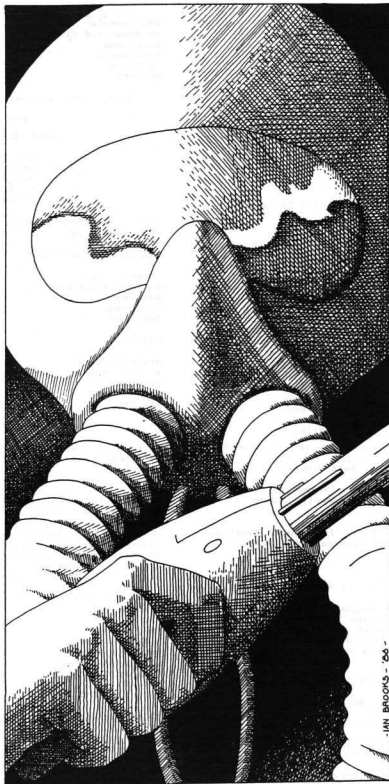




A·T·R·I·X

75p

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





Red Shift

IT MAY SIMPLY BE THE FACT OF HAVING READ too much war poetry of late, but I have the uncomfortable feeling of being caught in the crossfire, without the benefit of a white hankie, and a stick to tie it to. It may even be that I have galloping insecurities beyond the dreams of analysts, but I do feel uneasy as I watch all the thoughts about what the BSFA should be doing, what it is doing, and, most importantly, what it is perceived as not doing, flying backwards and forwards, with no real conclusions or resolutions being reached by anyone. And I get really scared by the way some people are so unforgiving on top of all this.

Perhaps it is just that I have some strict ideas about how an editor's personal opinions are aired in a magazine, but I couldn't see any way of being able to express my personal concern as a rank and file member. And then, as I was refusing point blank to do write an editorial because I wasn't entirely sure of an editorial's function, and felt that whatever it was, I wasn't fulfilling it, a flash of inspiration pointed out to me that this is what an editorial is really for. Alright, so this is a chunk of my personal thoughts and worries about the discussion surrounding the BSFA at the moment. And, if you didn't read it because you thought it was more of the same old whingeing crap about material needed, oh well ... and welcome to a rereading, because you saw it referred to in Write Back 75.

Please don't misunderstand. I think the discussion is vital, is healthy, that it shows an interest in the BSFA, and all that. But I also feel very uneasy when I see some of these ideas come trotting out, without, to my eye at least, much thought being put into the 'whys and wherefores' of the matter. Perhaps the philosophy classes are getting to me but I don't believe one can simply keep saying 'You should do this', 'You mustn't do that' without offering a more detailed explanation. 'I think you should do this because ...' seems a lot more helpful.

As I type Write Back, there is more often than not, a running monologue. Why does so-and-so think this should be done, why doesn't XYZ like what we're doing, why is QWERTY so obsessed about this subject to the exclusion of all else? Clearly, some questions can be answered with some thought on my part, but bald statements are meaningless if there is no amplification.

Ever since I became a member of the BSFA, and (to judge from the many back numbers of *Matrix* I have ploughed through since becoming editor) ever since *Matrix* first provided a forum for members' views, a recurring theme (alongside religion and rock music) has been the need to be bigger and better. This is a prime example of an idea continually resurfacing but I don't think anyone has ever given a real justification of why they think we should expand as rapidly as demanded, nor precisely what benefits are to be derived from rapid rather than more gradual growth.

I'm not opposed to expansion, any more than I'm opposed to us remaining at the same level. A certain amount of recruiting always has to be

done, in order to maintain even the level we are at now, and growth through new members suggests that more people are becoming interested, or that more interested people are coming to us. Great, I couldn't be more pleased. But, and this is being asked strictly out of personal curiosity, what is it that those who argue for massive recruiting are hoping to achieve? Why do they believe that we need to get more people as members?

I've seen it suggested, more than once, that more members provide more money for bigger projects, better projects, any projects. Okay, fair enough, and it would certainly happen. But you can have projects anyway, make them self-financing, so where's the need to be bigger and better, if you can grow gradually and still be better? Yes, and I shall certainly be floating a few ideas for 'projects' in the next year or two. I wonder, is it a need for security, a sense of being surrounded by many more of one's own kind? Is it simply that a society's success is measured by it being seen to recruit?

That's just one example where I find myself playing devil's advocate against myself to determine exactly what the benefits would be, because I can't see them. Yet the writer clearly could. And another favourite bugbear, 'The BSFA has got to decide what its function is'. This is reasonable, sensible even. But I can offer you a committee-full of different definitions, and you might well disagree with the lot. And there are another 950 definitions out there, somewhere. Yet, every time I see this one floated, the writer has not said precisely what he or she perceives as the function of the BSFA. It would have provided the hook for the argument, and given others somewhere to discuss towards or away from. As it is, we, the Committee, produce a definition as we see it, and everyone comes round for target practice without offering an alternative target for comparison. I personally believe that the BSFA is inevitably a lot of different things to a lot of different people, simultaneously, and the problem lies more in reconciling the different needs of 950 different people who've paid their money, than in providing a hard and fast definition of what we do. But what did the writer think? Ah, the number of times I have seen that written down, and left hanging in a vacuum ...

It's like 'broadening our appeal', another little slogan one encounters quite frequently. Why, in what way, for whose benefit? It's not that I think we shouldn't, I'm just interested to know exactly where we should be doing this. If we aren't doing this, clearly we don't know where we should be, so shouldn't a statement like this be amplified to provide the odd clue at least?

So what am I trying to say to you all? I am coming to realise that it is all too easy to make suggestions without developing the ideas, which, of course, makes it far easier to dismiss an idea out of hand, without stopping to consider the ramifications. What frightens me right now is the way we are all throwing around ideas, criticisms and heaven knows what else without taking a brief pause to think about what we are saying, and whether we are really managing to work towards a

sensible conclusion. In a more extreme situation I might say we were wasting our time, as it is I think I can see that we are close to discussing at cross purposes, without any real understanding of what we are discussing, and why. We are in a position to achieve a lot, and bring a more coherent feel to the BSFA, but not while people fling out statements without explaining what they mean.

This is a personal feeling, and isn't intended as an attack on any specific letter or opinion expressed in this issue of *Matrix* or any other. But I do wish people would bear in mind that the survey was made A YEAR AGO, and thus base their thinking and conclusions on the current situation, not simply on comments of a year ago.

Changing the subject, I know the typing has become

WALKING ON GLASS

The BSFA Column

There's quite a lot of news about the BSFA this time around, so I'll start with the most important items:

E.G.M.

By now you should have received notification and proxy form for the Extraordinary General Meeting we have called to consider our audited accounts and complete the formalities involved in our re-registration.

The EGM will be held on February 13th at 40 Cyprus Rd, Finchley, North London. This will also sort out such matters as the new address for the registered office, provisionally intended to be 114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1ES.

A.G.M.

The EGM will sort out a lot of immediate problems, but the business of the Association continues. To that end we have our usual Annual General Meeting which will be held at Follycon, the Annual British Science Fiction Convention, at Easter. The AGM will be held in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, and this mailing should include the proxy form which gives full details of time and place.

London Meetings

As you should all remember, the EGM was originally scheduled to be on Friday 18 March, at the Royal Connaught on High Holborn, London at 7.30 pm. Since we have had to bring the EGM forward by a month, we have decided to make this meeting into the first of our revived London meetings.

It is intended to be, primarily, a social occasion, a chance for BSFA members to meet one another, and also Committee members, but I am also hoping to be able to arrange a speaker. However, I am not in a position to organise these meetings regularly, so I am looking for a volunteer to take on the job.

The job of the organiser will be to book the room, liaise with the pub, arrange speakers, and keep the committee informed of what is going on. We will, of course, provide any help we can. If you want the job, please write to me with a brief outline of what you would like to do with the London meetings.

execrable. Two reasons, one being that I have not left myself enough time for proofreading in the past. It is also true that I have a worn out Amstrad keyboard which, if not an excuse, is at least a reason for some of the appalling work. Those of you who have taken to pointing out my typos will be pleased to hear that a mixture of different working methods and a new set of keys should soon produce an almost typo-free *Matrix*. I'm sorry, I'll try not to let it happen again.

The next *Matrix* deadline is:

FRIDAY 16th MARCH

so all material should be with me by then. Please take advantage of the opportunity to contribute your feelings, thoughts and opinions.

The Co-Ordinator's Response

The "Write Back" column this issue contains two pieces of criticism of the BSFA arising from our recent financial problems. The letter column would not have been the right place to reply to those criticisms, so I am taking the opportunity to do so here.

I will start by replying to Tom Jones. To begin with, the title Co-Ordinator arose from a committee meeting immediately after Alan Dorey resigned as Chairman. We found ourselves a group of people fairly new to the workings of the BSFA Committee and our first thought was re-organisation. The title of Chairman was dropped, and the role of Co-Ordinator was created since it was argued that the primary role was to co-ordinate the successful production of the magazines. I should point out that the current Treasurer, Phil Knight, was not able to attend that meeting and no-one present had any experience of the legal or financial side of running an organisation such as this. It was our first mistake. More and more since then I have found the role of Chairman forced upon me, but I am all the time having to learn by experience what this role actually entails.

All this time Phil Knight was having severe problems at home, specifically his home was falling down. This, coupled with the pressures of work, meant that he was unable to attend committee meetings, and the only time he and I met was in February 1987 when he had already resigned. He told me that he had spent his entire stint as Treasurer sorting out the mess the accounts were in when he inherited them, he had just about got the accounts up to date. I confess that I know absolutely nothing about accounts, but even I was worried when Phil told me that accounts had not been filed for several years. It was the first I had heard of this, and I asked then about our legal position. Phil assured me that Companies House had so far proved sympathetic to our problems and willing to wait. I assumed that this would continue until we had had a chance to sort ourselves out. It was my second mistake.

Meanwhile, in the confusion of his move from a house that was literally falling down around his ears, Phil forgot to inform Companies House of his change of address. It was an understandable

oversight, but a costly one, because this was the reason we received no warning about our removal from the register.

At this point John Fairley stepped in to handle the accounts for a few months. Although he has acted as Treasurer of conventions, John is not an accountant and was doing this simply to help the BSFA over a difficult period. He could do no more than keep things ticking over.

Then Brett Cockrell took on the position. He has proved to be exceptionally thorough and efficient, and without him our problems with Companies House would have been many times worse than they were. But even so, Brett had not even had time to look through all the books and discover the problems before the bombshell dropped.

And that is the full background to the story as far as I know. Undoubtedly there have been mistakes by myself and by this committee, but the roots of the problem lie far deeper than that and I think I can fairly claim that we have not been in the best position to do anything about them since they came to light.

