



A·T·R·I·X

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THE · NEWSLETTER · OF · THE · BRITISH · SCIENCE · FICTION · ASSOCIATION



December/January 1987/88

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Please note that any opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the editor or the BSFA.

The next BSFA COLLATING/MAILING WEEKEND will be on

6th/7th FEBRUARY 1988

Be there, it's actually an enjoyable social occasion in between the work, honest.

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BSFA MEMBERSHIP costs £10 per annum and is available from:

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# Red Shift

THE EDITOR'S TASK IS NOT AN EASY ONE, A fact that is brought home to me forcibly as time goes on. Whilst not everyone would actually want to edit the magazine in my place, there are some members who clearly have very strong opinions on the business of editing and constructing a magazine. It's not that I want to imply that they are wrong for holding these opinions but I'd like you all to understand why certain decisions have to be taken. At the same time I know that I am far from being the perfect, or most competent of editors which is not a subtle plea for praise, simply an awareness of my own shortcomings and a reminder that there is always work to be done.

So, why edit? Some people know that they are competent writers, some people believe that they are, some people are aware of the fact that whilst they can put the words down on the page what they are writing could often be said in a more felicitous way if only someone else would take the work and reig it a little. There are people who have something to say which is extremely interesting and could probably have had more words devoted to it, and there are some people who can take several pages to say one small, and not terribly important thing. An editor's task to give each of these people a fair crack of the whip.

It is the editor who reads a piece and, deciding that it is okay as it stands, corrects the spelling, adds a comma or two, and maybe removes an unnecessary sentence. When typesetting she may also remove another odd word to fit in into the format. Alternatively, she may read an article, realise that it is interesting but that it is badly worded, or else rather poorly constructed. It's too much for her to tackle, so she sends it back for some more work. Or it may be that all the information is present but the writer clearly hasn't the faintest idea how to get it into a publishable form so the editor settles for rewriting herself and asking for the author's approval. If the editor is lucky, the author will have accepted the corrections, agreed to rewrite, or approved the rewrite. It's not always like that, though, and there are some people who can't appreciate quite why their work has been altered, or why they are expected to adjust it.

Okay, fair enough, I am probably guilty of several inconsiderate editorial decisions, but I am learning my job as I go along, just like anyone else. What I do want to say is that anyone who tries to get into print can expect the editorial hand to fall upon their work, whether it's the Dorking and District Ferret Fanciers' Journal, or the Times Literary Supplement, and this is not some bizarre vendetta being conducted by a power-crazed BSFA Committee member.

An editor's job, in part, is to take a person's work and ensure that it is presented as well as possible, to the authors' credit as well as the editor's. Most writers would, I think, appreciate the necessity for this. I hope those who don't or won't will understand that just because they may think their work is incredibly good, not everyone else will think so. In extreme cases, an editor's judgement may save them great embarrassment, and

in a professional context, such things as libel must be considered.

An editor's job is also to sift material and decide what can go into the magazine this time, whether such an article is appropriate juxtaposed with that item. Decisions are difficult, and inevitably there are people who will find that their contribution is not used immediately. That is life. If I submit a review or an article to a professional magazine or newspaper, I can't necessarily expect them to use it at all, let alone immediately, and the same applies to Matrix.

This brings us indirectly to a complaint I've recently received about letters being edited. It says at the start of the letter column that the editor reserves the right to shorten letters or quote from them in part. The member who complained about the handling of letters felt that they should simply be printed in their entirety, one after another. I can receive thirty to forty letters per mailing, and some of them are very long. If I did print all of them, there would be nothing else in the magazine. Apart from that, reading the letters column would become a very painful and tedious process, and internal context would simply be lost as the reader waded through one set of wide-ranging opinions, and then the next. Slight variations of the same opinion expressed thirty five times are boring. And where should I stop? I doubt people wish to read the letters which simply say 'I hope you are well, you're doing a good job'. I like receiving them, but do we all need to read them? And they would have to be included. If one lifts editorial control to the extent of publishing entire letters, one is obliged to do so to the extent of publishing all letters, otherwise accusations of editorial discrimination would certainly fly.

Another complaint concerns the content of the magazines. It is rare for me not to receive one letter per mailing telling me that one segment or another of Matrix would be better placed in Vector or Paperback Inferno. Lately I've become tired of this, so I consulted Messrs Barrett and Sawyer to see what should go where. So far as we are jointly concerned, we are actually happy with the situation as it is.

Paperback Inferno handles paperback reviews, magazine reviews of the sort mentioned above, and a number of articles directly relevant to PI's content. Vector is a critical literary journal, and features author interviews, critical articles, and reviews, primarily fiction and non-fiction hardbacks, although certain selected paperbacks may be included. Matrix is the newsletter, and as such tends to provide information and listings, a general letter column and more general articles. It is more difficult to define, Matrix but this means that I have the flexibility to range widely, whilst including as much information as possible. We shall see what else I can squeeze in.

It is only too easy to become complacent about editing a magazine, especially when one tends only to receive letters saying that one is doing a

Continued on Page 4

# WALKING ON GLASS

## The BSFA Column

After a regrettable delay of nearly a year BSFA Committee meetings have restarted, and will definitely be held every two to three months from now on. It's hard to determine exactly why they fell into abeyance, but I fear we must in part look to the Worldcon which has certainly taken up the time of at least two members of the Committee, and indirectly affected others.

A Committee Meeting was held on 21st November 1987, and we spent four very tiring hours working through some very complex BSFA business and determining what needs to be done next. This article is a partial digest of matters discussed which are of direct interest to members.

The first matter I have to report is rather embarrassing, and may be worrying to some members. We have discovered, quite by chance that the British Science Fiction Association Ltd has recently been dissolved. This came as something of a shock to us, as you may appreciate.

It has come about because audited accounts were not deposited at Companies House during the last three years. Normally, this puts in train a series of formalities which involve letters being sent to the company's registered office warning them of possible dissolution, and giving time for this to be rectified. However, as we understand it, our registered address no longer exists, and the letters were not passed on. We only discovered this as a result of a query from our bank.

Now, this sounds like a fairly appalling state of affairs, and I don't doubt that some people will wish to start apportioning blame, either with the current Committee or with past Committee members. In mitigation, it should be said that this has come about through a series of unfortunate incidents, not least that the mail was not being passed on. Accounts have been prepared and sent to our auditor but as he was also acting as Treasurer for the Worldcon his time was at a premium and the accounts had not yet been audited. The administration of the BSFA has undoubtedly been a little haphazard in the past, and it is more than unfortunate that this should occur at a time when we had begun to straighten out many of the problems.

\*\*\*\*\*  
EDITORIAL continued from Page 3

terrific job, or else criticisms that could be dismissed as born out of a misapprehension of an editor's function. Allowing for the praise, and accepting that the magazine has improved over the last year, it is still very difficult to ascertain exactly what it is the reader wants. I'm not planning to lambast you for lack of response. I've learned my lesson there, but I would appreciate more comment on content, layout, and suggestions about other things I could include. It's easy to go one's own way and produce the magazine that one wants to read, but it wouldn't necessarily be what you want to read. So what do you want?

And a quick plea for more material. I'm planning to commission more articles in the future. I am aware that I have become lax on the matter whilst ill. Equally, I am aware that the post is decreasing, and that people shouldn't wait to be asked. If nothing else, write me a letter or send some more material for the Soapbox. Is there really nothing left to say? For example, what do you think about the way the press represents SF fans. I complained to a magazine only to be told

However, thanks to our Treasurer, Brett Cockrell, plans are well under way for our re-registration, which will hopefully be completed in the first couple of months of next year. Matters have been placed in the hands of a solicitor and will be proceeding by the time you receive this. Our money technically belongs to the Government at present, but our bank has agreed to keep the account open and handle matters as normal, so to all intents and purposes there is no problem with our business which being conducted as usual. Please note that your membership of the BSFA is not affected in any way by this situation, which is only temporary.

Brett Cockrell is currently ensuring that all these legal matters are being brought up to date, and once we are re-registered all information at Companies House will be brought fully up to date. There is no likelihood of this happening again.

\*\*\*

Another important matter which was discussed was advertising rates. Our Advertising and Publicity Manager, Dave Wood, agrees with various opinions recently expressed that our advertising rates are far too high, and in consequence the Committee has agreed that they will be cut, in order to encourage more advertising within Vector, and perhaps in our other journals later on.

The new rates are as follows:

Cover (11c, 10c, 09c)	now £25
Full page (10p)	now £20
Half page	now £15
Quarter page	now £10

These rates are for one insertion, rates for multiple insertions will be negotiable.

Loose flyers now cost £20 per thousand sheets for distribution with BSFA mailings, and rates for distributing booklets will be negotiable.

Any requests for flyer distribution should be directed to Dave, as should be any requests for advertisements. Artwork should also be sent to him.

His address is 1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon, BS21 7QA.

Dave will also be actively pursuing more advertising on behalf of the BSFA, including exchange ads such as we have with Interzone and Foundation. A new advert is to be designed for the BSFA and this will be used in future.

that we are effectively only good copy if we wear scanty costumes. Is that fair to the majority? What do you think? More reviews would be welcome, and longer articles on aspects of SF which aren't covered by Vector. How about it?

Why have I been saying all this? Because I want to see as many BSFA members as possible get their names in print. Believe it or not. Yet I want to keep a reasonably high standard of material and I want members to understand why I edit, and what my job is supposed to be. It is a little excessive to expect your name to appear in every Matrix, as I understand is the ambition of one member, but equally a little care, and understanding when I ask you to do a little more work, and you will be more than simply lucky. Think about it.

This is a grave and probably over-long editorial so I will say nothing else other than to note that the next Matrix deadline will be:

FRIDAY 15th JANUARY 1988

and wish you all a happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Provisional mailing deadlines for 1988 were also discussed and are now being circulated for definite confirmation.

Other matters which arose include a suggestion for a Committee/Staff newsletter. Maureen Porter felt that a major problem with any committee spread as widely as ours is a lack of communication, and proposed a Staff Newsletter which she would be happy to edit. This would be circulated to the Committee, Council members and also to staff working for the magazines and in various other capacities, in order to keep them more easily in touch and to provide a forum for discussion of the problems that arise in their various spheres of activity. The Committee felt that this would be a good idea, and it is hoped to have the first issue published early in the New Year.

\*\*\*

If any member has anything they wish to be brought to the attention of the Committee would they please contact the Co-ordinator, preferably by post, to explain what it is they wish to have discussed, and the Co-ordinator will proceed from there. Paul Kincaid can be contacted at 114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1BS

\*\*\*

Judging from the post that we are currently receiving at 114 Guildhall Street it is clear that many people are unsure of where to send various bits of information. We have recently received a letter addressed to Keith Freeman here, despite his address being in each issue of Matrix, which is, I suppose, one better than receiving address changes under my name (MSP). I hope that the following list of responsibilities will encourage people to send their letters to the right places.

Maureen Porter is editor of Matrix and would like to receive material for the magazine, and letters in response to previous issues.

114 Guildhall St, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1BS

David Barrett is editor of Vector and deals with all contributions for that magazine, and with correspondence concerning Vector.

23 Oakfield Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 2UD

Andy Sawyer edits Paperback Inferno, and as such

#### New & Rejoined Members

X4312 Oct 88 Rebecca Allen  
X4323 Jun 88 David Chatterjee, 106 Livingstone Rd,  
Blackburn, Lancs, BB2 0NE  
4318 Oct 88 Sharon J Clark, 25 Little Rd, Biggin Hill,  
Kent, TN16 3QB  
X4320 Jun 88 R J Cramp  
X4315 Jun 88 Roman Colhane  
X4316 Jun 88 Wendy K Day  
X4317 Oct 88 Susan B Harding, 11 Easburna Ave, Tolworth,  
Surrey, Surrey, KT5 9GB  
X4322 Oct 88 J Hodgson  
U 7 Sep 88 Fred Kulesa  
X4315 Jun 88 Richard V Lee  
X4314 May 88 James McLean  
X4313 Oct 88 Clive W Petty, 4 Dairy Cottages, Coach Road  
Hill, Glastonbury, Nr Gainsborough,  
Lincolnshire, DN21 4AH  
X4271 Jun 88 Jan Rosenthal  
X3423 Oct 88 Joyce Scrivner, PO Box 7620, Minneapolis, MN  
55407, USA  
X3562 Oct 88 Jeff A Sumner, 14150 Raven St, Sylmar, CA  
91342, USA  
X4319 Oct 88 Paul Ward  
X4321 Oct 88 Peter Watts

#### CHANGES OF ADDRESS

The following people are now at these addresses

Andreas Bjorkling Troskaregaten 3, S-583 30Uknoping,  
Sweden  
David H Boyce 4a Dene Park, Harrogate, N Yorks, HG1  
4JY  
R J Charlesworth Quabbe Farm, Vron Gate, Westbury, nr  
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, ST5 9EL  
John F Connor Sweden, Birch Hill, Bracknell,  
Berks  
Paul Cummings 44 Orkney Place, Kirkcaldy, Fife  
Howard Davies 40 Cambridge Rd, Aspley, Nottingham,  
NG8 5LJ  
Martin Feely 11 Iring Gardens, Harold Hill, Romford,  
Essex, RM3 9EP

deals with all material for that magazine, and all correspondence for that magazine.

