, SW1 3LB

I am completely in agreement with Paul's rejection of our usual knee-jerk reaction to human catastrophe.

In the short term, there is no profit - in capitalist terms - in feeding the starving millions. There *is* profit, however, in stoking up international strife and conflict. Harsh facts, but true. Paranoia is profitable.

I would, though, temper the above remarks by saying that I do not criticise those who try to help the Third World poor, including the people who simply knock on your door asking for donations for some worthy charity. They're acting out of the

best intentions. When Paul suggests that we 'question the motives of the next charitable collector', well, I think that is unfair.

Colin Bird
43 Grove Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 1NX

While Paul was 'crying hot tears' in his shower in Sudan many people were working, on behalf of such organisations as Oxfam, UNICEF, Save the Children and the Red Cross, to halt the inevitable disaster. Charity organisations can only help Third World starvation on a small scale but by doing so they can prick the conscience of governments who do little or nothing.

So don't question the poor sod who cycles to Brighton for Save the Children - give him some money. If you want to question somebody, question your MP. The starving Third World nations need money and they need your voice of support.

Colin wasn't the only person to point out the positive contribution being made by charities, here's Joseph Nicholas on the subject:

Joseph Nicholas
22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER

On the evidence of his 'Soapbox', Paul Brazier appears to have a rather Victorian impression of the things charities do and the ways they operate. He seems to view the whole business as a largely passive one, with donor and recipient mediating their transactions through a collector who undertakes all the work and is perceived as doing so from entirely philanthropic motives.

Joseph goes on to detail a number of political campaigns orchestrated by various charities.

The primary purpose of the campaigns is to *change* that environment, by lobbying and campaigning - and by persuading others to lobby and campaign - at every level from the United Nations and government downwards; approaches which have brought success even in these reactionary and recessionary times. Perhaps the most spectacular recent conversion is that of the World Bank, which for a long time took no account of the ecological impact of the development projects it funded but now incorporates such concerns as a central part of its planning.

But the final word on this topic for now should come from someone who has actually worked for a major charity. He points out a significant difference between the Zeebrugge disaster and the famine in Africa.

Steven Tew
144 Broadway, Wakefield, WF2 8AQ

Except in those cases where family are left at a serious financial disadvantage because of the loss of a breadwinner or high funeral costs, monetary compensation does little or nothing to compensate for their profound loss (after the ferry disaster). And any such financial compensation should surely be the responsibility of those to blame for the disaster - those who sacrificed safety precautions in order to widen profit margins. Subsidising them is surely wrong.

However, the situation with regard to famine, and to more domestic matters like poverty and homelessness, is not half so simple. It may well be that charities exacerbate the situation, but what, for anyone with a humanitarian regard for the immediacy of the situation, is the alternative?

What indeed? Answers next time? But now on to other matters raised in the letter



column of M69.

Kev McVeigh

Jennifer Cobbing would certainly be right in praising *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* for bringing more people into the SF field if it really was that way. It isn't.

When I speak of 'Trekkies' they refer to 'City at the Edge of Forever' or 'Tribbles', they may even read the story versions by James Blish, Vonda McIntyre and others. But if I suggest other work by Ellison, Gerrold, Blish etc I am rebuffed ... it is books, you see. They consider the written SF field to be elitist and pretentious (which some of it is) and don't wish to be dragged into that. They accuse us of being anti media SF (their use of that term excludes the written word, as much a medium as any other), and I suppose I am, partly because it lowers itself naturally to a common denominator but mainly due to its unwillingness to challenge anything at all. As James Parker says, it reinforces the prevailing attitude: that of the New Right.

And if that doesn't arouse a spirited response, nothing will. But speaking of James Parker ...

Lynne Bispham
Bushey, Herts.

I read James Parker's letter re. *Star Wars* half a dozen times, and even so I'm still not sure that it's not part of some satirical in-joke of which I, as a new member of the BSFA, am unaware. However, on the remote off-chance that the views expressed in the letter are serious, they deserve to be refuted seriously!

I would have thought that the intrinsic difference between *Star Wars* and the abhorrent *Rambo* is that the former is a fantasy set in a time and place far removed from present day reality, whilst the latter takes that reality and distorts it, and in doing so does indeed glorify militarism. I suggest that there is a vast gulf between cute little robots trying to zap a 'pantomime villain' named Darth Vader and the muscular Rambo re-writing the outcome of the Vietnam War in bullets and blood. I suppose *Star Wars* can be charged with 'simplistic moral perceptions' (if this is taken to mean Good v. Bad with no shades of grey in between), but then it was designed for a very youthful audience, and I'm afraid that complex ethical judgements don't feature very highly in the requirements of the average cinema-going ten-year-old.