On to Trevor Jones' letter. The lack of committee meetings for a year is something that we very much regret, and is certainly something worthy of condemnation. In mitigation it should be pointed out that this does not mean that there was no contact between committee members. We speak constantly on the phone, and exchange detailed letters, and there were also frequent informal meetings between committee members.

As for the Worldcon, two members of the committee were closely involved in that, myself and Maureen Porter. I was most handicapped through my role as Hugo Administrator, since the problems with postage resulted in a last minute and totally unexpected doubling of my workload. This was such a sudden thing that, frankly, there was no time to consider resignation or even calling for help. However, I do not believe that the BSFA suffered in any way during this time - except in the financial problems over which no member of the committee at the time had any competence to act.

But enough of the past, as Trevor says the most important thing is to ensure that nothing like it happens again in the future.

So what are we doing?

Immediately, we have got ourselves back onto the register of companies. In fact, this happened more quickly than anyone anticipated, which is why we have had to bring our BGM forward by a month. The BSFA Ltd has, in fact, been back on the register of companies since early January.

Our accounts have been brought up to date by Brett Cockrell, and as I write this they are all with our auditor John Steward and should be ready for presentation at the BGM. This means that our accounts are up to date for the first time since before I joined the BSFA Committee, and should make it easier to keep them up to date.

The next step is to produce a more thorough analysis of our income and outgoings, provide more detailed budgets for the magazines, and get the Association working more effectively than before. All of which should add to the regularisation of our financial position, and ensure that financial problems of the sort we have experienced are even less likely to recur.

An analysis of the Council and Committee of the BSFA is in hand, together with an examination of our legal requirements, with a view to reorganisation.

Regular committee meetings have been instituted, and will now take place every two to three months.

At the same time a committee newsletter is being started with the aim of providing even better communication between committee members.

Detailed job descriptions are being drawn up for every post on the committee, as well as for all those people who assist committee members without actually being on the committee. These will include not only a full description of every job required by the post, but also of the legal responsibilities they have.

All of these actions were put in hand at the last committee meeting, which is why it took four "very tiring hours". At the same time we must not neglect the magazines, which are the most public face of the BSFA, and the reason most people are members. So the same meeting spent time discussing how we can maintain their standard, and making plans for improving them in the future. We also agreed the changes to our advertising rates, which we announced last issue, which Trevor applauds, and which, to judge from the current issue of *Vector* is already bearing fruit.

All of that at one very crowded meeting. And that doesn't take account of the amount of time every member of the committee devotes to the BSFA in the normal course of things. There is, to my knowledge, NO political in-fighting of any sort between any members of the committee. Trevor Jones accuses us of this, so maybe he should put up or shut up. I am aware of mistakes having been made, but I am also aware of the strenuous efforts everyone has made to correct those mistakes, and I am not going to stand by and let any member of the committee be accused of not getting on "with the jobs they were appointed to do".

And finally I want to say a few words in relation to the Survey. Mik Norton conducted this survey over a year ago now, and it relates in the main to a time before the current BSFA committee was in action. Nevertheless it is probably the most important examination of the Association there has been, and the committee is obviously going to pay very close attention to it.

Some points can be made now. The coverage of the media within the BSFA is not as great as it should be. For that we need the help of members to provide the news and reviews we need to supplement the limited coverage we have already. However, personally I am not in favour of gimmicks to attract members to an organisation that may not provide what they are expecting.

Political bias is an odd thing. Trevor Jones and Ken Lake clearly feel it is still present in BSFA publications, while Tom Jones does not. The BSFA is not a political organisation, but much current science fiction does concern political questions or represent political stances, and we would be failing to provide adequate coverage of science fiction if we did not take cognisance of those views. If *Vector* devotes a special issue to Feminist SF, that does not make it a feminist propagandist. If *Matrix* devotes many columns inches to a debate on South Africa, that does not make it an agent of either the ANC or President Botha. If members feel that all political reference is anathema, then we can cut it out, but I suspect that our magazines would be very thin and very anodyne as a result. As for literary snobbery, that, surely, is in the eyes of the beholder. As reviews editor for *Vector* a very wide spectrum of books go through my hands, and I try to reflect that with a wide spectrum of reviewers. I suspect that quite a number of them would be insulted to be considered literary snobs. Balance is a tricky thing to achieve, but I'm certainly not going to ask any reviewer to change his opinions of a book simply because there has been too little praise recently.

As to the encouragement of new writers, I am one myself and I don't happen to believe that we

provide much that's worth while if all we do is provide another amateur place for their stories to appear without any critical feedback. So I for one am going to be very interested to see how Liz Holliday's new regime at *Focus* works out. But *Focus* is back, so perhaps we should leave further argument on this topic until it has had a few issues to establish itself.



And another in a slightly erratic line of biographies of BSFA committee members. Forced to confess all, this time, is Dave Wood, who is in charge of Advertising and Publicity.

Suddenly my safety equipment, the mechanism through which I can bounce off approaching seriousness, twanged. Your editor pinned me to the wall and demanded I write a "short piece" about myself. "You see," she says, "the members simply don't know the committee."

A genuine problem here, a membership starved by some eldritch force from becoming intimate with their cherished committee.

"For how long," I ask her with concern, "for how long can I hold out?"

"David," she says, "do cope. I've got to go and organise Paul Kincaid."

I stand stunned.

A friend approaches. "Problems?" he ventures.

"She was telling me I must write about myself in *Matrix*."

"Rather cruel."

"She's determined."

"Let me help you," my friend says. "Um, let's see. Dave Wood first encountered sf in the nineteen forties. By 1950 he has found fandom and attended his first convention. In addition to being the advertising contact for the BSFA he edits his own fanzine, *Xyster*, enjoys reading, writing and listening to jazz. His favourite sf authors can be found within the pages of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, though he does have special fondness for Bester, Moore, Joseph, Sturgeon and Miller, who have written some of his all-time favourite books. His one regret in life is not mastering the alto sax. Oh, and this year he has been nominated for TAFF."

"Um, that sounds about right. I think it should have some effect."

He looks at me pityingly "I shouldn't be surprised", he says, and moves off.

Focus

After a lot of problems, *Focus* has arisen like a phoenix from the flames. The first issue under its new editor will be in the next mailing, and Liz Holliday sets out her plans below:

A DIFFERENT FOCUS

Focus has, over the last few years, acquired the reputation of being "the BSFA magazine that never is". I hope to be able to alter that reputation, and put *Focus* on a par with *Vector* in terms of production quality, content and reliability.

The only way I can see of doing this - and remember, I am really only talking about bringing the magazine back to what it was when it was founded - is by completely changing the philosophy behind it.

Some of you may remember that I intended to co-edit *Focus* with Paul Grunwell, last year, but couldn't, for career reasons. I did have a look at some of the submissions at the time, and the thing that amazed me was the sheer amateurishness of most of them. Not so much in terms of content, although that was, in some cases, pretty awful. No, the really shocking thing was the presentation of the material, most of which looked as if their author's didn't give a damn either about their work or about *Focus*. Perhaps they thought that since *Focus* didn't pay, they could be as amateur as they liked. It is that attitude I want to eradicate. *Focus* is for people who write, whether they have or will be published or not. I will expect the highest standards of submission; if BSFA members cannot live with that, I will look outside the BSFA, because I feel that only a professional attitude can rescue *Focus* (and make the BSFA more than the ghetto it sometimes feels like, but that's an argument for another article).

For instance, there has been a tradition of publishing fan fiction. It is not one I intend to continue. If a piece of work is good enough to see publication, it is good enough to be submitted to the professional magazines. If not, why pull down the standard of *Focus* by publishing it there? What I will do is to publish material for public workshops (with the author's agreement, of course). It will probably take a lot of nerve for anyone to let their work be used in this way - which is why I will start with one of my own (if anyone would like a copy of it to criticise, the address is below).

As for the rest, although I trust you are going to inundate me with articles, I have every intention of badgering an article out of every professional I can find an address for (Mr Aldiss, you have Been Warned!).

Submission Details:

Articles should be sent to: Liz Holliday
106 Twyford House
Chisley Road
London E15 6PB

Copydate: As this issue of *Matrix*

Format: If you really want to impress me, typed, double spaced on one side of paper. I can also take Amstrad CPC 6128 Tascard files on disc (but send return postage for the disc).

If you don't want to impress me: any other way you like - but I won't promise to read it (just like any other market, really).

ALL SUBMISSIONS SHOULD ENCLOSE A STAMPED SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE FOR THE RETURN OF UNUSED MATERIAL.

NEWS

Compiled by Paul Kincaid (with a little help from Locutus and other sources)

AWARDS

The nominations for the 1988 Arthur C. Clarke Award have been announced. They are:

Ancient Days - Michael Bishop (Picador)
Agypt - John Crowley (Gollancz)
Replay - Ken Grimwood (Granta)
Fiasco - Stanislaw Lem (Deutsch)
Grainne - Keith Roberts (Kerosina)
Memoirs of an Invisible Man - H.F. Saint (Viking)
The Sea and Summer - George Turner (Faber)

The £1,000 award for the best science fiction novel receiving its first publication in Britain during the previous calendar year, is judged by representatives of the British Science Fiction Association, the International Science Fiction Foundation, and the Science Fiction Foundation. The short list was selected by Paul Kincaid (BSFA), Dr Edward James (SFF) and Dr Maurice Goldsmith (ISFF). The final winner will be chosen

Keith Freeman reports that disaster struck just before Christmas, when a Membership List went astray. It's not the first time this has happened, so there is a procedure. The trouble was that the Christmas mail delayed everything. He hopes that all is straight now, but would like to apologise to the various new members who had a rather large gap between joining and receiving their first mailing.