1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Newton,  
South Wirral, L64 4BT

Dave Wood is Advertising and Publicity Manager. All queries about advertising, and all material for advertising should be directed to him.

1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon, BS21  
7QA

Joanne Raine is Membership Secretary. All queries re. new members should be directed to her, so if you have a friend who wants to join, give them Joanne's address.

33 Thornville Rd, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS26 8BW

Keith Freeman handles membership renewals, and also changes of address, so please send money to him, and also your new address to him.

269 Wykeham Rd, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1PL

Mike Moir is Awards Administrator so address all queries about the awards to him.

27 Hampden Rd, Worcester Park, Surrey.

Brett Cockrell is our Treasurer and deals with all financial matters.

40 Cyprus Rd, Finchley, London, N3 3SE

Sue Thomason is the organiser of Orbiter, the BSFA postal writer's workshop. Contact her at:

31 Barfield Rd, Muncastergate, York, YO3 9AW

Paul Kincaid is Co-ordinator of the BSFA and as such tends to receive everything which doesn't belong anywhere else. On the other hand, there is nothing more irritating than having to spend half the morning redirecting mail, so please make sure that you are sending your letter to the correct place. Ultimately it benefits you as the response will be that much faster.

Paul is also Reviews Editor for Vector, so anyone interested in reviewing for Vector should contact him in the first instance.

114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1BS

Robert J Freeth 47 Southfield St, The Arboretum,  
Worcester, WR1 1NJ  
R P Hammond c/o NAAP Berlin-Gatow, R/N 25017,  
BPPG 45  
Roy M Hill 8 Lansdown Rd, Canterbury, Kent, CT1  
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Keith Mitchell 321 43 Jona St, Edinburgh, EH6 8SF  
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Jai Sharda 7 Jersey Rd, Ilford, Essex, IG1 2HH  
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Robert P Stout Flat 4, 91 Barrwell Green, Windore  
Hill, London N21 3AU  
Terry R Wood 5 Raughgate Close, Woodbridge,  
Suffolk, IP12 1LQ

#### LEFT:

Graham Beard - C J Berrill - E G Butland - Harry B Briggs - M P  
Cloughton - E J Clements - I Evertson - L V Flock - N S  
Hray - Mike Gellion - Bruce Gillespie - Michael Harrington -  
Ian S Hope - Steve Hubbard - Antony Jones - Gwynfor Jones -  
Shep Kirkbride - Anthony Larkin - Theo Malekin - David  
McWilliams - John P Mulvaney - Vic Morris - Robert A Sawyer -  
M Nounson - Raymond G Scrase - Michael B Squires - Elizabeth A  
Stott - Jenny Watson - Cherry Wilder - T Paul Williams

# NEWS

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

• ALFRED BESTER DIES  
• HUBBARD BIOGRAPHY BEATS  
SCIENTOLOGY BAN  
• BRITISH FANTASY AWARD  
WINNERS  
• EDDINGS WINS RECORD  
£1.25M ADVANCE  
• ALDISS TAKES TO THE  
STAGE

Alfred Bester, winner of the very first Hugo Award, died on 30 September. He was 73. Bester was Guest of Honour at Conspiracy 87, but was unable to attend because of a fall in which he broke his hip for the second time in less than a year. He never recovered from this injury, and died of heart failure at a retirement home in Pennsylvania.

## AWARDS

The 1987 British Fantasy Awards, presented by the British Fantasy Society, have been announced. The winners were:

### NOVEL

*It* - Stephen King

### SHORT FICTION

'The Olympic Runner' - Dennis Etchison

### SMALL PRESS

*Fantasy Tales* - Ed Stephen Jones & David Sutton

### FILM

*Aliens*

### ARTIST

J.K. Potter

### SPECIAL AWARD

Charles L. Grant

\*\*\*\*\*

*The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, already winner of the first Arthur C. Clarke Award, has been shortlisted for the £10,000 Commonwealth Writers Prize. The winner will be announced in London on 1 December.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Booker Prize went, somewhat against expectation, to *Moon Tiger* by Penelope Lively. But the novel that most commentators claimed should have been on the Booker short list has pipped *Moon Tiger* to the Whitbread Award for best novel. *A Child in Time* by Ian McEwan is a venture into SF territory with its disturbing, authoritarian near-future setting. This puts *A Child in Time* in the running for this country's richest literary prize, £20,000, which will be announced in January.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tim Powers has won the Prix Apollo, the main French award for science fiction, for *The Anubis Gates*.

## PEOPLE

Garry Kilworth's first non-SF novel, *Witchwater Country*, has been published in paperback by GRAFTON despite a public dispute between author and publisher over the cover. The illustration - a burning house, a skull-shape in a pond - does relate to the content, but coupled with quotations referring to the supernatural gives a misleading impression or what is really a very sensitively written book about growing up in Essex.

Meanwhile, he has a children's novel, *The Wizard of Woodworld* due out now from DRAGON.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gwyneth Jones gave birth to a baby boy, Gabriel, on 4th September. He was patient enough to wait until the Worldcon was over, but Gwyneth had to cut short her attendance at Novacon in order to return home for the christening.

The new addition to her family, however, doesn't seem to have hampered her work in any way. She is currently working on the second volume of a fantasy trilogy for children (which will be published under the name Ann Halam), and a novel for teenagers in the WOMEN'S PRESS's Livewire series.

Meanwhile her third adult novel, *Kairos*, is due from URWIS next year. It is named after the Greek god of Opportunity, but at Novacon in Birmingham she reported it as being set "around here" and as being "a companion volume to *Divine Endurance* and *Escape Plans*, but no-one other than me will recognise that."

\*\*\*\*\*

Michael Moorcock has joined a committee to attack pornography as a civil rights rather than a criminal issue. The committee was formed by MP Clare Short following her unsuccessful campaign against Page Three girls some time ago. Fellow committee members include Jo Richardson MP, several barristers, the editorial team of *Everywoman* magazine, and writer and campaigner Catherine Itzin.

\*\*\*\*\*

While we are on the subject of pornography, we must correct an impression given in our news column in *Matrix 72*.

Christopher Priest's protest campaign to force V.H. Smith to stop stocking gun and survivalist magazines began a long time before the Hungerford massacre.

\*\*\*\*\*

Iain M. Banks has delivered the manuscript for his second science fiction novel, *The Player of Games*, which will be published by MACMILLAN next summer. Meanwhile his next mainstream novel is apparently about "a middle-aged Japanese lady cellist in Central America", according to his publisher.

\*\*\*\*\*

Karen Joy Fowler, this year's winner of the John W. Campbell Award, reports that she is working on her first novel, and hope to deliver it to her publishers by Christmas. Meanwhile she has sold a story to *Interzone*, which will be the first opportunity most British readers have to find out what all the fuss is about.

\*\*\*\*\*

Arthur C. Clarke is to write a sequel to *Endeavour with Rams* in collaboration with Gentry Lee. It is part of a three-novel deal that the two have with BANTAM in the USA for a total of \$4,050,000. Clarke and Lee have already completed one collaboration, *Cradle*, and Clarke has said that in future he will only work in collaboration with Lee. Apparently, however, this does not cover 2061: *Odyssey Three* which is being published in this country by GRAFTON in January; 20,001: *The*

*Final Odyssey* for which Clarke has received an advance of \$1.00 from DOLBY, and *Astounding Days: A Science Fictional Autobiography*, a memoir of *Astounding* between 1930 and 1945, which will be published by BANTAM.

\*\*\*\*\*

David Eddings has earned a record \$1.25 million for the British rights to his new trilogy, *The Elenium*. It will appear in both hardcover and paperback from GRAFTON. The first book in the trilogy is due to be written by next September, and Eddings proposes to alternate books in this trilogy and his current series, *The Mallorean*.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas M. Disch is the person behind a new text computer game, *Amnesia* that has been recently issued in the USA. The story begins with you waking naked in a hotel room with no memory of who you are or how you got there. It soon becomes obvious you are the victim of a murder frame-up. The object is to discover your true identity and avoid the various forms of death awaiting you in the big city.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dave Langford has finally stepped down from his long-standing position as Secretary of the Milford SF Writers' conference. His reluctant successor is Alex Stewart.

\*\*\*\*\*

Alex Stewart, meanwhile, is facing an embarrassment of riches with the anthology he is editing for NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY. The anthology, provisionally entitled *Deus Lovers*, now has more stories than the space allows. It looks like *Interzone* could shortly find itself bombarded with a host of stories about sex in space.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ian McPherson has resigned as Hon. Administrator of the Science Fiction Foundation. Taking his place, on a trial basis initially, is Ted Chapman, who will also continue as the Hon. Librarian of the SFF.

Meanwhile, the SFF is compiling a directory of expertise of members for researchers to call on.

\*\*\*\*\*

Toby Roxburgh has resigned as editor of MACDONALD/FUTURA and has moved to the Isle of Islay where he owns a 250-acre farm.

#### OBITUARIES

Alfred Bester was not the most prolific writer of science fiction, but he has a good claim to being one of the most important and influential. His two novels from the early 1950s, *The Demolished Man* and *Tiger! Tiger! (The Stars My Destination)* certainly rank among the finest science fiction novels of the century, and just about every major science fiction writer since then has named him among their influences. And precursors of every significant movement in science fiction, from the New Wave to cyberpunk, can be found in those two books.

Alfred Bester was born in New York on 18 December 1913, and studied science and fine arts at the University of Pennsylvania, before going on to do law and protozoology at Columbia and New York University. It was while he was at law school that he wrote 'The Broken Axiom', which won \$50 in a competition run by *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. This success encouraged the first part of his affair with science fiction, and he wrote 13 more stories up to 1942. Right from the start his talent for

sharp, bright and unexpected stories was displayed in pieces like 'Adam and no Eve', 'The Push of a Finger' and 'Hell is Forever'. But Bester was always less than devoted to science fiction, he regarded it as therapy, or an escape, and in 1942 he quit SF. For four years he wrote comics such as *Superman*, *Batman* and *Captain Marvel*, before moving on to write radio scripts for *Charlie Chan* and *The Shadow*. But with the onset of television he grew more and more frustrated with the networks and censors, and returned to science fiction for more therapy.

This second and richest period lasted from 1950 until 1960, during which time he wrote *The Demolished Man*, *Tiger! Tiger!* and a dozen short stories. But this small output was enough to establish him for all time as a master of science fiction. *The Demolished Man* is a murder mystery set in a world in which telepathy has made crime obsolete, but its pyrotechnic style, the hard-edged detail of its future setting, the use of a variety of narrative styles and techniques, and the way the language reflects the demolition of the title all mark it out as an extraordinary work. Many of these innovations have been taken up later, but never with the same flair, originality or success. In 1953 it won the first Hugo Award, and the following year received the International Fantasy Award: rarely have either awards been so richly deserved. *Tiger! Tiger!*, a reworking of *The Count of Monte Cristo* transposed to the sordid 25th century, was if anything even better, with its hero Gully Foyle extracting revenge through his jaunting. The book revealed the same freshness of imagination and the same urge to experiment that produced typographical variety and a host of other media influencing the book in a breathtaking manner. At the same time short stories like 'The Pi Man', 'Fondly Fahrenheit', 'Of Time and Third Avenue' and 'The Men Who Murdered Mohammed' displayed the same fondness for technique, the same prolific imagination, and the same mastery of the psychological rather than technical SF story. The stories were gathered together in *Starburst* and *The Dark Side of the Earth*.

But this second period of his affair with science fiction didn't last. Towards the end of the 50's he became a feature writer for *Holiday* magazine, his need for escape vanished, and he remained with the magazine until it folded in the 70's. He returned to science fiction for the third and final time with the publication of 'The Four-Hour Fugue' in 1974, but though that story showed the familiar talent, this wasn't so well displayed in his later novels. *Extro* (also known as *The Indian Giver* and *The Computer Connection*), *Golem* and *The Deceivers* all have something of the old Bester about them, but lack the true vigour, vividness and inventiveness of *Tiger! Tiger!* or *The Demolished Man*.

Earlier this year, Bester was elected a Grand Master by the SFWA, he was also Guest of Honour of Conspiracy 87, the World Science Fiction Convention. Fitting honours, at the end of his life, for a writer whose work and whose influence will never die.

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Roger Lancelyn Green died on 8 October, he was 66.

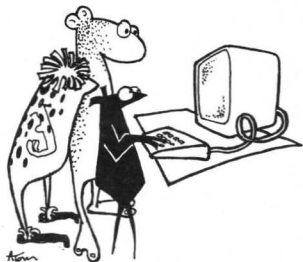
Roger Lancelyn Green is credited with writing nearly 100 books, the vast majority of them retellings of fairytales and myths for children. For a generation of children he was their first encounter with the stories of King Arthur, or Troy, or the Norse myths, or Robin Hood. These books were models of the type, simply and clearly told without losing faith with the originals. He also wrote one novel for adults, *From the World's End: A Fantasy*.

Green, an academic who taught in a number of British universities, will also be remembered for

his criticism. He wrote one of the earliest books about science fiction, *Into Other Worlds: Space Flight in Fiction, from Lucian to Lewis* in 1957, and also produced biographies of Lewis Carroll, Andrew Lang, J.M. Barrie, and (with Walter Hooper) C.S. Lewis. In 1975 he won the Mythopoeic Society Award for criticism.

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Walter M. Baumhofer, the first cover illustrator for *Doc Savage Magazine* between 1933 and 1936, and a prolific pulp cover artist during the 1930s, died on 23 September, aged 82.