Still on M69, quite a lot of people were stirred by Andy Brewer's letter. Here, for instance, is:

Terry Broome
230 Hykeham Rd., Lincoln, LN6 8AR

In response to Andy Brewer's comments, 'sense of wonder' usually means - for most people who begin reading SF as children - big, magical and devastating. Spaceships, lasers, robots and telepathy are devices. As you get older, you become less impressed with all the surface trappings and look for good plots and characterisation. SF is largely lacking good characterisation, and is no better at plots than any other genre. So it is easy to become disillusioned.

Mike Brain
2 Paddock Way, Meadowcroft, Higher Kinnerton,
Chester, CH4 9BA

I don't subscribe to *Interzone*, but managed to buy a reminder copy in a street market in Mold. But I agree with Andy Brewer that much of it was obscure.

Others spoke up for the defence:

Kev McVeigh

Yes, there is a great deal of crap out there, far too much, but it is possible to find good or even great stuff still. But though there are many novels I have started and not finished, I usually finish a short story; though some in *Interzone* have failed to hold me even at this length. Some have been great, however, so don't knock *Interzone* for only being half-successful, it's all we have.

Ken Lake
115 Markhouse Avenue, London, E17 8AY

Not much good SF around these days? Andy Brewer really can't be trying! I've been reading SF since 1944 or so, with gaps here and there, but I've never been at a loss for reasonable reading matter. Though of course I agree there's a lot of crap around (there always was).

Ken suggests using the Nicholls
Encyclopedia to compile booklists, and
scouring Rog Peyton's new book lists.

If you cannot find adequate SF reading of quality in these two ways, it's not the genre, it's you that's gone wacky!

But there's support for Andy from
another letter writer.

Julian R. Bills
3 Roseville Gardens, Codsall, W. Midlands WV8 1AZ

My interest in reading SF has been faltering lately for no apparent reason other than lack of a really good book. Normally this would not worry me, but there are several trends in the SF market that concern me. Increasingly SF bookshelves are taken up by poor quality Fantasy. The publishers are obviously trying to attract a younger audience eager for escapism and simplistic solutions. The old writers are still there and I can hardly blame the publishers for a lack of new authors but is publishing only a matter of market targeting? SF is a minority interest and I am feeling that I have become a minority within it, the whole area may be devalued and lost if things remain the same.

New writers are appearing but most are American and take a long time to appear in print here, often at a higher price than the imported editions I might add. There is inevitably a lack of high quality material throughout the market and I must content myself with perhaps one good book a year. Regardless of this I maintain that SF cannot tolerate the poor conduct and hard sell of current publishers who will only market best sellers.

My view seems bitter and I wish that it were not so, I can only hope the youth of the country realise what is going on.

PS - I am 20, is this a record for disillusion?

I suspect a lot of letters will now flood in contesting for this dubious honour. So let's turn from those grown tired of SF to those just discovering it.

Karenna Fry
18 Foxglove Close, Wokingham, Berks RG11 2NF

I have just received my first BSFA mailing, and to say I'm impressed is the understatement of the year. And to think I might never have joined but for Beccon and two friends Kurt and Jo (none other than your own BSFA Membership Secretary).

You might ask what on earth am I writing for, but

you did ask for letters, and you may (or may not) be interested in how I came to read Science Fiction, proving SF can grab anyone if you try hard enough. You see my main interest is detective/crime fiction. I came to read SF through my elder brother's large SF collection. To get me to read any he picked out the 'mystery' ones. Thus was I introduced to Asimov's Lij Bailey series. Plus I typed out his booklists so I was familiar at a tender age with such weird titles as *Dramaturges of Yaa*, etc. I progressed from there, was introduced to Stephen Donaldson, Tolkien by my brother, found McCaffrey, Clarke, Silverberg and Brunner on my own, and was introduced to lots of others by friends.

This April we all went to Becon and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We voted for Jersey in 89, it won, and I for one was overjoyed to hear that Anne McCaffrey is one of the GoHs. Thus was one SF fan born.

It's good to hear that SF can still inspire to inspire some new people. But Karenn's reference to Becon brings us to M70, and Paul Kincaid's report on that event. His opinion certainly wasn't shared by everyone:

Ken Lake

If I were to believe what Jennifer Cobbins said about the Adelphi Hotel in her Sol-III conrep, I'd cancel my approaches to Follycon at once - after all, the one essential thing for any reasonable con is that the hotel should be welcoming and efficient.