New & Rejoined Members

M4356 Dec 88 Michael Abbott 71 Jesus Lane, Cambridge, CB5 8BS
 X4357 Dec 88 David Adams
 X4347 Jan 89 Robert M Albarn
 X4365 Dec 88 Peter Ashburn
 X4346 Jan 89 Sam Badham
 X4359 Nov 88 David Barclay
 M 7 Dec 88 Stephen Baynes 5 Westminster Gdns, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 0DF
 X4367 Dec 88 Deborah Beale
 M3227 Jan 89 Andrew Brown 20 Longhope Dr, Walton, Stone, Staffs ST15 0LA
 M 243 Jan 89 Terry Bull Land of Green Ginger, Front St, Tyneworth, Tyne and Wear
 X4335 Jan 89 Tony J Burtenshaw, 10 Donnington Rd, Woodlands, Brighton, S Sussex BN2 6VH
 X4330 Nov 88 Jon Cunningham
 X4328 Nov 88 Park 351, East 10th St, Apartment 28, New York, NY 10009 USA
 X4360 Aug 88 Paul Gaze
 X4353 Aug 88 David E Gordon
 X4345 Jan 89 Frank P Griffin
 X4338 Jan 89 Oliver Gruter Viesenstr. 46, 4300 Essen 1, West Germany
 X4332 Nov 88 Laco-Juoni Haahtala Annantie 11, 03100 Nummi, Finland
 X4339 Jan 89 Jeff Houghton 7 Leicester Ave, Droylesden, Rochester, Kent TN3 7GD
 X4336 Jan 89 Stephen R Hill 90 Wellington Rd, Boston, Linz, PE21 0LE
 X4328 Nov 88 Johani Hinkkanen
 X4355 Aug 88 Miss L D Inches
 U 7 Nov 88 Lou Jacobs
 X4361 Jan 89 Edgar John Jones
 X4354 Aug 88 Paul Jowett
 X4337 Jan 89 Patrick A Lawford
 X4358 Dec 88 Paul Liley
 X4350 Dec 88 Lee Lloyd 34 Ormesby Rd, RAF Coltishall, Norwich, Norfolk, NR10 5JF
 O4362 Dec 88 Heidi Rahol Marilaine 235A, E-0467 Oslo 4, Norway
 X4325 Oct 88 Peter C Marley 212 Jockette Rd, Chaulden, Essex, Saffron Walden, Essex IP7 2JF
 X4359 Dec 88 Craig Marlock 78 Queen St, Castle Douglas, Kirkcubright, DG7 7BG
 X4351 Dec 88 Stephen P Marshall
 X4342 Jan 89 Eekhard D Marwitz
 X4343 Jan 89 Vile Morrison 353 Camden Rd, London, N7 0SH
 X4344 Jan 89 Christine M Pearson
 X4340 Jan 89 Colette Kemp
 X4364 Dec 88 Mark Rundle 27 Manor Gdns, Lewestoke, Westsuser-Hare, Avon BS22 9JU
 X4366 Aug 88 Ian Salee
 X4351 Nov 88 David Salgado
 X4353 Jan 89 Noora Sheeran 5 Tipperline Rd, Edinburgh, EH10 5ET
 U 7 Nov 88 Viola A Sprengle
 X4349 Dec 88 Anne R Stinford 14 Minerva Terrace, Hoiwick, Auckland, New Zealand
 X4370 Dec 88 Michael Taylor 19 Lady Frances Dr, Market Rasen, Lincs, PE8 0JF
 P Thomas 12 Rose Grove, Rothwell, Leics, LE26 0QY
 X4352 Dec 88 Alan Tombs 38 Summer Rd, West Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 4BU

by these three, with Andy Sawyer (BSFA), David Pringle (SFF) and George Hay (ISFF).

The winner will be announced at Pollycon, the 1988 British Science Fiction Convention at Easter.

The short list for the BSFA Award has also been announced.

NOVEL

Consider Phlebas - Iain M. Banks
Agypt - John Crowley
Grainne - Keith Roberts
The Urth of the New Sun - Gene Wolfe

SHORT STORY

Krash-Bang Joe and the Pineal-Zen Equation' Eric Brown (Interzone 21)
 'The Only One' - David S. Garnett (Interzone 22)
 'Triptych' - Garrry Kilworth (Other Edens)
 'Love Sickness' - Geoff Ryan (Interzone 20/21)
 'Sexual Chemistry' - Brian Stableford (Interzone 20)

MEDIA

Disappearing Acts - Geoff Ryan
 Hellraiser Clive Barker

M4334 Jan 89 Martin Tudor 121 Cape Hill, Snettish, Varley, West Midlands, B66 4SH
 M4344 Jan 89 Leo Wallace 5 Meadowdale Gdns, Carryduff, Northern Ireland
 M3596 Nov 88 Jennifer S Watson 51 Shepherds Way, Liphook, Hants, GU30 7HH
 M4368 Dec 88 Keith Williams 49 Barclay Lodge, Donnington, Telford, Shropshire TF2 6AB
 M 472 Sep 88 David Wood 1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Cleveland, Avon
 M4358 Oct 88 Mrs Jeannie Lates 14 Norfolk Ave, South Tottenham, London, N15 6JX

CHANGE OF NAME AND ADDRESS

Ake H Jonsson is now Ake B Bartenstam and his new address is: Stabby Allie 118,752 29 Uppsala, Sweden

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

The following people now live at the following addresses:
 Harry Andruschak 946 W 220th St #106, Torrance, CA 90502-2256, USA
 Iain Banks Flat 3, 31 South Bridge, Edinburgh E1000 Glen Creek Office, San Diego, California 92131, USA
 Keith Brooks 84 Eade Rd, Norwich, Norfolk, NE3 3EL
 Rod Cameron 11 Balsacal Dr, Holmes Gchapel, Cheshire, CV4 7HY
 Mike Christie Ty Llyn, Llangorse, Powys, LD3 7UD
 John F Connors 97 Sweden Birch Hill, Brookline, Berks GERROR last list)
 Rochelle and Alan Drey Donstable, Beds, LYS 5SB
 Dreammathe Ltd PO Box 802, Hove, S Sussex, BN3 5QZ
 John English 45 St Paul's St, Brighton, E Sussex
 Paul Pitt 67 Weston Close, North Bersted, W Sussex
 Barry G Freeman 4 Ramsden Cl, Orpington, Kent, SE25 4JJ
 David W R Greenwood 92 Faubourg, 4120 Esch-Elzecht, Luxembourg
 George Keesle 22 Tania Rd, London, W3 3UB
 Chris Lewis 41 Chertsey St, Oxford, OX4 3L
 Mark McCulloch 10 Heathfield Terrace, Readingley, Leeds, LS6 4DE
 "Lauriel", Clos de sept, Rue Jacques, St Sampson, Guernsey, CI
 John R Ollis 49 Springfield Cres, Barmen, Herts
 Michael D Pickering 45 Barton Rd, Rushden, Northants, NN10 0ST
 Dr Mark Poulson Flat 10, Carey Court, Gravel Hill, Leamington, Kent
 John Rennie 43 Hopetoun Court, Bucksburn, Aberdeen
 John Schiannaki 8 E 450 Krijnja Studby, W-0864 Oslo 8, Norway
 David J Scott 43 Manor St, Middleborough, Cleveland, TS1 4BY
 Martin A Smith 51 Cambridge Rd, St Albans, Herts
 Dr John J Taylor 5 Brydgate Court, Videspon, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE13 7EX
 John T Thomson Gt Cranney, (Kirkew) 126 6705, Babjerg 0, Denmark
 LEFT:
 Frank Arnold; Simon J Bostock; John Botham; Ian Bridge; A S Brown; Tim Burgin; Bill Carlin; Steven Chatfield; Michael C Conroy; Andrew Greenwell; Catherine Crockett; GSIE Library; Dr Antonio Dupla; Edinburgh Univ SF & F Soc; John H Evans; Michael J Evis; Steven Fowler; E S Gennell; Richard A Harris; Michael Hodgkins; Mark James; Chris Jones; Maurice K; Maurice L; Luclock; Anne McAllister; As Saleema Mohamed; S J Moore; R T Parker; Laura Resnick; Ian D Robinson; Colin S Selby; Martin Sexton; David Saele; Terry Stanton; Michael Stone; Colin Swann; Steve Tabber

Performance - Geoff Ryman
SF Blues - Brian Aldiss & Ken Campbell
Star Cope - BBC

ARTWORK

Cover, *Vector 141* - Ian Brooks
Cover, *Worldcon Programme Book* - Jim Burns
Cover, *Graizae* - Keith Roberts
'The Good Robot', *Interzone 22* - SMS
Illustrations to 'The Philosophical Stone',
Interzone 21 - Russ Tudor

The winners of the World Fantasy Award were announced at the World Fantasy Convention last November.

NOVEL

Perfume - Patrick Suskind

NOVELLA

'Hatrack River' - Orson Scott Card

SHORT STORY

'Red Light' - David J. Schow

ANTHOLOGY/COLLECTION

Tales of the Quintana Roo - James Tiptree Jr

ARTIST

Robert Gould

SPECIAL AWARD - PROFESSIONAL

Jane Yolen

SPECIAL AWARD - NON-PROFESSIONAL

Jeff Conner (Scream/Press) and W. Paul Ganley (Weirdbook)

LIFE ACHIEVEMENT

Jack Finney

SPECIAL AWARD

Andre Norton

BRIDGE PUBLICATIONS and their British counterpart, NEW ERA, sponsors of the Writers of the Future competition, are apparently putting together a new competition, Artists of the Future. As yet there are no further details.

PEOPLE

Alex Stewart has announced the proposed contents for his *Demon Lovers* anthology coming out from NEL. The 17 stories about sex in space are by Kim Newman, Tanith Lee, David Langford, Anne Gay, Garry Kilworth, Stephen Gallagher, Iain M. Banks, Geraldine Harris, Chris Morgan, Freda Varrington, Alex Stewart, John Grant, Paul Kincaid, Simon Unsworth, Christina Lake, Diana Wynne Jones and Brian Stableford.

Meanwhile Chris Evans and Robert Holdstock are now taking no further submissions for *Other Edens 2*, which UNWIN are planning to bring out to coincide with the World Fantasy Convention this autumn.

But as one market closes, another opens. David Garnett is to edit a new collection of stories by British authors, provisionally entitled *Zenith*, which will be published by SPHERE in the spring of 1989.

There is no theme to the collection, but Garnett emphasises that this is to be a *science fiction* anthology - although he admits that his definition of SF is whatever he decides to buy. He is particularly interested in the traditional themes of science fiction - time travel and immortality,

artificial intelligence and alien creatures, other worlds and alternate dimensions - but written for a contemporary audience. He wants stories which generate excitement and enthusiasm: the kind of things which turned us all onto science fiction, and which will do the same for new readers.

Deadline for submissions is 30 June, to David Garnett, West Grange, Ferring Grange Gardens, Ferring, Sussex BN12 5HS.

All of a sudden it looks to be an excellent time for original anthologies in this country. In addition to the above anthologies, Kim Newman is putting together an anthology of horror stories for NEL, and Chris Morgan is also rumoured to be putting together an anthology of horror stories.