#### PUBLISHING

MORRIGAN PUBLICATIONS have two books by James P. Blaylock coming up in 1988. The first of these is *The Digging Leviathan* which will appear in a hardcover edition of 1,000 at £11.95, with 300 special editions which will feature additional articles by K.W. Jeter and Tim Powers. This is to be followed in October 1988 by Blaylock's Philip K. Dick Award winner, *Homunculus*.

Meanwhile, in 1988 they will also be publishing *East of Laughter* by R.A. Lafferty, which will feature a major article by Gene Wolfe in the special edition.

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ARROW, the paperback division of CENTURY HUTCHINSON, has appointed Deborah Beale as their new science fiction editor. Deborah, 28, was non-fiction editor at PAN before joining ARROW on 15 November. She will be responsible for all SF and fantasy appearing under the new LEGEND imprint, as well as crime titles for ARROW.

LEGEND was launched on 5 November with just one title, *Bon* by Greg Bear, which appeared as a large format paperback, with a mass market edition to follow in autumn 1988.

LEGEND will be devoted exclusively to science fiction and fantasy, and in future intends to publish three new paperbacks a month, supported by regular re-issues from the ARROW, HAMLYN and CENTURY backlists. Leading titles for the future include *Myrmex* - Orson Scott Card which will be published in January 1988 along with *Blood Music* - Greg Bear. Other books announced for the new year include *This is the way the World ends* - James Morrow (May), *The Infinity Concerto* - Greg Bear (April), *The Misplaced Legion*, *Book One of the Widesons Cycle* - Harry Turtledove (February), *Ghost King* - David Gemmell (March), and *The Dark Lady* - Mike Resnick (June). There will also be new

books from Christopher Rowley, Katherine Kurtz, Kate Wilhelm, Timothy Zahn and Michael Kube McDowell. Re-issues include *2001: A Space Odyssey* - Arthur C. Clarke, *Galactic Empires* - Brian Aldiss, Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover* series, and something untitled from John Brunner.

From August 1988, LEGEND will also publish hardback fiction. Titles already announced for the launch include *The Tales of Alvin Maker*, a five-volume fantasy cycle from Orson Scott Card, *Islands in the Net* - Bruce Sterling, *The Hellbound Heart* - Clive Barker and a new novel by Jonathan Carroll.

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There are further details of the collection of stories by J.G. Ballard which is to be published by ARKHAM HOUSE next year. It is to be a collection of his "space stories" to be called *Memories of the Space Age*, and apart from the title story the contents include 'The Cage of Sand' and 'The Man Who Walked on the Moon'. The collection will be illustrated by J.K. Potter.

\*\*\*\*\*

GRAFTON books for the New Year include: *2001: Odyssey Three* - Arthur C. Clarke coming in January and featuring a centenarian Heywood Floyd, a newly independent HAL, and another incarnation of Dave Bowman. *Darkspell* - Katharine Kerr (February) is the second part of her Deverry series begun with *Daggerspell*. *Life During Wartime* - Lucius Shepard (May) is the novel that grew out of his award-winning 'R&R' and his fascination with Central America. *Land of Dreams* - James P. Blaylock (June) is described as "a swirling mosaic of evil and the promise of a marvellous land". And there's another collection of popular science essays from Isaac Asimov - *Far as Human Eye Could See* coming in May.

\*\*\*\*\*

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY's list for 1988 is headed by *Araminta Station* - Jack Vance (March) the first part of a new trilogy called *The Cadwall Chronicles*. Other titles include *Next, after Lucifer* - Daniel Rhodes (April) about the return of a medieval Templar as an evil spirit; *October* - Stephen Gallagher (April), a horror story about someone saved from death by an experimental new drug; and *The Highest Ground* - David Mace (June) a near-future thriller that sees the Russians on the Moon.

\*\*\*\*\*

HODDER is offering the new novel from Stephen King - *The Tommyknockers* (February) set in small town America where Bobbi discovers a strange spacecraft in the ground and starts developing telepathic powers; and *Haunted* - James Herbert (June) about a psychic investigator spending three nights of terror in a haunted country house.

\*\*\*\*\*

ARROW is to publish the paperback edition of *Communion* by Whitely Strieber, the supposedly true story of his personal encounters with aliens, in February.

#### NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

ABACUS: *Time and the Hunter* and *Communion* - Italo Calvino

ARROW: *Bones of the Moon* and *Land of Laughs* - Jonathan Carroll, *Starhunt* - David Gerrold, *Assault on the Gods* - Stephen Goldin, *Falling Angel* - William Hjortsberg

BLOOMSBURY: *Saint Hircanin* - Leigh Kennedy

BODLEY HEAD: *The Exile* - William Kotzwinkle



CENTURY: *The Demon Lord* - Peter Morwood

COLLINS: *The Road to Underfall and Palace of Kings* - Mike Jefferies

CORGI: *Equal Rites* - Terry Pratchett

DRAGON: *The Wizard of Woodworld* - Garry Kilworth

FANTASY: *The Power and the Prophet* - Robert Don Hughes, *Moonwind* - Louise Lawrence

FUTURA: *Magic Kingdom for Sale/Sold and The Black Unicorn* - Terry Brooks, *Rebel's Quest* - F.M. Busby, *Cutting Edge* - Dennis Etchison (Ed), *Fire Dancer* - Anne Maxwell, *Thorns* - Robert Silverberg, *Star Healer* - James White

GOLLANZ: *Great Sky River* - Gregory Benford, *The Annals of the Heechee* - Frederik Pohl, *Mort* - Terry Pratchett, *Beasts* - John Crowley, *Bring the Jubilee* - Ward Moore, *Star Man's Son* - Andre Norton, *Up the Line* - Robert Silverberg, *Quest of the Three Worlds* - Cordwainer Smith, *The Astura* - Jack Vance

GRAFTON: *The Shadow of his Wings* - Bruce Fergusson, *Spider World: The Delta* - Colin Wilson, *Non-Stop* - Brian Aldiss, *Martians Go Home* - Fredric Brown, *The Golden Tower* - L. Sprague de Camp, *Return to Shangri-La* - Leslie Halliwell, *Dragon in the Sword* - Michael Moorcock, *Adventures of Wim* - Luke Rhinehart, *Inhuman* - John Russo, *To Live Forever* - Jack Vance

HEADLINE: *Who Made Stevie Crye?* - Michael Bishop, *The Timekeeper Conspiracy* - Simon Hawke

LEGEND: *Son* - Greg Bear, *Wolf in Shadow* - David Gemmell

MACDONALD: *The Black Unicorn* - Terry Brooks, *The Carradine Touch* - Anne McCaffrey

MACMILLAN: *Intervention* - Julian May

METHUEN: *Sentinels from Space and Three to Conquer* - Eric Frank Russell

NEL: *The Nick of Time* - George Alec Effinger, *The Jade Demons Quartet* - Robert E. Vardean

PALADIN: *Ancient of Days* - Michael Bishop

PAN: *The 26th Pan Book of Horror Stories* - Clarence Paget (Ed), *The Peace War and Narcoes in Real Time* - Vernor Vinge, *The Woman of Flowers* - Susan Schwartz

SOUVENIR PRESS: *The Wyrm* - Stephen Laws

SPHERE: *A Circus of Hells and There will be Time* - Poul Anderson, *Timescape* - Gregory Benford, *The Time Raiders* - Bernard King, *Halloween Horrors* - Alan Ryan (Ed), *Trolllight* - Peter Tremayne, *Gabriel* - Lisa Tuttle, *Tyrannopolis* - A.E. Van Vogt

STAR: *Phoenix 1: Dark Messiah* - David Alexander, *Shadows and Relics* - Shaun Hutson, *Duel* - William Patrick (Ed)

UNWIN: *Throne of Fools* - Adrian Cole

#### MEDIA

The Royal Shakespeare Company is ending its Stratford season this year on an unusual note. They are performing a musical version of the Stephen King novel, *Carrie*!

Starting in December, the RSC is also putting on *The Wizard of Oz*, at the Barbican. It's a new stage version of the story based on the screenplay of the original MGM film. The score includes all the songs written for the film by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg, including some songs that were not used in the final version of the film. The cast

includes Tony Church as the Wizard, and Dilys Laye as the Good Witch.

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Meanwhile, our other great theatre company, The National Theatre is staging *The Pied Piper* by Adrian Mitchell, and starring Sylvester McCoy (the current *Dr Who*) in the title role.

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Brian Aldiss and Ken Campbell have put together a show called *Science Fiction Blues* which has been touring art centres and theatres throughout November. The show features Aldiss's own selection of his prose and poetry, and he describes it as "a sort of Side by Side by Aldiss, with something to think about, lots of SF thrills and spills, and more than a dash of black humour."

One new venue has been added to the tour, at the Young Vic, London, on 13 December. And there is already talk that they will try to take the show to the Edinburgh Festival next year.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ken Campbell, meanwhile, has devised his first new London stage show since 1982. Called *Outbreak of God in Area 9*, it concerns a number of famous people - Margaret Thatcher, Jonathan Ross, Bob Geldof, Derek Hatton (first Bishop of the Christian Militant Tendency) and the Blessed James Anderson - who are 'touched' by God and become perfect.

The show runs at London's Young Vic from 6-20 December and 29 December - 16 January.

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Kate Wilhelm has claimed that the Madonna film *Desperately Seeking Susan* plagiarised her 1982 novel, *Oh, Susannah!* She is suing Orion Pictures as a result.

\*\*\*\*\*

Leonard Nimoy visited Moscow in July to attend the Russian premiere of *Star Trek IV*. Business so far is said to be "good".

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New video releases and catalogue titles for the years 1975-80 are now being classified by the British Board of Film Censors for the home video market. This marks the third stage of the 1984 Video Recordings Act, and to date the Board has classified around 7,500 films, of which one in ten have had to be cut to gain a video certificate.

Many of these cuts are in addition to those demanded when the films were first released in cinemas, and there have been surprises. *The Evil Dead*, due for certification in March, has not yet been granted a certificate. The film's producers won a test case last year when it was tried under section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act, but it is believed the censors want to impose further cuts despite the legal victory.

There have also been several inconsistencies. John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China* was granted a PG certificate in the cinema, but a 15 on video. *Crocodile Dundee* was more heavily cut for home viewing than for the cinema, so its video rating is reduced to PG.

The Video Recordings Act has fostered a thriving and lucrative clandestine market for uncut videos.

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Steven Spielberg, Walt Disney and Richard Williams Animation have joined forces to produce *Who Framed*

**Roger Rabbit?** Part animation and part live-action, the film stars Bob Hoakins, with guest appearances by Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters.

Meanwhile, Richard Williams has sunk nearly all the money made by his studio into a project which has obsessed him for the past 20 years. *The Thief and the Cobbler*, a magical fantasy, has cost £2 million so far and is only half finished. He hopes it will turn out to be the most spectacular full-length animated film ever made, but reckons he needs at least another £5 million to finish it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Plans are afoot to film *Watchmen* by Alan Moore. Paramount are apparently very interested in filming Moore's highly acclaimed graphic novel, and a first-draft screenplay has been prepared by Sam Hamm which is acceptable to Moore. At one stage there were rumours that Walter Hill was interested in directing the project, but that no longer seems to be the case. The part of superhero Doctor Manhattan has been offered to Arnold Schwarzenegger, which would entail him shaving his entire body and painting himself blue. He is said to be willing, provided it is artistically necessary.

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Walter Hill, however, is definitely involved in the film *Aliens III*. A recent report in *The Independent* described how the first draft of the screenplay has been completed by William Gibson, then went on to say: "Hill, who has been a producer on both of the previous *Alien* films, isn't saying who he has in mind for directing this cyberpunkoid sequel; whoever gets the job, we can presumably expect the beastie to be decked out in safety-pins this time round."

#### MISCELLANEOUS

*Barefaced Messiah*, the unauthorised biography of L. Ron Hubbard by former Scientist Russell Miller, has been published despite an attempt by Scientologists to stop it through the courts.

The Church of Scientology obtained a proof copy of the book and, on 9 October, attempted to have an injunction served on Miller and PENGUIN BOOKS to prevent publication in its present form. The ban was sought on three grounds. First, that the church held the copyright on two photographs of Hubbard used in the book. Second, that the book quoted from diaries and letters written by Hubbard "of a confidential nature", and that they were entitled to protect these passages from public scrutiny. Third, that these documents were obtained by Miller in breach of a Californian court order.

Mr Justice Vinelott, noting that the church had become aware of the intention to publish the book in May 1987, implied that the application for the injunction was made at a time likely to cause the greatest damage and inconvenience to PENGUIN. He said it was plain that the public interest far outweighed any duty of confidentiality owed to Mr Hubbard or the church in respect of any of the documents at issue. He went on to say that the litigation was "oppressive" and was not bona fide to protect the interests of the church. "The application was mischievous and misconceived," he said, and the case was dismissed.

An appeal was heard on 22 October, the Scientologists asking for the earlier judgement to be reversed, but offering no new evidence. Lord Justice Fox and Sir George Waller ruled that the church had proved none of their arguments. In his summing up, Lord Justice Fox said, "It is desirable for the public interest that these doctrines and assertions of fact (in the book) should be exposed to public criticism." The appeal

was dismissed, with costs, and the church was refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

The book was published on 26 October as planned.