However, having read Paul Kincaid's conrep on Becon, I can only regard Jennifer's strictures as the result of eating or drinking something deleterious to mental health. After all, I was at the Eastercon with Jan and some 500 others, and the cross section of attendees I have polled indicates that Paul must have either been under the 'fluence of something really nasty, or partaking of quite a different con in another spacetime sequence.

Tell me, Paul, did Hitler win in your world? Since Valerie Housden's conrep is so personal (and none the less amusing for all that), I really must gallop to the defence of the superb Becon Team for running a really first-class con in an almost-but-not-quite perfect hotel with the most laid-back, pleasant, enjoyable and memory-laden organisation I can recall.

As for the doom and despondency about 1989 and 1990: there was no real opposition to either Follycon (about which I do have some lingering doubts) or Jerseycon which strikes me as a superb idea, especially if you take up the extra-week-for-£1-a-day-more-than-the-con-rate offer and really make the most of the journey and ambience. To complain that they were a 'one-horse race' is ludicrous - if nobody else is able to offer an alternative, should we cancel the con for the year because some few chose to raise socioeconomic howls of execration at the profligate plutocrats of the South? If Jan and I really find we can't afford Jersey, we will have to withdraw - but we won't stand around whingeing that fandom owes us a freebie just because we can't make it.

Let's face it: in the forties and fifties cons were actually organised to cater for poor people - mostly fen were poor then. Now we have gone for hotels that won't let you bring in your own food and drink, for luxury and less make-do-and-mend - if enough fen can't hack it, let 'em set up a cheapcon again. The whines of the poor who can afford computers and cars and cigarettes and booze-in-excess, but who choose not to use their resources for other things, are a thoroughly unpleasant aspect of today's world; for heaven's sake let's keep all that crap out of fandom.



Paul Kincaid responds: I'm not going to rehash everything I said in my conrep, but I stand by every word of it. On Becon, I remember long-time fans who have never been known to have a dull time at a con coming up to me and saying 'I'm bored' on several occasions over that weekend. Both there and since I have spoken to many people about the con, new fans and old, and haven't found any who enjoyed it. And the most common comment I have had about my conrep was that it was too mild in its criticism. Maybe you were the one under the 'fluence or at a different event?

As for the bidding sessions, there was a real alternative to Follycon. Nobody was suggesting that we cancel the Jersey con because there was no opposition, but to suspend the vote until next Easter's bidding session to see if any alternative has arisen. There would be nothing to prevent Jersey standing again (and even triumphing) at that session, and if one-year bidding hasn't prevented any Eastercon up to and including Follycon, there is no reason to suppose it would damage Contrivance. Why was there this sudden panic reaction that if we delay the vote there is going to be no Eastercon one year? It is unbelievably far from the truth.

And finally on those 'socioeconomic howls of execration'. Folkestone makes me one of the most southerly based of all British fans, yet for me travel to and from Jersey would take near-enough 24 hours each way. I doubt very much whether I will be able to afford either the time or the cost. But I am not whingeing that fandom owes me a freebie, I am simply stating that Jersey has taken the Eastercon out of the bracket of many British fans, including, probably, myself. Conventions grew from small to large hotels not because of increasing wealth but to cope with increasing numbers. But at any con, if I have been able to get to it, I've been able to 'make-do-and-mend'. In Jersey the spectre arises of not being able to get to it in the first place.

Maureen again, and on to other responses to M70. Terry Broome's 'Soapbox' aroused a number of comments:

John Feetenby
8 Mount Gardens, Alwoodley, Leeds, LS17 7QN

Just a note really to say that Terry Broome's point is taken. I exist. I'm here. I am a lump of meat with a passing interest in SF who is appreciative of the work that goes into *Matrix*.

Richmond Hunt
51 Danes Rd., Exeter, Devon, EX4 4LS

I do appreciate the hard work put in by those few members of the BSFA who have the necessary talent

SOAPBOX

WHY I AM NOT A FAN

By Pat Gardner

Have you ever, while conversing at a convention, been told "Ah, but if you read ... by ...", neither author or title springing remotely to mind.

This year I gawped at the nominations for the BSFA awards, and decided I was incompetent to vote. The names of some of the authors were familiar, but I'd read none of the works, and voting for a famous name is not playing the game. I abstained.

Both experiences have led me to explain why I am not a fan.