And, of course, there is always *Cassandra*. The new chairman is Simon Ings, and though the *Cassandra* magazine has been suspended, they will be continuing to publish *Fisheye* as a quarterly magazine of 100+ pages. *Fisheye* will publish both speculative and mainstream fiction, and Ings points out: "We are not a closed community. We want ideas and comments from as many sources as possible to further and broaden our work. If you're a writer not interested in SF, then you'll still find us an accessible and helpful group. If you enjoy SF but don't aim to write it for your living, we still need and value your company, your opinions and your knowledge. There are walls which divide readers and authors, devotees of genre and mainstream fiction. We're here to break down the walls."

Meanwhile, the *Cassandra* Workshops will continue. There are monthly discussions and two informal workshops planned for 1988, and the next formal workshop chaired by a professional author will be over Easter 1989. For further information about *Cassandra*, contact Simon Ings, 10 Marlows Ct., Lymer Ave., London SE19 1LP.

Gwyneth Jones is one of the speakers already lined up to take part in a conference on *The Practical Aspects of Science Fiction* to be held at the ICA, London, on Saturday 11 June. The conference is being organised by the International Science Policy Foundation as a follow-up to their conference on the same topic last summer.

Garry Kilworth has had to change the title of his new non-SF novel due to an unusual co-incidence. Set in a small Pacific community threatened by the sea, it was originally titled *Rocky Road Wave*. However, though his publishers, BODLEY HEAD, were keen to buy the book, they had just exchanged contracts on another novel with the same unusual title. Hence, Kilworth has re-titled his novel *Carpenter's Wave*. It is due out later this year.

Robert Holdstock has completed the long-awaited sequel to his award-winning *Mythago Wood*. He is apparently now looking for a publisher for the book.

Vector reviewers, Rosemary and Darroll Pardoe have collaborated on a book examining the legend of Pope Joan. The book, entitled *The Female Pope*, is due out from CRUCIBLE in March.

David Pringle, author of *Science Fiction: The 100*

Best Novels, is now completing a follow-up to that book called *Fantasy: The 100 Best Novels*. It will have the same format as its predecessor, summaries of and comments upon 100 fantasy novels published since 1945. The book is due to be delivered to the publishers, XANADU, by the time this issue of *Matrix* appears, and should be published later in the year.

John Clute is putting together a collection of critical essays on Gene Wolfe, and the likely publisher is the American SERCONIA PRESS.

Doris Lessing and PAN BOOKS have paid "substantial" libel damages to journalist Jeff Harmon, and cameraman Alexander Lindsay. Lessing had suggested that parts of a film about Afghanistan made by Harmon and Lindsay had been the work of the Mujahideen, and she had accused them of "timidity and cowardice".

Meanwhile, Lessing's new book, *The Fifth Child* about an 11-pound troll born to a normal family, is published by CAPE later this spring.

B.P. Thompson, the famous historian and anti-nuclear campaigner, has turned to science fiction for his first novel, *The Sykano Papers*, about a space traveller causing us to consider our wicked ways. It is due out from BLOOMSBURY.

Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee's three novel deal with BANTAN, mentioned last issue, not only includes the sequel to *Reckless* with *Rams* (due for delivery to BANTAN in March 1989), but also the sequel to *Cradle*, which is being published in this country by GOLLANCZ in July. Meanwhile, a film is being made of *Cradle*, which Clarke himself is co-producing with Peter Guber for WARNER FILMS, and movie options have also been bought for *The Songs of Distant Earth*, *The Fountains of Paradise* and *A Fall of Moondust*.

Pamela Zoline, whose story 'The Heat Death of the Universe' was one of the most renowned and highly acclaimed works of the New Wave in the 1960s, has a collection, *Runy About the Tree of Life* out from the WOMEN'S PRESS. 'The Heat Death of the Universe' is, of course, one of the five stories included.

From My Guy to Sci-Fi is the rather unfortunate title of a series of sessions on women and writing being staged by the ICA, The Mall, London. The sessions are all at 7.30 on Tuesday, beginning 12 January. Unfortunately, by the time this mailing goes out it will be too late for the session on science fiction which is being organised by Roz Kaveney on Tuesday 2 February.

Cambridgeshire Libraries are organising a Science Fiction and Fantasy Festival, under the title "Exploring Other Worlds". It will run in May.

As part of the festival they have organised two competitions. There is a photographic competition on the theme "Exploring Other Worlds", and a "Design Your Own Fantasy World" competition co-sponsored by TSR, the role-playing games manufacturers. Prizes will be presented at the festival launch at Cambridge Central Library on 3 May.

The early part of May will feature musical workshops by composer Nigel Morgan at five venues throughout the county. During the latter half of the month there will be panels of three authors appearing at nine venues throughout the county. Also during May, Cambridge Central Library will have a display of the Krazy Kat Archives on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Other events being considered include role playing in libraries, and a booklist is being compiled.

For more information on the festival contact: Michael Williamson, Libraries and Information Service, Castle Court, Shire Hall, Cambridge CB3 0AP.

OBITUARIES

Frank Arnold a long time British fan and a familiar figure at the London Group Meetings for as long as anyone can remember, died in November. We understand that he wished his book collection, which includes a near-complete collection of H.G. Wells' novels in their first edition, to go to the BSFA Library, and we hope that we will soon be able to announce that his bequest is housed with our library in the Science Fiction Foundation.

Anthony Vest died just after Christmas 1987, aged 73. The illegitimate son of H.G. Wells and Rebecca Vest, he was a writer on a variety of subjects, but waited until after the death of his mother before revealing her affair with Wells. For many years Vest himself did not know who his father was, and this fact overshadowed a career of promise that was never quite fulfilled.

PUBLISHING

Following Toby Roxburgh's departure from MACDONALD/FUTURA, his former responsibilities have been split in two. Taking over as the new paperback editor is long-time fan John Jarrold.

The 1987 paperback bestseller list reveals a high number of SF, fantasy and horror titles in the top 100.

The highest position goes to James Herbert for *The Magic Cottage*, which reached number 8 on the charts, grossing £579,367.

Other books on the list are:

12. *It* - Stephen King (£523,679)
36. *The Bachman Books* - Stephen King (£203,014)
37. *Mallorcan 1* - David Eddings (£202,864)
38. *Mirror of Her Dreams* - Stephen Donaldson (£195,341)
43. *Foundation & Earth* - Isaac Asimov (£177,927)
47. *Darkness at Sethanon* - Raymond Feist (£172,672)
67. *Contact* - Carl Sagan (£145,066)
98. *Perru* - Patrick Suskind (£104,763)

GOLLANCZ have produced their spring list, and following the example they set last year seem to have expanded their science fiction selection yet again. The list features new books by Arthur C. Clarke, William Gibson, Bob Shaw, Terry Pratchett, Brian Aldiss and Philip K. Dick among many others.

The selection is headlined by *Cradle* - Arthur C. Clarke & Gentry Lee due in July: two investigators "see what looks like a large hole, with metallic-looking 'lips' in the ocean floor, and emanating from the opening, a set of marks that look like tank tracks."

Other titles are *None Lisa Overdrive*, the final novel in William Gibson's cyberspace sequence due

in April: *The Sky Lords* - John Brosnan, due in March, concerns the scattered remnants of humanity "after the world has been devastated by the Gene Wars".

Best SF Stories of Brian W. Aldiss is a collection of around 20 pieces that will be published in April, while a companion volume, *Best Fantasy Stories of Brian W. Aldiss* is due in the autumn.

There are two sequels in the list, *The Wooden Spaceships* is the second part of Bob Shaw's trilogy begun with *The Ragged Astronauts*, and is due in March, and in the same month there is *Reign of Fire* by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg with William B. Rossum, volume two of *Lear's Daughters*.

Gregory Benford has two books on the list, *Great Sky River* in February is the first part of a trilogy set a thousand years in the future, while in July there's his first collection of short stories, *In Alien Flesh*.

For many people, no doubt, the best news is the appearance of *Sourcery* by Terry Pratchett, the fifth novel in his Discworld series, while other established writers on the list include Ian Watson with *The Fire Worm*, set "on the strange frontier where science fiction fuses with horror", in June; *At Winter's End* by Robert Silverberg in May is "set in the almost inconceivably distant future"; while Phillip K. Dick's *Pioneers* in July concerns adapted humans and an earth that has undergone a catastrophic collapse.

There are new writers on the list also: *Interzone* regular Richard Kadrey has his first novel, *Metrophage* out in July; the highly acclaimed Pat Cadigan's first novel, *Mindplayers* appears in February; while Britain's own Paul McAuley has *Four Hundred Billion Stars* due in April.

There is also one undeniable classic on the list: *Norstrilia*, Cordwainer Smith's only SF novel, receives simultaneous hardback and paperback publication in March.

Fans of Philip K. Dick are especially well served by Gollancz this Spring. In February they publish *Mary and the Giant*, one of the first but also one of the best of Dick's mainstream novels, while in June they are publishing his children's novel, *Wick and the Glimmung*, an SF comedy written in 1966 and featuring a variety of odd creatures such as "wubs, werjes, spiddles, printers, nunks and trobes".

The GOLLANCZ paperback line seems to have been similarly expanded, but the Gollancz Classic SF series has now become a part of the A-format VGSF series, and will be known as VGSF Classics. The VGSF Classics will, however, continue to be numbered.

The VGSF line for the spring is as follows:

February - *Varlock of the Witch World* - Andre Norton, *Strength of Stones* - Greg Bear, *Buy Jupiter* - Isaac Asimov, *Rendezvous with Rama* - Arthur C. Clarke.

March - *The Tree of Swords and Jewels* - C.J. Cherryh, *The Time Hoppers* - Robert Silverberg, *In the Valley of the Statues* - Robert Holdstock, *Norstrilia* - Cordwainer Smith.

April - *Sorceress of the Witch World* - Andre Norton, *Who Goes Here?* - Bob Shaw, *The Space Machine* - Christopher Priest.

May - *Robot Dreams* - Isaac Asimov, *Tuf Voyaging* - George R.R. Martin, *Dome* - Michael Reaves & Steve Perry, *Dawn* - Octavia Butler, *Heaven* - C.J. Cherryh, *Shadrach in the Furnace* - Robert Silverberg, *Big Planet* - Jack Vance, *The Deep Range* - Arthur C. Clarke.

June - *The Wave and the Flame* - Marjorie Bradley Kellogg & William B. Rossum, *Five-Twelfths of Heaven* - Melissa Scott, *The Rediscovery of Man* - Cordwainer Smith.

July - *Great Sky River* - Gregory Benford, *Where Time Winds Blow* - Robert Holdstock, *Floating Worlds* - Cecilia Holland.

HEADLINE still seem to be avoiding SF in their hardback list, though they are issuing Dean R. Koontz's horror thriller, *Lightning* in May.