\*\*\*\*\*

Stephen King has written the introduction to a book of film criticism. But *Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In* is no ordinary book film criticism.

Joe Bob Briggs (pseudonym of journalist John Bloom) claims to be the only critic of drive-in movies in the US, and has seen 15,000 films in those peculiarly American institutions. He takes pride in his offensive views, and in true redneck fashion has made a career of pouring venom on the handicapped, women and left-wingers. "There's always been basically three kinds of drive-in movies," he says, "Blood, Breasts and Beasts." His reviews are to the point. Of *Lust in the Dust* he writes: "Four breasts. Fifteen dead bodies. One riot. One brawl. One gang rape, with midget. Two quarts blood. One beast (Divine)." Sounds right up King's street.

\*\*\*\*\*

It looks like authors may be saved the tedium of the publicity tour, at least in America. Three or four companies there are now arranging book promotions by satellite, and the idea is proving very popular.

An author now simply goes to a local studio and, in an hour-long session, can be interviewed by TV talk-show hosts in six or seven cities. A four-hour session can get the message over to 24 cities. To reach a dozen or so markets the cost is \$10-12,000; if the author visited the cities in person the cost would be more than twice that. Though, of course, this method misses out on radio and newspaper coverage, and bookshop signing sessions.

Carl Sagan is among the authors taking advantage of the satellite system, along with Sidney Sheldon, Gore Vidal, Jackie Collins and Robert Ludlum, but there are surprisingly few SF authors so far.

\*\*\*\*\*

MCA are planning to open a major new theme park, probably on the Spanish coast, to coincide with the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. Steven Spielberg has been named as a consultant on the project, which will include a studio tour, sound stages for movie and TV production, and various resort facilities. No budget has been announced, but the cost is expected to be in the half-billion dollar range.

Meanwhile work is well advanced on the new Disneyland being built on the outskirts of Paris.

\*\*\*\*\*

In September a group of West German computer enthusiasts calling themselves the Chaos Computer Club made world news by hacking into the network linking NASA with research centres in Europe. The group called a press conference on 16 September where their spokesman, Wau Holland claimed most of NASA's research concentrated on the development of new weapons systems. He said they also came across studies on computer safety and details of unpublished rocket accidents. He also said they have a 200 page print-out containing the data they obtained. The NASA computer is connected to the Space Research Centre in Los Alamos, the European Space Agency, the West German Space Research Agency and the Japanese Space Agency.

Two weeks after the press conference, West German and French police raided the club's headquarters

in Hamburg. They also visited the homes of three of the members. No arrests were made.

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*Trojan* comes to life? That's what it seems like when you play *Photon*, a computerised adventure game. Players wear space-age gladiatorial outfits, with special stereophonic helmets, and carry laser-directed "phasers" to zap their opponents. There are two teams of ten, and games last 64 minutes with participants racing along dimly lit, carpeted tunnels, ramps and bunkers set in a 10,000 square foot arena with strobe lights and other effects. You gain points by shooting the enemy, or the opposing team's light base; you lose points, and temporary power, by shooting your teammates. Robotic voices issue instructions direct to the players, while observers can take pot-shots from an observation deck without disrupting the game.

There are now 24 *Photon* centres around the USA. The one in New York attracts 500-800 people on a good night, with doors staying open until 1am. As *Photon* grows in popularity a debate has sprung up between parents, psychologists and sociologists about whether the game encourages violence or is just good clean fun.

\*\*\*\*\*

A fully-operational moon base by 2007, that was the prediction of British, American and Russian space scientists meeting in Sheffield on 20 October.

The meeting also produced bizarre speculations about the way humans will adapt to such an environment. Dr Richard Taylor of London University said, "It sounds like a joke, but children born on the moon could grow to be 36 feet high. Children on Mars will be 15 feet. These are the sort of changes we might expect."

It was also announced that Professor Tim Scratchers, head of Britain's new space biomedicine institute, had been offered a place on a future Russian space mission. This is so he can carry out a research project to put a midget pig in orbit, a means of checking the rate at which calcium is lost by living organisms during prolonged stays in space.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meanwhile NASA Administrator James Fletcher says a manned mission to Mars could not be attempted before 2003 even if planning began now.

At a conference in July he said, "It is not likely we would send a manned Mars mission on its way until the return of a Mars surface sample provided by a robot spacecraft," so that we could test Martian soil for potentially harmful or deadly organisms. Even if we were to start extensive preliminary studies for such a mission right away, we could not launch before 1998, or have a sample before 2001."

Nevertheless, a manned flight to Mars has been recommended by NASA's Advisory Council as the next priority in space, and Fletcher says, "The question no longer is whether people will go to Mars someday. I firmly believe that we should go to Mars. And I am confident we will go. But how and when remain to be determined."

\*\*\*\*\*

And while we're on the subject of space, how about a space funeral? The Celestis Group, a Florida company, want to launch an orbiting space mausoleum containing the cremated remains of as many as 10,000 people. A snip at just \$3,900 per person.

Thirty astronomers from the University of Illinois

are trying to stop the venture. They say it would only add to the ever-growing accumulation of orbiting junk threatening space navigation. They also claim it would contribute to "light pollution", hindering astronomical observation.

\*\*\*\*\*

A scientist has claimed that an earthenware pot discovered in a Swedish bog was left by aliens who visited Earth some 20,000 years ago. The pot seems to have unusual suction-pad attachments, and Dr Leonard Stein explained them by saying the aliens needed them to stop it floating away when used in zero-gravity.

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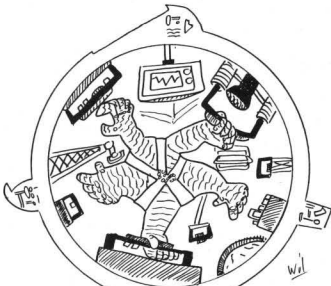
Going even further into the past, the secret of how dinosaurs performed sex has been discovered. Dr Beverly Halstead of Reading University told delegates to the British Association annual conference in August that a female dinosaur could bear the weight of the male, even a 150-ton brontosaurus, but only if he kept one foot firmly on the ground. "We have found fossils of a female brontosaurus with marks on her back where the male forelimbs had been placed. He would have had to lift himself on her back, but he must have kept one leg on the ground, otherwise she was in trouble."

Dr Halstead went on to admit that one breed baffled him, the kentosaurus which had sharp spines down its back. "They must have managed somehow," he said, "but I haven't yet worked out how."

\*\*\*\*\*

Thinking of fossils ... James Beinders of Alliance, Nebraska, is building a scale model of Stonehenge out of 22 cars and trucks. He is aligning the automobiles - on end and two-thirds buried - in exactly the same orientation as the famous Wiltshire monument. He hopes the display will have great historic value someday.

Asked to comment, his wife described the project as "stupid".



## BSFA Survey

In 1986 Nik Morton conducted a survey among members of the BSFA about membership retention problems within the BSFA. In this issue and the next, we shall be printing his findings and various comments on the BSFA. Response from members is encouraged, and should be addressed to the Writeback Column. Please bear in mind that the questionnaire refers to the situation within the BSFA during, and prior to 1986.

\*\*\*

The BSFA was formed in 1956 to further interest in science fiction (SF). Recently the Association have become aware of a rapid turnover of members. This analysis is concerned with tackling the problems inherent in retention of membership in an organisation run wholly by volunteers. The recommendations that are sought are guidelines towards the Way Ahead for the officials of the organisation, to engender more interest and to create a truly national BSFA which is known beyond the confines of ghetto genre fiction, and in the process reiterating the aims of the BSFA, culminating in a better retention rate for membership. A soft systems approach was adopted. Information was obtained through interviews, questionnaires and research on correspondence in the periodicals produced by the Association.

One presumption was made: it was assumed that members joined because they had an interest in SF, be it written or visual (film, tv, artwork, illustrated, musical).

The BSFA provides a service to its membership which entails expensive printing processes, time-consuming editorial work, labour-intensive collating and despatch, as well as maintaining contact with a variety of outside influences. The BSFA continues to rely heavily on members coming forward to fill the various posts that keep the organisation going. Though no one person can destroy the BSFA, each official can potentially affect the continued loyalty of the membership.

Interviews revealed that the now-resigned Chairman (Alan Dorey) did not delegate; the result was issued printing deadlines, unanswered letters, one of the BSFA magazines folding while another new magazine died still-born. The organisation was in a pronounced state of flux and many of the lines of communication were non-existent or disrupted.

A questionnaire was sent to 800 members and the response has been 12%. Of these respondents, 97.7% stated that they would renew subscriptions; 74% said they were happy with the BSFA yet there was a feeling that the BSFA could still benefit from changes - 65.5% of the respondents would like to see changes made. A large proportion (81.25%) would pay increased subs for changes to occur, the popular annual figures being £10 (51%) and £12 (19%). Whilst 19.5% would change the magazines' frequency, 95% wanted an improved appearance of the periodicals. (Since these responses both Matrix and Paperback Inferno have undergone attractive metamorphoses).

(The annual membership subscription was raised to £10 at the beginning of 1987, agreed at an AGM held at Novacon in 1986.)

In response to the question, "Would you consider attending more BSFA events if they were organised on a regional basis?", 67% said they would. Criticism of the BSFA officials was not great, tempered by the knowledge that they all fulfil their commitments in spare time without recompense; 10.7% were dissatisfied because of the officials' apparent anonymity, and 10% unhappy about the officials' poor feedback. Family pressures did not

figure greatly, and misconceptions about the BSFA's aims registered at only 5%.

Ex-members received a separate questionnaire resulting in a 40% response. Of these, 66% said they would consider rejoining the BSFA, reasons given for leaving were:

- 'Political' in-fighting
- Family pressures
- Dissatisfaction with the content and frequency of the magazines
- Switch from reading SF to other books
- Expectations of the BSFA not realised
- Influence of the BSFA officials: viz anonymity, distance and poor feedback
- Neglected to renew
- Cost of membership

At least four of the above reasons might prove instructive to members (a, c, e, f)

Of the members' questionnaires, 69% also contained comments offering useful suggestions for retention, for changes and expressing their frustration over recent political events within the organisation which resulted in the resignation of the Chairman.

Without doubt, the political stance of some committee members has been off-putting to some members. Furthermore, this political biased aspect is not the view offered to potential members through advertising ...

Outside influences, such as the cinema, novels, magazines and tv have undoubtedly engendered an interest in SF. The genre is now too broad to be comfortably encompassed by any one individual, and includes works both sublime and ridiculous, possibly a great deal more of the latter. However, the BSFA in its recruitment has hitherto not differentiated in its appeal to SF enthusiasts yet has appeared to be noticeably partisan in its overtly selective style of SF followed in its periodicals. The end-result could well be disenchantment.

An advertisement published in Arrow paperbacks does not mention the BSFA aims, though it is implied that the BSFA is for "anyone interested in SF." An attempt at printing the aims of the BSFA can be found in the Critical Journal vector which states "The BSFA is an amateur organisation formed in 1956 which aims to promote and encourage the reading, writing and publishing of science fiction in all its forms." Yet the magazines have often not truly reflected these aims, devoting space (sic!) to non-sf subjects and criticisms of personalities.

Not recognised in the recruitment process is the fact that individuals bring with them their own psychological baggage, their own reasons for joining, the least of which may be an interest in SF; a need for belonging, for sharing an interest, for example.

Many published writers began as novices in the BSFA or fandom generally. This fact is an added spur to would-be SF writers, and the BSFA offers encouragement in its adverts; however, this encouragement is thin: Focus has not been printed since mid-1985, leaving novice writers adrift. (Since happily resurrected and looking good).

Whilst films like Star Wars have kept interest in SF in the forefront of the public mind, the SF retail outlets seem particularly blinkered in their stocking of SF titles. As a national organisation the BSFA has had little effect on the retailers, such as V H Smith, in encouraging them to stock authors other than Asimov and Tolkien imitators. The reverse situation is noticeable; that the retailers radically affect the choice of SF enthusiasts; many new members join the BSFA with a limited appreciation of the immense variety of SF writers and styles in existence.

It seems apparent that these new members have not been properly encouraged to seek new authors; in this respect, it would appear that the BSFA is failing in its aims.

Publicity is a significant factor in recruitment members; having joined, these new members are naturally keen to receive the services advertised. Financial constraints have affected advertising campaigns, so that proper market research and a powerful market approach to recruitment has been adopted; also, the types of magazines in existence (to carry BSFA adverts) which might appeal to potential members are few. Radio Times contained a mention of the BSFA and as a result 75 members enquired, 29 joined, from a 3 million readership. To publicise the BSFA more, which would have the added bonuses of advertising its existence and promoting its corporate identity, would inevitably entail an increase in annual subscriptions; whilst more new members may join, the increased subscription could dissuade existing members to renew. Ways of alleviating a lump-sum payment of, say £10, may need consideration, taking account of unemployed and pensioners, representatives of which are members who responded to the questionnaires.

Now that BSFA periodicals are commercially produced by a Guildford printer, the need for adequate finance remains imperative, for should the periodicals not appear or revert to an inferior print appearance through lack of funds, the potential damage to the membership could be considerable. Earnings, then - subs, advertising fees - need to be adequate to cover stationery, advertising the BSFA, postage (which increased in October (1986)), and printing.

the primary task of the BSFA is to promote and encourage the writing, publishing and distribution of SF in all its forms. The problem situation's primary task must be to retain membership by fulfilling the aims of the BSFA.