Now, of course, with respect to both the above points I could read every SF book published by ordering at my local library. Lancing library is not exactly well stocked, and contrary to recent suggestions in *Matrix*, not all library orders are free, but at 25p a go the West Sussex charge is a pittance compared to the price of a book. They've even made it easy for those of us with little time to browse to select a book (a green dot signifies SF - okay, it's one person's definition, but gung for a green dot rather than an author's name that springs to mind does actually widen my repertoire). So I could spend most, even all, of my spare time reading science fiction.

I don't.

I read, on average, one book every three weeks. This is accomplished in the pub, book in one hand, pint in the other, for the short interval between entering the pub and finding a friend to talk to. Approximately once a week I have a video, generally on Saturday for watching at the most boring time of the week, i.e. Sunday afternoon. The book and the video will almost certainly both be SF, let's say about 99% certain for the book, and about 70% certain for the video. So obviously I like SF a lot.

But fans do things. They write fanzine. They run the BSFA. They organise conventions. Some of them try to write their own SF, perhaps even sprig to professionalism, or they illustrate. I know a number of people who enjoy making and wearing SF/fantasy costumes.

and enthusiasm, but I certainly would not 'feel guilty' if the BSFA disappeared. All of us have certain interests/hobbies and I am not keen on being told that I am not playing fair if I only consume. I presume that because writing/editing is hard work for little or no reward then those like yourself do it for the enjoyment and not necessarily for any other tangible reward. I concentrate on other types of entertainment which includes reading, but not writing, SF and related material.

Personally I think that any organisation works well when a small number of 'leaders' provide direction for the rest, true mass participation would not work.

Kev McVeigh

Terry Broome's 'Soapbox' was excellent, but I'd like to add more. How many out there have wondered about the absence of reviews of *The Fly*, *Aliens*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *ALF*, etc? I have to admit I saw most of these, but I thought 'someone else will have already done a review'. The result: no review! So when I finish this letter I'm going to get in touch with Mark Greener with a piece for him. So should you.

I do none of these.

Yet I love going to cons (especially Beccons, grovel, grovel) and I've indicated that I read and watch mainly SF. And I do drink real ale.

Since joining the BSFA (either at Channelcon or the Season Eurocon, I can't recall which) I've been a consumer, rather than a provider. I can't write in-depth articles, or compare a book for review with a title of similar ilk, because I don't have the background knowledge. I don't dedicate my life to SF, or any other single activity (though I do have a fetish for breathing).

So by these standards, and certainly, by the demands of BSFA award voting, I am not a FAN. Perhaps, though, you could be generous and label me a lower case fan, and now you will realise why I am a member of the BSFA.

For a start, I use the BSFA awards as a guide for future reading. Who knows, in a couple of years time I may actually read one of this year's nominations (perhaps even the winners).

For seconds, I want news. It seems that many FANS do not need the BSFA. Attendees at every, or say, 90% of conventions, know everything that goes on anyway. But lower case fans would miss out. I attend only one or two conventions a year, and without *Matrix*, would rely solely on convention organisers distributing flyers at the conventions I attended, otherwise I would not know of the existence of their con. This is only an example. The BSFA is, to me, the means whereby the FANS let the fans know what's going on.

This distinction between FANS and fans does exist, and I hope I have not upset people by pointing it out. I see no problem with it. If you want to, and are able to, read every SF book that is published within one year of its publication date, and are happy doing so, that's fine by me. And if I'm happy strolling along to the odd con or two, reading my one book every three weeks, and watching the weekly video, I hope that's fine by you.

Matrix may, therefore, never receive a piece by me again (sigh of relief) and I will return to being one of the silent majority.

But I shall remain, lower case, a fan.

All media reviews should come straight to me from now on. But thanks for that comment, Kev. All submissions gratefully received. One final comment on M70:

John Feetenby

The only complaint I have about M70: I know the news column exists just to give news but I could have used a little sensitivity in your breaking it to me that Alice Sheldon was dead.

Sorry. And now there's only time to say I Also Heard From:

Mike Cobley who thinks that fiction zines should be reviewed in *FI* or *Vector* rather than *Matrix*. Alison Scott who 'joined the BSFA under duress ... but was pleasantly surprised by the quality of my first mailing.' David R. Smith (twice) who loved Terry Pratchett's 'Alien Christmas' and would like to see more reprinting of speeches in our pages. We'll try to oblige. And Wil Walker who sent a long letter on the religion debate, but I rather think we should close that avenue of discussion for a while at least.

And that's it for now. But do keep writing.