Their paperback list, however, does include some of the most highly praised new writers to emerge in America over the last few years. Among them are Pat Murphy - *The Falling Woman* and Stephen Leigh - *The Bones of God* both in January; Terry Bisson - *Wyrdmaker* and S.P. Somtow *The Shattered Horse* both in February; Lois McMaster Bujold - *Shards of Honour* and Stephen Leigh again with *Slow Fall to Dawn* both in May.

Other SF and related titles on HEADLINE's list are: Tony Richards - *The Harvest Bride*, Simon Hawke - *The Pimpernel Plot* and *The Zenda Vendetta*, Isaac Asimov, Martin Greenberg, Charles Vaughn (eds) - *Encounters*, Marion Zimmer Bradley (ed) - *Sword & Sorceress I*, Raymond Harris - *The Broken Worlds*, Charles Sheffield - *The Windmiller Hunt*, Claudia J. Edwards - *A Horsewoman in Godland*, Chet Williamson - *Ask Wednesday*, Dean R. Koontz - *Watchers* and Craig Shaw Gardner - *A Malady of Magicks*.

CRUCIBLE, the imprint responsible for last year's *Ghosts and Scholars* anthology of ghost stories in the style of M.R. James (see review in *Vector* 141), is planning to publish more English ghost stories. Lined up for 1988 are a collection by Sheridan LeFanu, and a book of previously uncollected ghost stories by E.F. Benson, perhaps better known as the creator of the Kapp and Lucia books.

The Spring Lists which all publishers produce at this time of year hold many other delights for SF readers:

The new novel from Kurt Vonnegut is called *Bluebeard*, but apart from the fact that it is to be published by CAPE, we have no further details at the moment.

Michael Moorcock's new novel, *Mother London*, covers the years from World War Two until the present, and uses the city itself as his central character. It will be published by SECKER.

Peter Carey, the young Australian novelist responsible for the extraordinary *Illywhacker*, has his first new novel since then coming out from FABER. It is called *Oscar and Lucinda*.

There's a challenging dystopia from the exiled Russian writer Vladimir Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, which will be published by CAPE.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1988

ARROW: *Communism* - Whitley Streiber.

CENTURY: *The Infinity Concerto* and *The Serpent Mage* - Greg Bear.

FUTURA: *The Alien Debt* - F.M. Busby, *Web of Wind* - J.P. Rivkin, *The Forge in the Forest* - Michael Scott Rohan.

GOLLANCZ: *Great Sky River* - Gregory Benford, *Mindplayers* - Pat Cadigan, *Mary and the Giant* - Philip K. Dick.

MEDIA REVIEWS

GRAFTON: 2061: *Odyssey Three* - Arthur C. Clarke, *The Children of Ashgaroth* - Richard Ford, *The Burrows Beneath* - Brian Lumley, *Darkspell* - Katharine Kerr, *The Krugg Syndrome* - Angus McAllister.

HEADLINE: *Encounters* - Ed. Isaac Asimov, Martin Greenberg & Charles Vaughn, *Wyrdenker* - Terry Breson, *The Pimpernel Pilot* - Simon Hawke, *The Bones of God* - Stephen Leigh, *The Falling Woman* - Pat Murphy, *The Shattered Horse* - S.P. Somtow.

HODDER: *The Tommyknockers* - Stephen King.

LEGEND: *Blood Music* - Greg Bear, *Wyrms* - Orson Scott Card, *The Deryni Archives* - Katherine Kurtz, *Time Out of Mind* - John R. Maxin, *The Misplaced Legion* - Harry Turtledove.

MAGNET: *The Dream Catcher* - Monica Hughes.

NEL: *Starquake* - Robert L. Forward, *Sentenced to Prism* - Alan Dean Foster, *Crabs: The Human Sacrifice* - Guy M. Smith, *A Blackbird in Amber* - Freda Warrington.

PALADIN: *The Revelations of Dr Modesto* - Alan Harrington.

TITAN: *Don't Panic* - Neil Gaiman.

UNWIN: *Khalidaine* - Richard Burns.

VGSF: *Buy Jupiter* - Isaac Asimov, *Strength of Vosses* - Greg Bear, *Rendezvous with Rama* - Arthur C. Clarke, *Merlock of the Witch World* - Andre Norton.

MEDIA

SHEER ENTERTAINMENT have announced what they call a "wild sci-fi comedy adventure", set for video release in February. *Star Slammer* (18) certainly seems to fall a little short of the intellectual levels of *Star Wars*, with characters like "Hunk Hardigan, the ultimate in inter-galactic balitosis", while the heroine is described as "blonde, beautiful and bereft of a full wardrobe". What actors like John Carradine and Aldo Ray are doing in the film probably owes more to bank accounts than artistic merit. The press release seems to get the tone about right: it "is especially compatible with a few beers after the pubs have shut!"

MISCELLANEOUS

THATCHER TO ANNOUNCE ALIEN CONTACT! That is going to be the headline of the year, at least according to American psychics. When the writers of the horoscope columns in America's tabloid newspapers came to make their predictions for 1988, they declared that the Prime Minister would reveal the "incredible proof that other civilisations exist in space." This, of course, topped other world shattering events such as the divorce of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, who is apparently going become a fashion designer in Los Angeles. A dangerous place to be, since a new skin disease in California is going to make everyone come out in black blotches.

Of course, these predictions aren't always totally accurate. The top prediction for 1987 was that actor James Garner would be kidnapped by space aliens, and nothing further has been heard about that story - though maybe Whitley Streiber has something to say on the subject.

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

Golan and Globus, 1987
Directed by Gary Goddard

Reviewed by John Feetenby

Forget the gold and frankincense, this year we got myrrh-chandising. And the most blatant example has to have been Cannon's *Masters of the Universe*, a film whose bizarre retro-evolution from plastic toy to crudely animated TV series to big budget movie is so contrary to the natural way of things that it is almost appealing from the outset. I did have the feeling that not being au fait with the pre-defined, blister-packed universe might be some sort of handicap, but, immediately after the credits, a voice-over stated the initial conditions, and each character was introduced quickly and clearly.

At the centre of the Universe is the planet Eternia, where the Sorceress, a hi-tech Glinda the Good Witch, keeps things in balance. As we join the action, evil Skeletor and his hench-things have just staged a coup in a bid for universal power, and also seem intent on giving He-Man some grief, just as soon as they can find him.

He-Man, and his two companions, Man-at-Arms and Teela, find a latex gnome called Gwildor, who has created a teleport device, since stolen by Skeletor, which is how he was so easily able to stage his invasion. At the height of a skirmish, He-Man and company, thanks to Gwildor setting random co-ordinates on the teleporter, jump through a swirly coloured hole which Gwildor states could drop them onto any planet at any point in time.

If you can't guess straightaway which place and which era they are going to pop up in, then you haven't been paying attention to current fantasy movie trends. Late eighties America it is then, and there is now scope for the usual contemporary young couple, and easy humour through the central characters' lack of familiarity with our world. Skeletor's minions follow shortly afterwards, and the remainder of the film is a quest/chase affair, with colour-coded laser battles, quiet interludes, wise-cracking humour, and an ending as illogical as it is predictable.

A flip summary like this makes the film sound pretty awful, which isn't quite fair as the plot is the film's only major weakness. The script is credited to David Odell, and I think it's to him that any blame must go. His basically empty stories have lacked such potential winners as *Dark Crystal* and *Supergirl* in the past. He, at least, has the knack, now, of using more than one strand of plot, but still uses dialogue by way of rent-a-cliché, and has a tendency to fall back on simplicity, depicting a scenario where men are men, women are also men, and stereotyping is word processing with two fingers.

This matters less than it might, because of the film's strengths in other areas. Frank Langella makes a superb Skeletor, even behind a mask, and is counter-pointed cleverly by Meg Foster as Evil-Lyn, his chief cohort. Dolph Lundgren, last seen denting his face against Sylvester Stallone's fist in *Rocky IV*, is also ideally cast as He-Man, putting the butch back into butchery.

Richard Edlund's special effects are gaudy and grand, Moebius' designs are intriguing. Gary Goddard's first-time direction shows a good degree of accomplishment; and when all this is combined with speed and fluidity and Bill Conti's manipulative score, the film becomes quite galvanising. It's loud, fast and professional.



I enjoyed it, certainly, but I'm hesitant about saying that it's a good film. I still worry about the arbitrariness of it; after all, we never find out why Skeletor is bad, and why He-Man is good. And I never quite lost the depressing feeling that the movie was just designed to shift a product.

SCREENS TWO: THE VISION: BBC2 January 10th 105 mins
Written by William Nicholson; Produced by David M Thompson; Directed by Norman Stone

Reviewed by Ben Stavelay-Taylor

Sometimes the genre of science fiction becomes so obsessed with being "original" that good plots get left untreated for fear of being called derivative. Then along comes a production like *The Vision*, from a mainstream source, with such a powerful and convincing approach to the age-old themes of brainwashing and corruption that it makes you think, "Why didn't anyone do it before?"

The plot in brief: satellite TV is gathering pace in Europe, but it's such a huge investment that only a very few organisations can afford it. The People Channel is funded by a nebulous religious outfit in America, who need a cosy front-man for their European broadcasts. They duly hire Dirk Bogarde, an avuncular ex-chat show host who badly needs the money.

The People Channel is into a seemingly make-or-break investment: to get the maximum viewing figures, they give away free satellite dishes to all subscribers. The question is, where is the £2 billion that the People Channel needs coming from, and why?

Indeed, the screenplay makes it very clear from the outset that something is most definitely up. Besuited heavies always lurk in the background, and there is a restricted access area of the headquarters which, it turns out, seems to be politically subverting the government.

However, the strength of *The Vision* is that it resists the urge to get drawn into this futuristic

political melodrama. Nowhere do we see MPs being bribed, or Mr Big from America becoming Dictator of the World. Instead, the action revolves around Dirk Bogarde's quintessentially English family, and their gut feeling that all can't be what it seems.

Dirk isn't what he seems either, and is having an affair. The People Channel, seemingly as a vetting process to protect themselves against possible scandals, uncover it and confront him. He resigns, the affair hits the paper, his lover kills herself, the family takes it stoically. It's the publicity the People Channel were praying for, to be seen to be sacking someone for adultery and so promoting family virtues. They successfully thwart Bogarde's plans to rumble them live on air, and the channel's launch carries on apace.

The Vision was at its best probing the complacency of the establishment. What was genuinely frightening was the convincing ease with which the sinister Lee Remick, the People Channel's European head, sweet-talked the British system into giving in. The broadcasting authorities blessed them because, otherwise, their £2 billion would have gone to Munich; the Government Minister blessed them because he saw the People Channel as promoting morality against the BBC's sex and violence. On first viewing, *The Vision* may seem anti-American, but it was really just as much pointing out how society lays itself open to exploitation.