The significant issues within the problem situation at the time of analysis seem to be:

- Lack of "corporate identity"
- Dissatisfaction with some of the officials of the organisation
- No major contact except roughly every 2 months, and that by mail
- Adequate BSFA funds need to be safeguarded by adjusting the level of subscriptions

Perhaps what is required is a system to promote the BSFA through advertising and in so doing giving the membership a more tangible identity as members of a known national organisation. By creating a committed feeling of belonging within the membership it should be possible to create regional chapters with accredited BSFA representatives linked to the Committee membership, encouraging two-way communication and trust. Within time and financial restraints, the membership and Committee should set forth a programme of intent to pursue the BSFA aims on a broader front. At all times representatives and Committee should be mindful of the views of the membership.

In short:

PROMOTE through ADVERTISING  
PROVIDE membership with tangible identity  
CREATE a committed feeling of belonging  
CREATE regional chapters  
ELECT regional representatives  
ENCOURAGE two-way communication  
SET OUT a programme of intent  
BE MINDFUL of the views of the membership

The BSFA has suffered a crisis of communication breakdown and without any forceful leadership figure to direct it, the organisation has wallowed

helplessly, allowing members to fall away in disinterest. The 'internal politics' aspect needs circumspect attention, as do the Political views of editors, and more needs to be done about feedback. The concept of regional representatives, linked to the Committee, and able to pass on information to other members outwith the bi-monthly mailing schedule would appear to be worthy of consideration. Certainly, if the aims of the BSFA are re-dedicated and followed more enthusiastically, the membership should rally to the cause and find much of interest and challenge. As a side issue, contented members are more likely to recruit new members who will bring with them fresh imaginations, swelling the coffers and the intellectual possibilities of the organisation.



## \*\*\*\*\* Competition Corner

I understand from Elizabeth Sourbut that there were only two entries for our last competition, and that she thus felt unable to award a prize. I was very disappointed, considering how good the response to recent quizzes has been. I'd like to know what sort of competitions people want, so please send comments to the editorial address.

If you'd like to devise a competition, please send it to either myself or Liz and we'll take a look and see if it's suitable for use in Matrix. We recently received a lengthy quiz asking very detailed questions on very obscure subjects. Certainly, we don't want competitions composed of very easy questions - it takes the fun out of everything - but bear in mind that other people have to answer the questions, and try to avoid the situation where you're the only person who can answer your quiz.

Anyway, this time we have a quiz compiled by John Fairley and Paul Kincaid, which I hope will produce more entries. Entries should be sent to Maureen Porter at the editorial address by Friday 15th January 1986.

The following are characters in well-known science fiction and fantasy novels. In each case name the title of the book in which the character appears and the author of each novel:

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Smoky Barnable                                     | 2. Ruby Red                |
| 3. Barlennan  | 4. Adam Selene             |
| 5. Gully Foyie  | 6. Mr Tagomi               |
| 7. Epiktistes   | 8. Mahasentman             |
| 9. Schon  | 10. Salvor Hardin          |
| 11. Krip Vorlund                                      | 12. Shevek                 |
| 13. Donal Graeme                                      | 14. Algy Timberland        |
| 15. Aiden Dennis Veer                                 | 16. Jomny Cross            |
| 17. Stan Fotts  | 18. Bobby Newmark          |
| 19. Durathor  | 20. Borza Morza Gotobuchul |
| 21. Gil Hamilton                                      | 22. Malachi Constant       |
| 23. Magdalen Hayward                                  | 24. Helward Mann           |
| 25. Robert Zeitman                                    | 26. Connie Ramos           |
| 27. Winston Smith                                     | 28. Karl Glogauer          |
| 29. Roderick Frederick Ronald William MacArthur McBan |                            |
| 30. Leto Atreides                                     |                            |

# The Periodic Table

## CONVENTION ROUNDUP

### 1986 CONVENTIONS

#### LUCON

26-28 February, Leeds University  
 Guest: Bob Shaw, Duncan Lunan  
 Membership: Attending £7 supporting £3  
 Contact: LUCON, c/o SF Soc, Leeds University  
 Union, PO Box 157, Leeds, LS1 1UH

#### MICROCON

27-28 February, 1988  
 Guest: Terry Pratchett/Dave Langford/John Grant  
 and others  
 Membership: £5, NUS members £2.50  
 Contact: Richmond Hunt, 51 Danes Rd, Exeter

POLLYCON '88 - UK National SF Convention/Eastercon  
 1 - 4 April, 1988, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool  
 Guests: Gordon R Dickson, Gwyneth Jones, Len Wein,  
 Greg Pickersgill  
 Membership: Attending £18 Supporting £12  
 Contact: Pollycon '88, 104 Pretoria Rd, Patchway,  
 Bristol, BS12 5PZ

#### CONGREGATE

10-12 June, 1988, Peterborough Moat House Hotel  
 Guest - Terry Pratchett, Bob Shaw  
 Membership: Supporting £5, Attending £11.00.  
 Cheque payable to Congregate 88  
 Info: Chris Ayres, 67 Ayres Drive, Stanground,  
 Peterborough.

#### ALBACON '88

29 July - 1 August 1988, Central Hotel, Glasgow,  
 Guest: C J Cherry  
 Membership: Attending £10, Supporting £5  
 Info: Albacoon '88, Mark Meenan, Burnawn, Stirling  
 Road., Dumbarton, G82 2PJ

#### MYTHCON XIX - Mythopoeic Society Conference

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

#### CONINE

5-7 August, Oxford Polytechnic  
 Guest: 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

#### WINCON - Unicorn 9

19-21 August, King Alfred's College, Winchester  
 Guests: Patrick Tilley, Michael de Larrabeiti  
 Membership: Attending £8 Supporting £4  
 Contact: Wincon, 11 Rutland St, Hanley, Stoke-on-  
 Trent, ST1 5JG

#### NOLACON II - The 46th Worldcon

1 - 5 September, New Orleans, LA  
 Guests: Donald A. Weir, Roger Sims  
 Membership: £19 supporting until 14/7/88 Attending  
 £38 until 31/12/87, thereafter £45 until 14/7/88.  
 Info: UK Agent, Linda Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Rd,  
 South Essex, London, W5 4XJ. Linda is also trying  
 to make some group travel arrangements so contact  
 her for further details.

#### 1989 CONVENTIONS

#### CONTRIVANCE - 1989 British SF Convention/Eastercon

Easter 1989, Jersey  
 Guests: Anne McCaffrey, M John Harrison  
 Membership: Attending £15 Supporting £8  
 Contact: 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey

#### NORREASCON III - The 47th Worldcon

31 August - 4 September 1989, Boston, MA.  
 Guests: Andre Norton, Betty & Ian Ballantine, The  
 Stranger Club  
 Info: UK Agent, Colin Fine, 28 Abbey Rd,  
 Cambridge, CB2 8HQ

*Conspiracy '87*

Compiled by Paul Kincaid

The 1987 Worldcon was big, too big for any one person to encompass. The report that follows, therefore, was drawn from a number of reports we have received. Contributions are by Sylvie Denis (SD), Kev McVeigh (KM), Brian Magorrian (BM), and an anonymous reporter (A). If the writer of that piece would let us know, we'll publish his or her name in the next issue of *Matrix*. Anything that is not credited in this piece is by Paul Kincaid.

#### The view from the trenches

I don't know about anybody else, but I was shell-shocked. It was my third Worldcon, but I was still not used to coping a convention that size. I met a lot of friends, made a lot more, encountered people I've long wanted to meet, yet there was always more going on in the next hall, round the corner, down another corridor. I had a very good convention, but it was a small part of a lot of much larger conventions all going on at the same time. But I wasn't the only one. (A): "Everything was done on a massive scale, the traders had an area the size of a football pitch in which to sell

all manner of things. I could have spent a day just looking at the artwork on exhibition, but I didn't have the time. Sometimes the size of the convention meant it was difficult to find out exactly what was going on, a friend of mine even suggested instead of 'Conspiracy' the convention name should be changed to 'Confusion'."

But amid all this confusion, what was going on?

#### The Programme

(SD): "There are never enough panels - or at least this seemed to be the convention motto, perfectly justified by the number of attendees, but nevertheless leaving you with the frustrating feeling that whatever fun you may be having, there was still more to be had! (Why, you silly, they told you it was going to be BIG.)

"How one cooks up an interesting panel is a very mysterious question indeed. There should be a topic in which enough people are interested, but not too many lest communication be frozen; and there should be good speakers on the panel, but not too many or nobody has got time to say more than one sentence; and somebody should always manage to lure one or two professional controversialists out of the bar, so as to liven things up if needs be. Hmm, sounds a lot like Mission impossible, doesn't it?

"Out of the three panels dedicated to the fate of British SF, I only managed to see 'British Made - or what is British SF' in which the British production - in between interruptions from an intrusive PA system - was called 'cosy' and 'not

science-oriented'. Oh... The problem of selling to the US was evoked, and I've been told other panels stressed *Interzone's* continuing existence and hopes for an American audience for some writers.

"SF Origins" were discussed on Friday morning, a question I always feel like answering with another one: 'Where does a tree begin?' Panelists Larry Niven, Sam Lundwall, Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove all had their favourite root: Niven made the case for Dante, Lundwall talked about Gernsback, and Aldiss expounded his Mary Shelley theory. Then somebody said that, of course, it all depended on how you defined SF, and everybody got very busy trying not to answer that question. Where does a tree end?"

[A]: "The 'Need there be War' panel was unbalanced and one sided due to the absence of Jerry Pournelle. Harry Harrison's talk on 'Esperanto' was well worth attending. The talks on writing by Brian Aldiss, Fred Pohl, Robert Silverberg and the 'Writers of the Future' were both entertaining and educational. The panel discussing 'The Ethics of organ transplants' was much poorer without Larry Niven. The group of editors on the panel 'Why we reject your story' couldn't agree on how stories should be submitted or on anything else for that matter.

[BM]: "Before the convention I was concerned that anti-Americanism could be rife over the weekend. Fortunately, this did not occur; even the discussion 'Why have the Americans hijacked the Worldcon?' was held in a cordial atmosphere. The Worldcon did have a certain American tang to it, but they do write most of the stuff! And how can you hijack something you started?"

"The last official event I attended was 'Britain Today and Tomorrow' starring Ian Watson and the infamous politician Ken Livingstone. Although they spent most of the discussion agreeing with each other about such topics as new technology and future international alliances, the discussion did bring out some interesting, thought-provoking ideas. A good end to the weekend."

#### The Events

But there was a lot more going on than just panel discussions and talks.

[A]: Two hands are seen waving from a cloud of smoke, preceding the laser show. 'I'm Brian Aldiss, your Toastmaster,' a hidden voice booms as the con begins.

"The standard of entries on Saturday evening for the Masquerade was the highest I've ever seen at a convention, though I would like to have seen them close up (especially the Elric entry).

"Looking down on a half-filled hall during the Hugo ceremony seemed to slightly mar the occasion. However there was still atmosphere a plenty, a fair amount of cheering and booing from the balconies and even some colourful language from one of the winners. The words 'You bastards, it's about time you gave me one of these!' will be remembered for many years to come."

Ah, yes, the Hugos. One of the few things I was able to see, and that just because I had to be there on the stage. All credit to Vince Doherty, the whole thing was superbly staged, and getting all the slides the right way up and in the right order is, apparently, a unique achievement. But it all started in confusion, with the unwarranted speech by Algis Budrys which went against both the spirit and the letter of what he had agreed with the committee; and ended in similar confusion with a Hugo Party from which photographers were seemingly excluded. A closed party, too; I was Hugo administrator, but I didn't get an invitation. Of course, it may have been the centre-piece of the convention, but not everyone went:

[BM]: "No, I didn't go to the Hugo Awards. Instead I went to a Filksinging Concert. This consists of

fans getting up and singing comic and serious songs about SF and random. This was excellent!

"The con got off to a good start on Thursday with 'Disappearing Acts': four short theatrical adaptations of stories by Guest of Honour Alfred Bester. Geoff Ryan wrote, directed and appeared in these plays, which I found interesting if a little difficult to follow."

#### The People

Irregularly, Alfred Bester was a Guest of Honour who was unable to attend. But we were lucky to have other excellent guests.

[SD]: "The Strugatski brothers proved very entertaining and interesting guests, despite the inevitable slowing down of any of their participation by the problems of translation. Are SF books really stolen out of libraries in Russia?"

"Doris Lessing's panning of academia in the first part of her Guest of Honour speech pleased me very much indeed. I guess that anybody coming from that end of the literary world to SF should be canonised on the spot."

"Had not Pascal Thomas been there to remind me of a change in the programme I would have missed David Langford's delicious skewering of this year's fattest turkeys."

"William Gibson was not a guest of honour, which didn't prevent him being one of the most talked about persons throughout the con."

And I have particular memories of Kim Stanley Robinson stalking the stage and talking fluently without notes about Philip K. Dick

#### And everything else

It's hardly worth mentioning the Metropole Hotel and its manager, Mr Hutchins; they have already passed into infamy. But what about other things?

[A]: "The convention book was magnificent. When Orson Scott Card was signing one I overheard him say it was one of the best, if not the best he had seen. Jim Burns' cover art would have made a great postcard."