Where it was less successful was where it aspired to pretensions of being a thriller. The sub-plot of subversion was irrelevant, since it was both unbelievable and unnecessary; the mere existence of an American fundamentalist station was quite sinister enough. And having raised the matter, it was never followed through, so the viewer was left at the end wondering whether their political schemings were successful.

Overall, *The Vision* was a superbly acted and thought-provoking drama. I'll never be able to watch *Songs of Praise* in quite the same way again.

Members' Noticeboard

WRITERS - Let's review one another's stories on a regular basis, for mutual encouragement and feedback. Personally, I feel the current paucity of markets, especially in the UK, is a real downer, and I'd like to do something about it, starting now. The deal is, you send a story to me and I send you a story in return. You write your comments onto the text in pencil, and supply a one-page summary of what you thought. And you turn it round inside a week. OK? I've got the time and intent to take this further. Tell your friends, and send your stories to: John Duffield, 24 Fordwich Rise, Hertford, SG14 2BB

* WANTED *

Paperbacks or hardcovers of: Josephine Saxton - Group Feast; Vector for Seven; Harlan Ellison - Over the Edge; Ellison Wonderland; Gentleman Junkie; James Tiptree Jr - Starsong from an Old Primate, 10,000 Light Years from Home; Lisa Tuttle - Familiar Spirit; Tom Reamy - Blind Voices R & Lafferty - Any

Records or taped copies of: Janis Ian - Who Really Care; Miracle Row; Janis Joplin - Janis (OST & rare tracks); Leonard Cohen - Songs from a Room; Baby Tuckoo - first LP; Paul Simon - Songbook; There goes Rhymain' Simon; Little Steven - Voice of America; Nazareth - Greatest Hits; The Band - Songs from Big Pink

Any similar suggestions or exchange lists welcome. Contact: Kevin McVeigh, 37 Fire Rd, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7QF

THE BRUSSELS SCIENCE FICTION GROUP meets on the second Wednesday of every month at The Drum, 25 Avenue Auderghe, 1040 Brussels. Contact: Graham Andrews (Tele 734 1694) or David Stewart (Tele 675 0126).

* * * * *

MEMBERS UNITE and help a frustrated collector. Books 2 and 3 of the Saberhagen series, *The Book of Swords*, from Macdonald, are desperately required. Hardback editions in good or mint condition only.

Phone A A Morris on 061 773 8426, after 6pm

* * * * *

Eric Brown would like copies of the August and December 1969 issues of *Vision of Tomorrow SF* magazine, both of which contain stories by Michael Coney. He is willing to buy or exchange them for a mint copy of *The Visitors* by Clifford Simak (Hardback, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981)

Contact him at 32 Mytholmes Lane, Haworth, Keighley, W Yorks, BD22 8EZ

* FOR SALE *

Roy Denison finds himself having to pare his SF collection and is consequently disposing of approximately 1000 books. A sales list can be obtained from him at 61 Ruddersfield Rd, Barnsey, S Yorks S75 1DR for a stamped addressed envelope.

Competition Corner

In *Matrix* 73 we gave you a list of well-known science fiction and fantasy characters, and asked you, in each case, to name the author and title of the books from which they came. There were three entries, a poor response to this competition considering that there was a nice break for research over Christmas, (was the quiz too long, I wonder) but I think we can award a prize this time. The lucky winner in this case is actually winners. Richard Cooper and Kev McVeigh each scored 41 points out of a possible 60, and despite rechecking each entry several times, I can't separate them. So book tokens for both of you are on their way. Nicholas Mahoney comes in third with a respectable 36 out of 60. One point was given for each correct author, and another for each correct title.

And the answers were:

1. Little Big - John Crowley
2. Nova - Samuel R Delaney
3. Mission of Gravity - Hal Clement
4. The Moon is a Harsh Mistress - Robert Heinlein
5. Tiger, Tiger (The Stars My Destination) - Alfred Bester
6. Man in a High Castle - Philip K Dick
7. Arrive at Easterwine/Thus We Frustrate Charlemagne - R A Lafferty
8. Lord of Light - Roger Zelazny
9. Macroscopic - Piers Anthony
10. Foundation - Isaac Asimov
11. Moon of Three Rings - Andre Norton
12. The Dispossessed - Ursula K Leguin
13. Dorsai (The Genetic General) - Gordon R Dickson
14. Greybeard - Brian Aldiss
15. PEACE - Gene Wolfe
16. Slan - A E Van Vogt
17. The Chalk Giants - Keith Roberts
18. Count Zero - William Gibson
19. The Weirdstone of Brisingamen - Alan Garner
20. Consider Phlebas - Iain M Banks
21. The Long Arm of Gil Hamilton/The Patchwork Girl - Larry Riven
22. Sirens of Titan - Kurt Vonnegut
23. Queen of the States - Josephine Saxton
24. Inverted World - Christopher Priest
25. Eye among the Blind - Robert Holdstock
26. Woman on the Edge of Time - Marge

Maureen Porter's sales list has been delayed by an unfortunate technical hitch (having to reorganise the list and reprint it) but should be with interested people within a fortnight. Anyone else who would like a list should contact her at the editorial address. All sorts of goodies available.

CONSPIRACY FAN ROOM PUBLICATIONS

NOW READ ON - A Collection of Recent British Fanwriting ed. Rob Hansen

THE STORY SO FAR - A Brief History of British Fandom 1931 - 1987 by Rob Hansen

FLATFAN STORIES by Dave Langford. A collection of Dave's writings. Each publication costs £2

EMBRYONIC JOURNEY comp. Graham James. A collection representing fan writing over the last fifty years. Price £1

All items available from Greg Pickersgill at 7a Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London W5. Cheques should be made payable to Conspiracy, with a flat rate of 50p postage per order.

AGUIRIES - Issue 7 now available, issue 8 printing. Issue 9 will be a theme edition on Time, and from issue 10 contributors will be paid £2 per 1000 words (illios and poetry negotiable).

£1 per issue (inc p&p) or a subscription for 4 issues is £3.80. Cheques to N Morton.

Contact: Nik Morton, 48 Anglesey Rd, Alverstone, Gosport, Hants, PO12 2BQ

Piercy: 27. 1984 - George Orwell: 28. Behold the Man - Michael Moorcock: 29. Norstrilia (The Underpeople/The Planet Buyer) - Cordwainer Smith: 30. Dune - Frank Herbert

Thank you to John Fairay and Paul Kincaid for their sterling work in compilation

Liz Sourbut has compiled the quiz for *Matrix* 74, so over to her.

Below are the last line of 20 short stories, most famous, one or two not so famous. Two points for each correct title, one for each correct author. The one with the most points wins.

1. Overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out.
2. The long night had come again.
3. And then he went into his office, going *rrreee, rrrree, rrrree, rrrree*.
4. *Abel knew!*
5. I turned around and started down the steps; and the thought struck me, and made me terribly sad, so that I blinked and smiled just from reflex: it was probably just as well to leave it there till morning, because there was nothing in it that wasn't mine, anyway.
6. "Third Child, we are going home!"
7. But Wedderburn himself was bright and garrulous upstairs in the glory of his strange adventure.
8. I didn't do anything to die for - I didn't do anything -
9. "What? Oh, yess, sir!"
10. It was only the first of his lies.
11. I thought of the radiation that must have eleted over the far side of the world, and wondered if our children would colonise Europe, or Asia, or Africa.
12. For a moment they saw the nations of the dead, and, before they joined them, scraps of the untainted sky.
13. Next day it snowed, and killed off half the crops - but it was a good day.
14. Straining his eyes, Faial could just see a tiny cluster of lights where the colonies at L5 were rising above the hidden bulk of Africa.
15. But the corpse was already rotting in the doctors' dissecting rooms and would soon be destroyed.
16. He prepared himself, unafraid, for the Earth's blind embrace.
17. Then we must put him in a chamber, and lose him, and drive him mad with loss, in the sure and certain hope of a sane and loving resurrection thirty years hence - so that He does not harrow Hell, and carry it back to Earth with Him.
18. But Keawe ran to Kukua light as the wind; and great was their joy that night; and great, since then, has been the peace of all their days in the Bright House.
19. I snapped the recorder shut and ran to squeeze in behind them.
20. "Murderers," Itin said, and the water ran down from his lowered head and streamed away into the darkness.

Please send entries, by the next *Matrix* deadline, to Elizabeth Sourbut at (new address) Home Farm, Moreby, Stillingfleet, York YO4 6HN

Thanks, Liz, and I hope you attract more entries than I managed to.



The Periodic Table

CONVENTION ROUNDUP

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ...

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

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

2nd KONGRESS DER PHANTASIE; 11-15 May
Membership 35DM attending; Contact: Erster
Deutscher Fantasy Club, PF 1371 D-6390 Passau 1,
West Germany

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 Cherryh; Membership:
Attending £10, Supporting £5; Info: Albacoon '88,
Mark Meenan, Burnawn, Stirling 88; Dumbarton, G82
2PJ

CONIWR 5-7 August, Oxford Polytechnic; Guest:
Terry Pratchett; Membership: supporting £4,
attending £9; Contact: c/o Ivan Towlson, 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 Larrabetti; Membership: Attending £8 Supporting
£4; Contact: Wincon, 11 Rutland St, Hanley, Stoke-
on-Trent, ST1 5JG

WOLACON II - The 46th Worldcon; 1-5 September, New
Orleans, LA; Guests: Donald A Wolheim/Roger Sims;
Membership: £19 supporting until 14/7/88 Attending
£45 until 14/7/88. Info: UK Agent, Linda
Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London,
W5 4XJ. Linda is trying to make group travel
arrangements so ask for details.

ARMADACON 23-25 September, Ballard Centre,
Plymouth; Guest: Katherine Kurtz; Registration:
£10 for the weekend £5 per day until Easter, then
£15 for the weekend or £7.50 per day, also four 9"
x 4" saes; Contact: c/o M Corneli, 4 Glenaele
Avenue, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 5HL

CONSCRIPTION 24-25 September, Cobden Hotel,
Birmingham; Membership: Attending £10, Supporting
£6, Pre-con publications £2; Contact: Henry Balen,
8 Vest Ave, Valthamstow, London, E17 9QN; A
convention designed especially for those involved
in, or interested in, convention organisation.