[SD]: "I found myself coming back again and again to the most confusing place of them all: the dealers' room, where marvels are piled upon marvels and the only problem is that you must choose among them. The dealers' room is the greatest place in the con, because the books are the reason why it all began in the first place."

Of course, the convention didn't begin and end in Brighton:

[KM]: "'Are you going to Conspiracy, Kev?' It sounded so exciting. And so very expensive, too much for the financial anemia of student life. I wanted to go, desperately, but I had too many excuses: 'I've nowhere to stay' - sleep on my floor; 'How do I get there?' - hitch; 'I need a job!' - you need a holiday too; 'I haven't a membership' - buy one; 'I've no money!'. August brought news that memberships could be transferred - oh fabulous day. I wrote. I waited for a reply. And I waited. Three days before it all began I tried someone else. Liz Sourbut gave me Ann McPhail's number. A deal was struck. Ann sent a letter. Somehow I would be at Conspiracy. Bearing a rucksack and armed with a chocolate cake and teddy bear, I sought out the Brighton Centre. 'You should have a letter about me.' 'No, sorry. You'll have to pay £45.' (I only had about £60 for the week). Eventually we rang Ann at work, and my attendance was confirmed."

"Did you have as much fun at the Worldcon as I had just getting there?"

The anonymous contributor has been discovered to be Jeff Haughton. Sorry, Jeff!

# Fire & Hemlock

## The Fanzine Column

A genzine is general, usually more than one contributor, includes articles, reviews, fiction, letters, contents depend on the editor.

A perzine usually has the one author, but contents subject to the whim of the author.

A clubzine is produced by a group or society, a mixture of any of the above. Very variable.

Fictionzines are self-explanatory, as are critical journals such as *Foundation*.

Anything else is probably indefinable anyway. 'The usual' varies: a promise of a letter of comment (loc), a contribution, the right sort of begging letter, a stamp. You'll soon find out the best way to get a particular zine. Trade means their zine for yours, though this isn't always successful.

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**BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL** - Christina Lake & Peterfred Thompson, 47 Wessex Ave, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 0DE. Readable perzine, available for the usual

**CONRUNNER #7** - Ian Sorenson, 304a Main St, High Blantyre, Glasgow G72 0DH. Available to those interested in conrunning. A must.

**CONSEQUENCES** - Bridget Wilkinson, 15 Manor Drive, Southgate, London, N14 5JH/James Steel, 15 Maldon Close, Southwell, London, SE5 8DD. Stories about past conventions. Available for more stories about long gone cons, but unsure of availability otherwise.

**CRITICAL WAVE #1** - Steve Green, 33 Scott Rd, Olton, Solihull, West Midlands, B92 7LQ/Martin Tudor, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH. A new newszine, available every two months, 6 issue sub for £2

**EMPTYIES #7** - Martin Tudor, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH. Genzine hardly seems to be adequate as a description. Available for the usual. Worth getting.

**SCREWED UP LETTERS #2** - Alan J Sullivan, Room H3, 53 Ecclestone Sq, London, SW1V 1PG. Readable genzine available for the usual.

**SFERICAL ABERRATION #1** - Richmond Hunt, 51 Danes Rd, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4LS. Affiliated to Exeter University SF Society. #1 is about the Worldcon, and reveals a truth about the Matrix Editor. Available for the usual?

**TEN GRAND #2** - 49 Rugby Rd, Brighton, Sussex, BN1 6EB. A5 amateur media mag. Four issue sub for £2.40. Nice looking production tho' layout is a little cramped.

**VILE ANCHORS #1. #2** - Simon Polley, 152 Woodsley Rd, Leeds, LS2 9LZ. Two powerful issues of a very impressive perzine. Available for the usual.

**VAHF-FULL** - Jack Herman, Box 272, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, Australia 2006. Nicely produced genzine, worth a look.

**XYSTER #13** - Dave Wood, 1 Priory Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon. Highly entertaining genzine with reprints of Langford and Shaw speeches. Worth getting, available for the usual.

**CONSPIRACY THEORIES** - Chris Evans  
**THE LAST DEADLOSS VISIONS** - Christopher Priest

Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

It is hard to say what fuels the best writing. Any of a host of impetuses may be behind it, among them anger, curiosity and conviction. It is these three which lie behind the two fanzines being reviewed here.

Fanzines are strange beasts. In essence they can be whatever their author chooses to make them. The typical fanzine is stencilled and distributed free by an editor for whom the fanzine marks an entry into or an involvement with the world of fandom. There is an element of paying dues, or of maintaining contact with and furthering dialogue between a circle of friends and acquaintances. To that extent the fanzine itself is, if anything, more important than its contents.

But that isn't always the case. Some fanzines are produced because their editor has something urgent and vital to say, and fanzines are the best, most convenient, or perhaps only way it can be said. That is the case with these two. Evans and Priest are both professional authors who have maintained their links with fandom. Priest, over the years, has produced a number of fanzines, including the intermittent but excellent *Deadloss*; and the material in *Last Deadloss Visions* has been simmering for a long time now. But there could be no market for this material, it is too short for a book, too long for an article, even if there weren't sound legal reasons to make a publisher shy away from it. What Priest has written, in other words, is the classic pamphlet, and in an age when this means of self-expression has gone the way of all flesh, the fanzine is a perfect substitute. Evans has produced articles for some of the leading fanzines of the 80s, though *Conspiracy Theories* is his first fanzine. Its subject came out of fandom, involves fandom, and would probably only be of concern to fandom. A fanzine, therefore, was the only way of expressing it.

*The Last Deadloss Visions*, as its title implies, is about *The Last Dangerous Visions* and Harlan Ellison. There's no point in going into the story here, we all know how Ellison has been promising LDV since *Again Dangerous Visions* appeared in 1972. What Priest has done is, very carefully, record every statement about LDV, so that the story is told through Ellison's own words. We get the ever-growing lists of contributors, accompanied by the ever-growing excuses for non-appearance, punctuated with promises that it would be with this publisher or that publisher by such and such a date. Around this is woven an essay of unassailable probity and precision which carefully undermines every single statement Ellison makes:

One of the features of being in Mr Ellison's company is that he frequently makes verbal claims about having finished and delivered *Last*. These claims are invariably made in such an emphatic way, supported by plausible-seeming detail, that it is impossible to challenge them except by seeming to call Mr Ellison a liar.

Priest has no time for such niceties. He points up every inconsistency. He explains how a book of, by one estimate, 1,213,000 words or somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 pages, could not be published. He records how many writers have died since their work was bought for the anthology, how many others would be 60 or more by 1991. He lets us into the minds of writers whose work was bought by Ellison in the late 1960s, and have yet to see it in print. He recounts the passing of time. And he gives a voice to some of the writers who have been caught in the LDV trap. Bob Shaw perhaps sums it up best:





## Store Wars

More news and views courtesy of Stan Nicholls

### SPEND, SPEND, SPEND!

Despite plenty of WCI (WorldCon Tension) - not surprising at an event spread over five days, six venues, with 5,000 plus attendees - *Conspiracy* was unquestionably good for the dealers. With one London specialist alone grossing around £20,000, and overall estimates as high as ten times that, the stresses tended to pale into insignificance. Even the anti-Americanism which some US fans chose to believe characterised the convention - and which the rest of us put down to largely uninformed paranoia - didn't prevent them being the biggest spenders by far at the dealers tables. One look at those cavernous halls, and the diversity of material on offer, should have dispelled any lingering doubts about the magnitude of the industry now surrounding the field.

At any given time there were more people milling around in the dealers area at *Conspiracy* than the entire membership of *London II* two brief decades ago, where a motley handful of hobbyist booksellers occupied a small patch well away from the main programme. Dealers are now so central in terms of revenue, and as a major attraction, it's hard to see how any good-sized convention could succeed without them. But there could be a conflict of interests brewing with more people arguing for a limit to be set on the numbers attending big cons. Obviously, you'd have a hard time finding a dealer who agreed with that idea. In future, I think we may see a move towards dealers' marts, already common in comics and movie memorabilia circles, with no provision for socialising at all. That would be a shame, but it seems to be what a lot of people want.

(It has nothing to do with books but my favourite line of the entire convention came from the splendid Ken Livingstone. Asked how he found the life of an MP, he said, "Being in Parliament is a bit like working in a museum where most of the exhibits are still waiting to be stuffed".)

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### ONE ON EVERY HIGH STREET?

The mighty *Forbidden Planet* empire continues to grow. On 1st September, just after *Conspiracy*, they opened a new branch in central Brighton. About the same size as FP2 in London - i.e. smallish - the new outlet is a microcosm of the mix of stock to be found in the capital stores, with rather more of an emphasis on comics. Which is perhaps to be expected as it's part-owned by long time comics fan and dealer Dave Stanlake.

The Brighton shop is the beginning of an expansion designed to bring FP stores to other parts of the country. In late October there will be another opening in Milton Keynes, with more to follow. In fact, several areas with sizeable student populations can expect a visitation within the next couple of years.

Meanwhile, plans to move FP1 in London to larger premises, and rationalise the operation by merging it with FP2, the media outlet, are running behind schedule due to protracted negotiations for the new venue.

However, the Brighton launch doesn't seem to have deterred another, albeit smaller, dealer who has let it be known that he intends opening a shop there himself in a few months.

*Forbidden Planet*, 29 Sidney St, Brighton, BN1 4EP.  
Tel: 0273 687620. 9.30-5.30pm; Saturday 9-5.30pm

## THE UNLIMITED DREAM COMPANY

Sadly, however, FP is going, it'll be with Paul (Gamma) Gamble. Gamma, for some years a key figure in the book division of FP's parent company, Titan, quit the organisation just after *Conspiracy*. But he will still be very much involved in specialist bookselling, as he intends turning freelance on 29th September, when his stint with Titan comes to an end.

Trading as *The Unlimited Dream Company* - with J G Ballard's blessing to use that very appropriate title - Gamma will be an independent agent, initially supplying mostly American dealers with British books. We wish him well.

*The Unlimited Dream Company* - Paul Gamble, 91 Chaffinch Rd, Beckenham, Kent

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### A COLLECTOR'S DEALER

Michael Anft is a science fiction mail-order dealer who sets great store on the condition of the stock he offers. No sloppy definitions for him - when he lists an item as mint, he really means mint. And he can rightly be termed a collector's dealer as he has a good nose for rarities. In business about twelve months now - although a collector in his own right for many years - he mostly carries British material, but hopes to add selective American imports in the near future.

Separate hardback and paperback catalogues are available - be sure to specify either or both - in exchange for a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and want-lists, particularly for first editions, are welcome. Michael is also in the market to purchase individual items or whole collections for fair prices.

Michael Anft, 30 Frazier St, London, SE11 7BG

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### THE ADVENTURE OF THE HOLMES FORGERY

On 20th August Bloomsbury Book Auctions, in London, planned to offer for sale a copy of the first edition of Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) complete with dustjacket. Copies of the book without a jacket, but otherwise in good condition, usually fetch about £200. However, such is the scarcity of a copy with a jacket that it could be worth up to £10,000. But before the auction went ahead Richard Lancelyn Green, a well known collector and bibliographer of Doyle, exposed the jacket as a forgery in an article for *The Bookdealer*.

The real jacket was printed in red on grey paper - the fake is in black on white paper. Among other inaccuracies, the forgery has the price 6/- on the spine instead of a question mark. Lancelyn Green also points out that the phoney wrapper was inexpertly aged and torn, the edges apparently having been rubbed with glasspaper.

Barry Shaw, editor of *The Bookdealer*, says that fake dust jackets are very unusual, mostly because they are so hard to pass off. He did concede that "it is perhaps just possible that the dust jacket is a trial one by the publisher, but there is no reason I know of that this should be so." The forger probably made the mistakes because the jacket is so rare it's unlikely he or she had ever seen one. Lancelyn Green says he has an idea who is responsible, but would only reveal that the forger lives in the Midlands.

Given the fabulous prices some SF and fantasy items are now commanding, it's surprising nobody has tried it on our field. (Assuming they haven't...) Apart from rumours about ten years ago that certain American limited edition hardbacks

were of doubtful origin, the only examples of fakery I can recall relate to comics - the easily reproducible black and white edition of *Serie 1* being an obvious example. Check your shelves!

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#### A LOAD OF ROT

Something else to worry about is whether your books will fall apart before you do ...

Conspiracy was not the only significant event in Brighton during August. The 53rd Council of the International Federation of Library Associations met between 14th-16th August, and a major topic of discussion was the problem of literary decay.

In the mid 1800s publisher sought to meet the growing demand for books by switching from rags to wood pulp as the raw material for paper. Mike Weston, from the British Library, pointed out that modern paper contains chemicals, including acids, which hasten the process of decay. "The irony is that the paper of older books, published since the beginning of printing in 1475, can be in much better condition than something printed in 1950, which is collapsing."

The de-acidification process needed to preserve the paper is both costly and complicated, and the problem is causing headaches for librarians all over the world. George Cunningham, chief executive of the Library Association, this year's host, said "Over the last hundred years, paper has been made of materials that disappear - rotting itself away." High on the agenda at Brighton were new methods of preserving books which do not involve the expensive option of stripping off bindings and treating each page individually. Above all, said Mr Cunningham, "We have to keep bullying the publishers to use acid-free paper."

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And one tiny little crumb of news from your trusty editor, who has also joined the mail-order business with her first list of second-hand books (although some of them are very new, unread secondhand books). For a free catalogue contact me at the editorial address. I would, however, just stress that my bookselling venture is totally unconnected with the BSFA. And as usual, any recommendations in this column should not be regarded as being endorsed by the BSFA.

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## MEDIA REVIEWS

The Human Factor, presented by Kieran Prenderville  
ITV, 29 November 1987

Reviewed by Maureen Porter

In 1979 there was a series called *Time Out of Mind*, remember it? Inbetween the musings of various authors there was a programme about the fans, remember that? I was new in those days, I sat and looked at it all, and wondered what fandom was about. Was it really about ten foot wings, bare breasts and pale, overexposed male bodies. Was it really about sitting in panels, wandering around in corridors, buttonholing authors for autographs? Watching that programme never gave me the answer, and despite watching the rash of repeats over the years, it still hasn't given me the answer. Though I've really enjoyed spotting people who since have become my friends, I've given up trying to fathom the mysteries of fandom as perceived through the camera.

Basically, I do not trust the media, never have done, and probably never will. Deep in my heart, I know that it is useless to protest when they portray all SF fans as wandering around in scanty costumes pretending to be characters out of Star Trek. As it was put to me recently, when I was complaining about this tendency to present all the women as fat, and all the men as having acne and beerbellies, we're not good copy if we're normal. Gee, whatever happened to the majority?

Well, to give The Human Factor its due, it got nearer than anyone has so far. Our very own Coordinator, Paul Kincad, defined fandom as he saw it, Brian Aldiss defined fandom as he saw it, Ken Slater defined fandom as he saw it, there were shots of the fanroom at Worldcon. Occasionally, I even recognised what they were all talking about. Kate Solomon and Gytha North demonstrated that costumers are articulate too, and it was good to see our very own Alison Cook playing a starring role, and winning prizes, though it was a shame that no one mentioned the BSFA. Oh well, can't win them all.

I can't deny that my reactions to this programme were very mixed. I do believe that we have had a fairer crack of the whip than ever before, that there was a chance for it to be understood that

some of us prefer to keep our flesh, all of it, firmly under denim and sweatshirts, even if we did have to trade this off against being portrayed as astonishingly shortsighted, that we were demonstrably out for a good time. At the same time, I was disappointed that the unifying link, once again, was the costuming element, even if it was/is good to look at. More to the point, it was extremely noticeable that all the costumers were women, and all the readers and fannish philosophers were men, reinforcing a certain stereotypical view of male and female roles in fandom. God knows, there's enough prejudice in the outside world, this does not make things any better.

I also feel more time could have, should have been devoted to the fact that fans and authors intermingle quite happily, that fans are equally as creative as the authors they admire and that fans are active, are 'doers', not simply passive consumers. Inevitably however, and please, no disrespect to costumers, we have to consider whether we want to be portrayed simply as people who dress up in silly costumes and have fun shooting at each other over pool tables, or whether we really shouldn't be reminding everyone that there is a little more to this than meets the public eye, this always assuming that we really want people to know we're here at all?

The Witches of Eastwick, directed by George Miller

Reviewed by Colin Bird

John Updike's feminist fantasy novel gets the full Hollywood treatment in this lavish movie version directed by George Miller of *Mad Max* fame. Jack Nicholson turns up in a small New England town to answer the prayers of three frustrated divorcees, after they jokingly conjure up their 'perfect male'. Jack declares that he is 'just your average horny little devil', and proceeds to seduce them each in turn. Each of the three contemporary witches is enticed into his decadent mansion in which they come to realise his true nature. Nicholson exudes a playful menace in these early scenes which greatly enhances the film's slyly humorous viewpoint. The climax of the film is much less successful as the witches decide to banish their host by turning his own magic against him.

The disappointment is that the morality play of the novel is never explored on screen, the cast is so busy trying to reflect the surface wit that

they miss the deeper ironies of Updike's humour. The potency is masked by special effects, and over-ripe performances. Susan Sarandon provides the most effective performance as a repressed music teacher who learns how to let her hair down and express her feelings. The other two witches are portrayed by Cher and Michelle Pfeiffer, and the distinctly hummable score is provided by John Williams.

Anyone who wants to see the Devil doing his ironing while questioning whether God created women by mistake, could do worse than see *The Witches of Eastwick*, but if you prefer your black comedy truly black then stay at home and read the novel.

HELLRAISER, written & directed by Clive Barker

reviewed by Chuck Connor

There are lemons, and lemons with feathers on. Sadly, *Hellraiser* has more than anyone could be reasonably asked to pluck away and ignore.

Disregard the hype that surrounds this film, especially the quote that "this is the future of horror", because if it is, then we are in for a very lean time of it.

The fact is that, on paper, Barker may work excellently, but it doesn't translate to the screen at all. Taking the film from start to finish, there are so many styles used (and, sadly, abused) as to make the film sloppy and bitty, as well as managing to destroy what little atmosphere is ever generated.

The sale of the Oriental box (a kind of Chinese puzzle cube, though the sale is just vaguely played as 'Eastern') has all the hallmarks of *The Queen/Finch* Conflict, though does little to add any air of menace. Then we get the husband and wife walking into the old family house, which is the stage for most of the action. The house is bang out of Hammer and throughout the film it remains in a state of disrepair. Why is it left unrenovated? Well, if it were tidied up and dusted down there would be a hell of a lot more light around which would make more of a mockery of character Frank's bodysuit than the film already does. Actually, that bodysuit thing, despite Barker's claims of inspiration from Andreas Vesalius's anatomical drawings, reminds me very strongly of scenes from the British-made *Xtro*, especially the part where the father and son go towards the alien craft and there's that odd skeletal/x-ray effect.

Frank's brother, Larry, is almost embarrassingly 2-dimensional and as emotionally exciting as a solar-powered vibrator at midnight. All he seems to do is counterpoint his daughter's fears - and all she seems to do is to play a condensed version of the girl in *Nightmare on Elm Street*, teen scream a la Americana, reminding me of a latterday Fay Wray or Pearl White wherein everything comes out okay in the last few minutes of the final reel. She's too American, so is her boyfriend, Larry, Frank, and even Julia, the femme fatale of the film. Well, she could've been, if only she didn't look like an out-of-sync refugee from a Hitchcock late 50s/early 60s movie. Even when she commits the murders with a hammer it has every Hitchcockian angle covered: camera, facial expressions, and the fact that you never really see the blows connect but are given an impression that they do through sharp edits and cuts. And in her death scene she still manages to look like Bette Davis in *The Nanny*.

Slashing aside, the storyline is that Frank is jaded with life's experiences, so discovers the box, which is the key that opens the door to the world of the Cenobites. Instead of trying it out there and then, he goes all the way back to the old, disused family home in the suburbs of London before unlocking the secrets of 'unlimited pleasure'. But the pleasure is a little one-sided as the Cenobites (inhabitants of another dimension) are to De Sade what University is to kindergarten. Pain in Pleasure, Pleasure in Pain, and Frank sells his soul and gets carved up into little bits for his troubles. The bits are put under the bedroom floorboards and that, supposedly, is the finish of Frank: exit Cenobites, dimension left.

Larry and Julia move in. Julia is attracted to the disused bedroom and in a series of flashbacks - the only really powerful piece of the film - we find that Julia was Frank's slave in a S&M relationship, which is why she is now frigid towards Larry. This is intercut with present day action, and the fact that as Larry and the removal men move the double bed upstairs, Larry cannot see the big, sharp nail sticking out of the rail of the stairs. Result? One of the most erotic/horror culminations to make it to the screen. The pleasure/pain-brutality/love spectrum tumble end over end in rapid succession, until the point where Larry gashes the back of his hand at the same time as Julia orgasms at the memory of being raped by Frank. Larry immediately runs to Julia for her advice, all the time dripping blood all over the place. Conveniently, it drips down and comes into contact with Frank's remains. Thus is the start of Frank's rebirth.



THESE TERRANS ARE EVER SO GENEROUS, THEY KEEP FEEDING ME FOR NOTHING!

Needless to say, the Cenobites return and wreak havoc, only to have a teenage kid do what neither Frank or the other previous victims could not, namely return the Cenobites back to their dimension and remain unharmed.

Science Fiction Blues, Library Theatre, Sutton-in-Ashfield, 22nd October 1987

Reviewed by John A Spencer

Take one of the world's leading SF writers, two excellent actors, a selection of the former's writings, and you have Science Fiction Blues.

As a large part of the programme is made up of published stories, its success depends on its ability to re-create these for an audience, many of whom will already have preconceptions about them; and it works.

The selection, which includes poetry and specially written material, has been carefully chosen with an eye to variety and dramatic adaptability. Thus we get the hilarious "Drinks with the Spider King" (from The Eighty Minute Hour) rather than an extract from "Report on Probability A", and the poignant "Super-toys Last All Summer Long" instead of a more ambiguous piece such as "The Day We Embarked For Cythera".

The appeal of Science Fiction Blues is summed up for me by "Last Orders". This 1976 story of three ill-assorted characters finding solace in each others' company in the face of oblivion is superbly re-created and Ken Campbell's performance as the self-deluding xenobiologist is particularly memorable.

I must also mention Petronilla Whitfield's powerful interpretation of "Juniper" (Seasons in Flight), evoking the anguish of captivity; and the author's reading of "Don't Go to Jupiter" - an angry blast at our apathetic, unimaginative society.

Science Fiction Blues, Greenwich Theatre, 15th November 1987

Reviewed by Mike Moir

Three people sitting on a stage reading SF stories doesn't sound very exciting. Even when you know that they are Brian Aldiss stories, and that he is one of the three readers, it still sounds, at best, self indulgent. How can such a thing work? I'm not totally sure, but it definitely did work, and very well.

The choice of readers was inspired. Brian Aldiss gave an authoritative meaning to the stories, and Petronilla Whitfield, a stunning Shakespearian actress, provided high drama. Finally, Ken Campbell, the ultimate pub raconteur, provided a counterbalancing earthiness. (Ken is most frequently seen as one of Alf Garnett's perennial pub pals.)

The method of telling the stories was clever; no two were told in quite the same way. They told them in series and in parallel, with one, two or three narrators. Possibly, the only failure of the night was the attempt to tell three in parallel; the stories would not quite weave together right, and you were left thinking that they had ragged ends.

The greatest surprise was the use of stage and props. They hardly used them at all. Sitting (or for high drama, standing) they just read the tales. A simple hand gesture became dramatic and a plastic pointy nose gave sudden character. Interruption by one of the other readers added whole new dimensions to the tale. It sounds too simple, yet it worked. I suspect anything more adventurous could easily have failed.

So much for the production, but was it Science Fiction? Yes, as many genre authors try to disown SF, Brian Aldiss has gone on the road to acclaim its vital relevance and his undying love for it. Each story and poem had its fair share of Sense of Wonder. The stage was filled with aliens and robots. There were great alien landscapes to explore, and finally, suitably, we sat watching as our Earth died.

I greatly enjoyed Science Fiction Blues, possibly the best bit of SF theatre I've seen. Unfortunately it, and I believe, the rest of the tour, was poorly attended. Where were you all?

[Matrix did not receive information about Science Fiction Blues until after the last issue had gone to press.]

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## WRITE BACK

### The Letter Column

There's one thing I hate about being editor, apart from all the other things I hate about being editor, and that's the constant whinge for more material. It makes me sound like a nagging bore, and I bet you all get fed up to the top teeth with it as well. There are very few letters coming in to Matrix these days, which in turn will mean a lot more of a few people, or else a smaller letter column. Maybe I am naive in supposing that anyone wants to write anything, but it is the correspondence which keeps this magazine going, and it is dwindling away. Anyhow, you've got Christmas, lots of time for writing there, so I hope that when I get back from my holiday, I'll have serious trouble in pushing open the front door because of the piles of goodies behind it. The next deadline is:

Friday 15th January 1988

Be there!

As usual, the editor reserves the right to shorten and edit letters as necessary.

In the meantime, shall we start with the heavy stuff, or something a little lighter? Patrick Lee's *Star Cops* review did not win favour some quarters. I'm surprised that more attention hasn't been made of the series, but long since gave up the struggle to fathom out what pleases people.

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

I WAS DISAPPOINTED BY PATRICK LEE'S REVIEW OF *STAR COPS* IN N72. It seems that he has given a very lukewarm overview of what is probably the most realistic and adult TV SF ever produced. Certainly Chris Boucher is to be congratulated. There were flaws, especially with the moon buggies, the sets supposed to show people outside on the Moon and Mars, and some of the supposedly futuristic hardware, but overall the programmes were excellent. This was not a series which tried to survive on non-stop action or spectacular effects, but concentrated on good acting, sensible (and believable) plotting, and character development. These are all qualities to be admired in TV drama but, until now, they have been absent from an SF series.

If you enjoyed *Star Cops* can I urge you to write to the BBC and tell them. In reply to a letter printed recently in the *Radio Times*, Evgeny Gridneff, the producer, said that there were no plans for another series. If enough of us write praising the programme perhaps we can change his mind, or at least get it repeated. With *Dr Who* going/gone down the tube we need *Star Cops*.

Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Rd, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7QF

PATRICK LEE SAYS THAT DAVID THEROUX IN *STAR COPS* WAS "obviously not American". I'm surprised. Actor Erick Ray Evans is an American though he works here. He has an American accent and is currently in the role of a American diplomat in ITV's *The London Embassy*. Whatever gave Patrick the impression of too many Britons, there were mostly only the two, quite limited for a British production.