NOVACON 18 - Annual Brum Group Convention;
4-6 November, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham;
Guest: Garry Kilworth; Membership: £10 (£15 on
door); Contact: Novacon 18, c/o Bernie Evans, 7
Grove Avenue, Acoccs Green, Birmingham, B27 7UY

1989 CONVENTIONS

CONTRIVANCE - 1989 British SF Convention/Eastercon
24-27 March 1989, Jersey; Guests: Anne McCaffrey/
M John Harrison/Avedon Carol/Rob Hansen;
Membership: Attending £15 Supporting £8; Contact:
63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey

NOREASCON III - The 47th Worldcon; 31 August - 4
September 1989, Boston, MA; Guests: Andre
Norton/Betty & Ian Ballantine/The Stranger Club;
UK Agent: Colin Fine, 28 Abbey Rd, Cambridge, CB5
8HQ

1990 Conventions

CONFICTION - The 48th Worldcon; 23-27 August 1990,
The Hague, Holland; Guests: Joe Haldeman/Volfgang
Jeschke/Harry Harrison/Chelsea Quinn Yarbro/
Andrew Porter; Registration: Attending £7.50,
Supporting £16, Children £9 (if they will be under
14 in 1990); UK Agent: Colin Fine, 28 Abbey Rd,
Cambridge, CB5 8HQ

1988 CONVENTIONS

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

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



WRITE BACK

The Letter Column

BETTER, DEFINITELY BETTER. AFTER MY HEARTRENDING plea for more correspondence, the pile behind the door when I returned from my Christmas holiday was quite cheering. And some of it was even for *Matrix*, which was even more cheering.

The deadline for the next mailing is:

Friday MARCH 18th 1988

so if a few more of you would like to put pen to paper, I'd be only too happy to see the results. As usual, though, I reserve the right to shorten and edit as necessary.

And now, on with the show. Amazingly, there were only two letters commenting the recent crisis the BSFA found itself in, now happily resolved. I'm really not certain whether to be alarmed or comforted by this lack of comment - does it indicate understanding and acceptance of the problem and solution, or simply indifference. Only you can say. However, we had a long letter from Trevor Jones commenting on the state of the BSFA, which I reprint in full.

Trevor Jones
1 Ravenshoe, Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Cambs,
PE18 8DE

AT LONG LAST, AN ITEM IN *MATRIX* HAS INTERESTED ME enough to elicit a response. Some hard-hitting article? A contentious book review? A controversial editorial? No. I'm writing about the results of the BSFA survey conducted by Nik Morton

and published in *Matrix* 73 (pp 12/13). At long last I know I'm not alone! The views of the membership, as summarised by Nik, are almost precisely my own. The criticisms voiced by his respondents are my own exactly - the difficulties he highlights are the difficulties I myself had seen the BSFA slipping into. Indeed, some of them are difficulties I have encountered myself, in the production and promotion of my own publications.

To take the main points, one by one. Firstly, it seems to me that there is an unwarranted emphasis on written SF in the pages of your publications. My own initiation into the world of SF was with the classic old SF 'zines, *Astounding*, *Galaxy*, *FASP*, the *Carnell New Worlds* and so on. I love written SF, particularly the short story form, now an endangered species. However, I recognise that times have changed. Three million people watch the umpteenth repeat of *Star Trek*; *Star Wars* and its sequels do enormous business at the box office, youngsters grow up with an almost saturation level of (albeit crude) SF in the form of TV cartoons, adventure and computer games, Dr Who etc. If you want to increase the BSFA's membership you've got to give this potential army of new members something to interest them. At present there's not enough, and too often any coverage of such items takes the form of pseudo-intellectual sneering putdowns. The sort of stuff I'm talking about isn't my idea of ideal SF by any means, but to attract today's youngsters you've got to give them something to interest them, together with a wider overview of the SF world, so that they are encouraged to try other forms and have their imaginations further stimulated. The SF 'snobs' among your membership will no doubt be outraged at the suggestion, but that's their tough luck. If you want to progress beyond 1000 or so members (do you?) then you must widen your appeal.

Secondly, you must eliminate political bias from the BSFA. For whatever reason, it often seems to me that the membership of the BSFA is dominated by groups of vociferous minorities. Feminists, left-wing socialists, ecologists, CNP, gay rights campaigners. You name it, it's there. Also there seems to be a sort of pseudo-intellectual literary snobbery pervading the writing of a great many of your contributors and precious little appreciation of what the ordinary (if there is such a thing) SF fan (or, more importantly, potential SF fan) likes and requires. Don't get me wrong, I'm not against these minorities having a voice in SF, but I'd like to see some balancing opinion from the other side of the spectrum. There seems to be a sort of "Militant Tendency" of SF pundits, who seem to think that theirs is the only true path. As Nik points out, this biased political stance is not indicated in your advertising and must put off many recruits. It makes my blood boil certainly, and I'm by no means a supporter of Mrs Thatcher!

But my main point of agreement is with Nik's point about the encouragement of developing SF writers. *Focus* has, apparently, bitten the dust (again!) and there seems precious little interest among the BSFA powers-that-be in starting it up again. Yet I know (from publishing my own fiction 'zines) that there are many, many fans and potential pros out there, writing short stories that will never be published because there is only one professional SF 'zine in the UK and that has an editorial policy so narrow as to exclude large sections of the genre entirely. My magazines (*Dread* and *New Moon*) can do only a little to encourage the development of new writers, but we do what we can (including making small payments for work published) and other individuals are doing their bit also. (Nik Morton's own *Auriges*, Mike Hearn's *Opus* and others.) But we could use a bit of help from the BSFA. More publicity, both for potential readers and writers, longer reviews - at least an interest in what we're trying to do. Since I'm biased, but the lifeblood of SF and the key to its continuing vitality, lies at the roots. New writers must be nurtured and encouraged. The

British SF scene today is curiously lacking in vitality - the dead hand of academic "respectability" seems to have exercised an enervating influence upon the genre.

Mik makes the point that the SF retail outlets (or, at any rate the large national ones) are very limited in the range of SF that they stock. I'm afraid that this is understandable - they're going to stock whatever sells. Asimov, Hubbard, Tolkien etc. sell. V.H. Smith aren't in business to educate (a dangerous concept in any case) readers as to what they should read - they're there to sell them what they want to read. If the BSFA wants to steer potential new recruits towards an appreciation that there is a wider range of work available all well and good, but let it not propagandise. Astonishing though this concept may seem to some of your more "intellectual" members, most SF fans are perfectly intelligent enough to decide what they like best. If that's Heinlein, or even John Norman, so be it. However, let's by all means let them know there is a choice, but let's not force them to make it if they don't want to. As Mik points out, the BSFA seems to have failed even to make known to the vast majority of SF fans that this choice exists, and it never will make that fact known if it can't recruit those fans to the BSFA in the first place.

Publicity is a problem, I agree. The number of suitable media for SF advertising is limited, indeed, as I have found out in attempting to advertise my own magazines. There is, perhaps, an argument in favour of trying to recruit "Trekkies" and "Dr Who" fans by advertising through their own clubs and appreciation societies. This would, of course, bring in many new members whose expectations would be different from the expectations of fans of written SF, to whom the BSFA seems primarily designed to cater at present. If you want to expand you'll have to cater for such people. Perhaps more "gimmicks" are required to encourage membership. This might be a significant departure from the rather sober attitude of the BSFA up to now. As I say, it all depends whether we want to expand; whether we want the new blood; whether we want the unsophisticated enthusiasm of such new members or whether we want to continue as a small minority of minorities, going our own sweet way, arguing in our own fashion about the minority interests we espouse, withering on the vine, decaying to dust without realising the extent of our own "ivory-tower" isolation. If that's what the majority want so be it. But let's be honest; the BSFA will not last that way. I've noticed in recent issues that the numbers of new members is again failing to compensate for the number of members leaving. Let's wake up while there's still time.



Perhaps the problem is summed up by the revelations in the "Walking On Glass" column (p4). Christ almighty! No committee meetings for a year - BSFA Ltd. dissolved without anyone being aware of it, accounts not audited! So the Worldcon took up the time of the Committee members, did it? Well, fair enough, perhaps it did, but they must have realised that this would happen (or was happening, indeed). Why no pleas for assistance? If they couldn't handle both jobs, why not resign one and let someone else have a go, even if only temporarily, to tide us over this mess? The point is: what's being done to make sure it doesn't happen again? You say the committee spent four "very tiring hours" determining what needs to be done next, but there was precious little indication of what is to be done next, short of re-registering the BSFA (which is surely so obvious a step that it could hardly have taken four hours discussion to decide to do it). Let's have the facts! It's our money, after all, that someone's carelessness nearly lost for us. I don't want witch-hunts - I want to know what precautions are being taken to avoid a repetition. All members must want to know that! It's our BSFA, after all. Or are the officials too busy with their "political in-fighting" to get on with the jobs they were appointed to do. They must "put up" or get out.

But all is not doom and gloom. The reduction in advertising rates is a good move and one which I think will pay dividends. It has already encouraged me to send you some leaflets for distribution and I may well be advertising in *Vector* this coming summer. With the exception of the apparently defunct *Focus* the magazines are looking good, particularly *Matrix*, which is to your credit, particularly given the difficulties you have apparently had in your personal life. I must admit I don't particularly like *Paperback Inferno*, mainly because I'm not interested in pages and pages of often boring reviews, but I admit that it does serve its purpose.

I think that's about it. Sorry to go on at such length, but I feel strongly about the BSFA and its direction. Maybe Mik's findings will encourage its officers to look more closely at the organisation's purpose and at ways of broadening its appeal and attracting a wider variety of members and opinions. If not, I'm afraid that in the long run it is dead. Many members will not stay, but will lose interest and look for alternative ways of following their interest in SF. I'm afraid that I may be one of them.

A long letter, and full of points that need to be considered. Paul Inceid responds to some of the points in the "Walking On Glass" column this issue, but as Trevor says, it's your organisation, what do you think?

Another response to our problems over registration came from

Tom Jones, 14 Haywood, Haverham Park, Bracknell, Berks RG12 4WG

I FIED THE SITUATION CONCERNING THE AUDITED accounts very sad. I remember rushing round trying to get the accounts and forms sorted out in my days on the committee, always a pain but necessary. Having been a committee member I try not to criticise the committee knowing that people are giving up their time, that they get little thanks and that some of the jobs are not exactly a pleasure. But in this instance criticism seems merited. The committee has two main tasks: a) to ensure the publications are produced on time and to cost and b) to fulfill the legal requirements of being a company. I have always assumed that Co-Ordinator was just another name for Chairman and it is the chairman's responsibility to ensure the Treasurer and Auditor do their bits. It is obvious the problems started before Paul came to the job but to discover the problem "quite by chance" is

was cut down to around 3-4 minutes for transmission. Obviously I had no control over what was cut out.