I confess I thoroughly enjoyed *Star Cops* myself. It was likable, the characters were human, and dare I admit I even felt like hiding behind the sofa again on occasion. Just like old times! I think that Linda Newton's genuine Australian accent should also be defended. It may sound like Central Casting but an Aussie friend assures me it is an urban Australian accent equivalent to something like our Cockney.

Patrick wasn't the only person whose reviewing provoked comment.

Peter Tennant, 9 Henry Cross Close, Shipham, Telford, Norfolk, IP25 7LQ

Though hardly a classic of the genre or even an especially good film, I found it (*Superman IV*) innocuous and mildly entertaining. Extremely silly in parts, certainly, but I can't share John Feetenby's feeling that it was somehow sinister, and his conclusions about the film's ideology seem to arise out of an almost wilful misinterpretation of the facts.

John labels Superman an 'American chauvinist' and 'trenchant nationalist', but what are the facts? Superman addresses the United Nations, not the American government. In John's own words he 'enforces worldwide disarmament' and 'the world is apparently re-armed'. There is no suggestion that only the USA is to be entrusted with nuclear weapons, an obvious conclusion for an 'American chauvinist'. Right or wrong, Superman acts on a global scale, not a national one. John accuses Superman of a 'strongest is best' philosophy, whereas the opposite appears to be the case. Superman himself is the strongest force in the world, but ultimately he concludes that it is

wrong for him to force a course of action on the world's people simply because he has the power to do so. Might is not right at all. We are left free to choose.

Inevitably, however, the majority of letters received were about South Africa. We start with a long letter from Nick Shears, which I have printed in its entirety because I feel Nick is speaking from a far more informed position than most of us can ever hope to achieve.

Nick Shears, 27 Chiltern Rd, Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP22 6DA

I USED TO LIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA. In fact, it was while living there in 1970 that I was introduced to fandom. I was a founder member of SPSA, the SA equivalent of the BSFA, and held various offices over the years. I published 40 odd fanzines in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and founded Granfallot, the SF Club at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Amidst these fanish activities I was also politically active, campaigning against apartheid and the inequities of the system. I was also a member of the BSFA. Had I been refused membership I would have shrugged the BSFA off as another unthinking bureaucratic organisation, to be considered as despicable as some of the SA organisations we decried.

South Africans have developed a 'laager mentality', harking back to the days when they would draw the oxwagons into a circle from which to fight off their enemies. They see 'overseas' as a malevolent force determined to destroy their way of life. They resist foreign cultural influences - the Nationalist Government fought the introduction of television for years, finally allowing broadcasts to begin in 1975, but only under very strict state control. This is the government which banned not only Playboy and the works of Karl Marx, but also *Stranger in a Strange Land* and *Stand on Zanzibar*.

Science fiction is a source of innovation, of free thought, a way of looking to the future and attempting to shape it. I believe that some of my own thinking was shaped for the better by the science fiction I read when I was young, and that led in part to my political activity against apartheid. Would those who would deny membership of the BSFA to South Africans also approve of the non-distribution of books to SA? How different is that to book burning? And is it likely to open South African minds or close them? What is more important, an empty political gesture or the thought that every white mind open to change is a small step towards a better future for all South Africans?

There, as far as I know, only two BSFA members resident in SA. One I don't know, but the other I have known for 16 years. He has done more to progress the cause of freedom and equality in SA than I suspect most members of the BSFA have. I also happen to know whether he's white or black, but I'm pretty sure that Mark McCann can only guess. Boycotts are not selective - you either boycott a country or not, there is no way to avoid including as targets those whom you wish to help.

This is not the place to discuss economic boycotts, which are quite a different matter. But a cultural boycott which restricts freedom of access to information by South Africans can only be harmful. Whilst I understand and sympathise with Mark's reasoning, I don't believe that he has thought things through completely. I do believe that if the BSFA refused membership to South Africans that will be a blow against freedom in SA. It would also initiate an interesting debate about what other countries' inhabitants should be refused membership on the grounds of their governments' policies. But I'm afraid that I

wouldn't be part of the debate, because I would have reacted to that empty gesture with one of my own - I would have resigned.

Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland St. Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST1 5JG

MARTYN TAYLOR IS PRESUMABLY JUST TRYING TO CAUSE controversy over his suggestion that we can't tell whether SA members are white. SF is, largely, a middle class hobby, so how can the poverty-stricken blacks afford to join? Also, in Africa, blacks are still generally known by their ancestral names. This is in contrast to Britain, USA etc., where blacks are generally known by the name of the last white family to own their ancestors. Thus it doesn't take much to work out whether people are white, Asian, or black (Coloureds are more of a problem, obviously), any more than it does to guess the race of a British member called, say, Singh.

Richmond Hunt

I AGREE TOTALLY WITH MARTYN TAYLOR THAT WE MUST not confuse our reactions to individuals with our response to 'representatives'. Those who actually speak for South Africa should be constantly reminded of our disapproval of their regime. Individuals, even those who hold what we consider outrageous viewpoints, should be tolerated. everybody has a right to their own opinions (individual viewpoints), no one has a right to force them on others (repressive regimes, apartheid, etc.). If we lose sight of this last distinction we fall into the same intolerance and bigotry Mark McCann rightly detests. We should boycott South Africa not South Africans to show our distaste for discrimination.

The whole thing could be conducted on the Christian principle: Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner.

Peter Tennant

IT IS TEMPTING TO SAY THAT THE BSFA SHOULD HAVE nothing at all to do with South Africa and hold ourselves aloof from any kind of contact, but I feel this is simply to dodge the issue. We cannot draw conclusions about the moral and political allegiances of an individual from his or her country of origin. Though in no way ashamed of my British nationality, I do not want to be identified with or held responsible for many of the policies advocated by the Thatcher government.

On the other hand, to interrogate South Africans about their beliefs with a view to excluding them from membership of the BSFA if they don't meet our high standards is an idea I find repugnant. Nietzsche's warning not to become the monster you seek to destroy seems highly apposite. We have no reason to suppose that, once started, a witch hunt of the sort would end with the exclusion of South Africans. Evil as it undoubtedly is, apartheid is far from the only injustice in the world. Who among us can claim to be without moral or social blemish of some sort. certainly, science fiction as a genre has its share of jackboot fantasies and sadism, the purveyors of which are seldom ostracised; some are even honoured.

Ideally I would like to see the BSFA become such an organisation that no racist or bigot would want to be a part of it, but I have little clear idea how such a state could be achieved. I do have one suggestion, the practicality of which must be decided by those more familiar with how the BSFA operates. Could we perhaps grant honorary membership to Nelson Mandela or some other detainee, thus identifying ourselves as supportive of the opponents of apartheid and also in the hope that its advocates in our ranks, be they South African or other will resign in disgust?

The mechanics of this suggestion would present no

problems at all, but I don't think, particularly in view of comments made in the questionnaire responses earlier in the magazine that the Committee can at present take a decision of this nature on behalf of the membership, without bearing what the rest of the members think, one way or another. Perhaps members would care to let us know what they think?

Next, a letter from Mark McCann, whose name, it appears, both David Barrett and myself have managed to consistently misspell, for which humble apologies.

Perhaps this is a good point at which to ask people generally to print surnames, so we can avoid this another time.

Mark McCann, 103 Malone Avenue, Belfast, N Ireland

I THINK SOME PEOPLE WERE CONFUSED IN M72 AS TO what the major aims of a boycott actually are. It is used simply to isolate apartheid and South African regime from all aspects of normal life. It is to stop P W Botha from using our magazine as another piece of evidence that all is civilised and good in South Africa. To not act is to passively support apartheid. Therefore the BSFA is making a political decision whether you like it or not. The question of whether the members are black or white is beside the point.

The Soapbox piece by Rabbit (and for those who may think this is a pseudonym, I assure you that this is what the author is always called. We worked on the newsletter at Conspiracy together and he was known as such throughout. In fact, I don't even know what other names he may have) caused some mild reaction.

Peter Tennant

I found the Soapbox article "Defeating the SF Stereotype" very interesting but was surprised to find that reading science fiction is popularly regarded as "weird and abnormal". I don't think any of the people I know regard me in this way, at least not because I read science fiction, while many of them do look askance at outlandish punk fashions, contrary to Rabbit's impression. Certainly an interest in science fiction can be questionable if it becomes obsessive or engenders overzealous proselytising, but then so can anything. I suspect Rabbit is suffering from a bad case of inverse snobbery, but I am open to be convinced otherwise.

Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London, E17 8AY

Have Rabbit come out of his hutch and I'll explain to him that hutchies and ghettos have much in common, but what SF has is neither - it's "cult status". SF works like this: if you happen to discover SF or fantasy and read it quietly on the train or "in the privacy of your own home", nobody gives a damn. But if you blurt it around that you like it, or if you try to get in touch with others who share your liking, you run up against some aspect of "fandom". And fandom is simply an interlocking series of cult groups united under the SF banner that reads "we're kooky, we talk jargon, we pub our ish, we hate Irekkies/Towelies/select your own group, we are DIFFERENT." is it any wonder that outsiders perceive this declaration of difference, and that they then proceed in true simplistic manner to lump together all lovers of SF under the cult's own image and banner?

Much as I would love to respond in depth to Ken and Peter, space is running out, and the awful trap which lies waiting for the unwary editor who disagrees with her contributors is yawning at my feet even now. Pity about that. I'll have to leave it up to you to respond. Your mailing deadline is:

FRIDAY 15th JANUARY 1988

That's all for this time. Bye!

# SOAPBOX

## GIVE THE ALIENS A FAIR BREAK!

By John Peters

I want take some time to look at an aspect of SF rather than discuss the mechanics of being a fan, or where our social conscience should be. Worthy subjects, but let's talk Science Fiction. And I want to talk about Aliens. Not the Ridley Scott and James Cameron films - but how we actually perceive them, and especially how film and television deal with Aliens.

You only have to watch almost any SF film or tv show to see how used we are to destroying anything that manifestly comes from another world. Of course, there are benign aliens, but be honest, don't we really get our jollies from the pyrotechnic destruction they usually suffer. And to be fair, after the scriptwriters have finished their job, most Aliens deserve everything they get.

Stop to think for a moment. Aren't we getting into a mental rut here? "The only good alien is a dead'un". Same mentality that was used in westerns against Indians. We haven't changed have we? But we must, soon. One day, and I'm the first to admit it will probably be in the far future, Man will meet Alien cultures. I refuse to believe we are the only life in the Universe. And so what will happen. Will it be a meeting of minds or a clash of wills?

Another pause for thought. How will the Aliens perceive us? For any Alien spacecraft travelling into, or near our Solar System is bound to pick up the indiscriminate detritus of our world's radio and tv. What the hell will they think of *Biko*, or *East Enders* or *Bill and Ben*? More worrying still must be their interpretation of telecasts of *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and yes, even *Alien*.

They will see us shoot first and ask questions later (*The Day the Earth Stood Still*), approach with Bible in hand (*War of the Worlds*), not even notice their presence (*Invasion of the Bodysnatchers*) or perhaps we will play funny music (CBSA).

Most of these films are masterpieces of cinematic art, and they have entertained millions. But, and this is the main point I want to make, won't we have been programmed by all the plethora of SF films that we see into taking the only course of action possible - violence?

And can you blame any Alien spacecraft being extremely hesitant in its approach? With the captain having his finger very much on the trigger.

Then there is the reality of the world around us. If the Aliens watch our news broadcasts as well,

and I assume they will have the technology to decipher and translate our broadcasts, then they will see a planet tearing itself apart socially and ecologically. They will see two distinct images of us, images that blur quite easily if you think about it.

So what can we do? Alien contact is, and always will be, a one in a million long shot. So we aren't really going to change ourselves are we? If Mary Whitehouse has only a limited effect on our entertainment habits, worrying about some Bug-eyed Monster's attitude is a loser before we start. But, has anyone out there ever considered the outcome of such a meeting? Is there a contingency plan anywhere in the world for dealing with alien contact? Has any government ever given it serious thought, as our knowledge and experience of space has increased?

Somehow I think not. The UFO hysteria has blinded us with all its attendant hype into thinking of little green men. What happens if just one of these UFOs becomes a legitimate first contact?

Of course, tv in space has been used as a plot device recently. Director Joe Dante used it to good comic effect in *Explorers*, but that was for fun. One day it could be for real. Will it be peace or war? Only our programmed responses will tell. Keep watching the screen.

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Do you agree with this view? Or do you think that the writer has it totally wrong? Whatever you think, write to the Writeback Column in *Matrix* and let the rest of the BSFA membership know what you feel. If it made you angry, don't keep your feelings to yourself, share them. If you agreed, stand up and be counted, and tell us why.

All letters to Maureen Porter at the editorial address, as usual.

Alternatively, is there something you want to share with BSFA members, something you want to air an opinion on, something you want the rest of us to know about? Send it to Soapbox. Whatever it is, write it down and send it to me at the editorial address. The rules are quite simple. Nothing on this page is edited, beyond an odd misspelling or re-arrangement of titles to fit the house style. This is where you have the chance to express your opinion without benefit of editorial interference (within reason). All I want is enough writing to fill this page and no more. You can write about science fiction, about fandom, about anything in the world which happens to disturb you right now and, barring anything extraordinarily offensive, I'll print it.

Contributions to Maureen Porter at the editorial address, as usual.