As for regional meetings: we will shortly be restarting the London meetings, and I hope they'll be popular. Maybe the idea will spread from that. But it's up to members in any particular region to get together and arrange a meeting. We can give advice and publicity, but we don't have the facilities to go out and set up meetings all over the country, unfortunately.

And still on the Survey.

Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AY

WE OWE A VOTE OF THANKS TO THE COMPILER OF THE report on the "BSFA Survey". It's balanced, it makes the right explanations where things have already been changed (in all cases for the better), and it neatly summarises the membership's feelings about our organisation.

I was particularly struck by two things - the reiteration of members' disgust and distrust of political intrusions into the pages of BSFA publications (a strong message here for David Barrett in Vector), and the intriguing list of reasons for quitting the Association advanced by ex-members (many of whom, it seems, last no more than a year).

However, I don't think all their reasons are valid, or at least equally valid. "Political" is fighting first - I take it this has nothing to do with politics but means the sort of internecine conflict caused by personality suits. I think we have to accept that *fen* are kooky, that fandom will always be rent by such battles, and that they're all a part of our world; surely they are only important where they actually affect the efficiency of those engaged in BSFA business?

Family pressures - well, if it's the "my wife won't let me" syndrome that's fair enough I suppose (though in my case Jan demurred for years, finally came to a con, and has been enjoying them ever since!). But the "new baby" can't be a reason surely - look at all the people who provide enough kids for a full time crèche to be operated at cons for their benefit.

Dissatisfaction with the content and frequency of magazines: well, frequency surely isn't at all bad with six of everything a year for £10? Content is another matter - not only the politics, but more than half a Vector devoted to a pop group made me see red. Anything connected with SF in book or media form belongs in these pages - nothing else, but surely there's enough in there to keep anyone happy? Leave the non-SF stuff for self-financed fanzines!

Switching from SF to other reading? Well, that's honest enough, if perhaps not very easily understood by us *fen*. Cost of membership is something everyone has to fight out for oneself - by what earthly right should the unemployed, the aged and other special groups demand (or even expect, or even plead) that the rest of us should subsidise them? OK so I am registered unemployed - I wouldn't demand myself by waving a UB40 around to knock a quid off the price of a concert or movie ticket, I have my pride and I see no reason for someone else to pay for me without their offering to do so.

Neglecting to renew - no comment: there are half-hearted people in every walk of life. Expectations of the BSFA not realised - now that's fascinating simply because it says absolutely nothing. WHAT expectations, we want to know. Whoever said that: particularise!

Finally we find the claimed anonymity of BSFA officials (how?), their distance (I never met a



not very comforting. This backed up by the "BSFA Survey" article indicates Alan Dorey's "young Turkes" seemed to have ignored the boring, but essential, bits of the job. Perhaps job descriptions for committee members would be of help to future post holders, and would specifically emphasise the legal requirements of the posts and the dates in each financial year when actions have to be taken.

The "BSFA Survey" confirms many of my own views. The only thing I would question is the belief a lower quality magazine (or magazines) would result in fewer members. Even when we had to switch Vector from litho to duplicated for a period of time I don't believe we lost many, if any, members - not that I could substantiate this view, of course. I like to think the members still believe content is more important than presentation. I'm only arguing this as a philosophical point, I certainly hope the BSFA doesn't have to give up its lithoed magazines.

And while we're on the subject of the Survey ...

Kevin McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA4 7QP

NIK MORTON'S BSFA SURVEY PRODUCED SOME PREDICTED results, and some interesting comments also; anonymity of the BSFA officials was partly rectified with the brief run of biographical pieces, but this appears to have been abandoned half way through. I would like to see more of this, I know you and Paul, but Andy Sawyer and David Barrett rarely go to cons they say, and similarly other members of the committee are strangers to me. Perhaps a few photos from meetings/parties/cons/etc might help?

Regional meetings, or representatives might help, I would certainly like to see something like this. What is most important though must surely be advertising; why was there no BSFA ad in the Conspiracy book for instance? Can anyone produce some small posters that will advertise the BSFA as well as local events? Is anything being done along these lines at all?

Can we not persuade publishers to label books as "Winner of the BSFA Award", or similar. It would all count to making us look a serious organisation to a wider audience, and if a few of them join us, all the better.

Should the Co-Ordinator not have mentioned the BSFA when he was interviewed for The Human Factor?

Paul Kincaid replies: my interview for The Human Factor lasted something like 20-25 minutes, which

distant fan in my life!), and poor feedback, about which all I can say is that I don't notice it at present, do you?

There are many fine ideas in the latter part of the Survey, and we all know that among the members are many who could easily use their own expertise to provide what the notes suggest is missing from the BSFA - more direct guidance to news, for example, and better advertising.

But what I totally fail to find mentioned here is the one thing that to my mind has been the major contribution to the failure of the BSFA - its committee's belief that "small is beautiful" and the determinedly amateur way that this smallness is maintained.

It's simple economics to state that where 1,000 members can support certain basic activities with the help of kindly given volunteer help, increasing the membership tenfold (not at all hard!) would provide such an influx of cash that the BSFA could improve its publications manifold, pay for contributions and thus encourage professional contributors (and help SF writers become more successful by giving them a new paid outlet), employ and pay experienced people to run everything, and for example ensure that the Association does not find itself legally nonexistent, without funds, lacking any committee, using the personality cult to cause trouble, doing all the things that we've seen have lost us many new members and indeed older ones too.

So long as the BSFA continues to seek to turn an unfortunate necessity (lack of funds and use of volunteers) into a virtue, we'll stay an ineffective, infighting, cliquy in-group. By facing facts, going out into the market, providing members with a professional service and thus becoming a "real" Association, the BSFA can contribute directly and immensely to the improvement of the image of SF, the wellbeing of SF writers, the quality of cons, and everything that over the years writers to our publications have put forward as worthy aims.

Or do you want to live in a barrel all your fannish lives?

A nice pipe-dream, Ken, about the super, professional BSFA with 10,000 members, but it's no more than that, I'm afraid. You blithely say that it is "not at all hard" to increase our membership tenfold, but you don't give us any idea how we might achieve this magical transformation. Believe me, we are not trying to turn a necessity into a virtue, and we are all very keen to get more funds if for no other reason than because each member of the committee has some pet project for the BSFA which is being frustrated by sheer lack of

cash. If you've some new idea for getting all those members, do tell us. We're keen to know.

Anyway, back to the Survey one last time.

Phil Nichols, 19 Kendal Avenue, Copnor, Portsmouth, Hants PO3 5AX

THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN DO NOT NECESSARILY - OR EVEN obviously - follow from the survey results quoted. Where in the survey did people say they wanted additional communication with the committee? Or that they wanted locally elected representatives?

And if it is a scientific report, where are the figures supporting the list of "reasons for leaving"? How many people cited "political" issues as the reason for leaving? Since no figures are given, how can the "internal politics" aspect be claimed to be a subject requiring "circumspect attention"?

Further, Nik's proposed resolution of the "significant issues within the problem situation at the time of analysis" (phew!) are rather vague. Even assuming that his conclusions are valid, he doesn't tell us exactly what he means by a "tangible identity" for the BSFA. Where do we get one?

And how do you create a feeling of belonging if people are falling head-over-heels in a rush to leave the BSFA? Of course, if Nik's suggestions are taken up, we might logically expect a "feeling of belonging" to follow, but he lists it as a separate task to be achieved, not something which will flow from the other tasks he mentions.

Yes, Nik should be allowed to state his views in *Matrix*, but he should not try to dress them up as scientific findings. They are *opinions* tenuously supported by some unspecified evidence - and presented in very poor prose.

Time to turn from that to another subject raised in the last issue of *Matrix*, the Worldcon. And we begin with a point of information ...

Brian W. Aldies, Woodlands, Foxcombe Road, Boars Hill, Oxford OX1 5DL

IF I MIGHT JUST TAKE UP A MINOR POINT MADE BY YOUR anonymous reporter, Jeff Haughton, in his report on the Brighton Worldcon ...

He mentions some *colourful language* in the Hugo ceremonies. How shocking that someone should inject a little colour into a colourless event! He then goes on to say that the words of this colourful language were "You bastards, it's about time you gave me one of these!"; which words, he claims, will be remembered for years to come.

If this claim is true, may I say that the words were, in reality, "It's about time you gave me another of these things, you bastards". It's always satisfying to get such matters right and, in this case, I'm in a position to vouch for their authenticity.

This Worldcon seems to have sparked off a number of controversies, perhaps not surprising for an event of that size. One, which is raging in America but doesn't seem to have caused such of a stir over here, is about the site selection ballot. We have received this comment from one of our American members.

Harry Andruschak, 946 W. 220th Street, #106, Torrance, CA 90502-256, USA

ON PAGE 16 IT IS STATED THAT "WHY THE AMERICANS are surprised as a strong local vote is beyond me".

What is beyond this American is how anybody can regard the result as an *honest win* by Holland when



most of the USA was not allowed to vote! Of course the local walk-ins won ... who wouldn't with that kind of setup?

I know of hundreds of USA fans who were awaiting the site selection ballots for the 1990 Worldcon, so as to vote for LA, and were very disappointed, then angry, when the worldcon was stolen by Holland.

I happen to be one of those. In fact, I have written to the 1987 Worldcon asking for a refund of my membership. The only reason I bought a membership in the 1987 Worldcon was to vote for LA in 1990.

I have received no response from the 1987 Worldcon. Could you please publish this letter in *Matrix* so that I can make it loud and clear that I want my money back, and I am sure most of the disenfranchised fans over here would welcome it too.

Obviously I cannot speak on behalf of the Worldcon, so I can't respond to this letter. However, for the sake of those people who don't know what is going on, I will try to sketch in the background to this problem.

Conspiracy 87 had a lot of problems with postage, which was being handled through Forbidden Planet. It is known that large quantities of mail, particularly that going overseas, was very badly delayed and some of it never arrived. It was problems such as these, for instance, which meant that the Hugo nominating ballot had to be re-mailed, and the deadline for its receipt had to be extended by a month. However, by the time the site selection ballots for the 1990 Worldcon were being distributed, there wasn't the time available for such an extension. Because they had no alternative, both bidding committees agreed to abide by the result of the vote at Conspiracy, and Holland won by a significant margin.

However many supporters of the LA bid, like Harry, believe that this system unfairly favoured the Dutch bid, and have protested about it.

Ken Lake has a modest proposal that might prevent such problems occurring again.

Ken Lake

MAY I PROPOSE IN ALL SERIOUSNESS THAT ANY CON which can attract enough support from fan and guests worldwide (or, to simplify, from the USA, Britain, Australia and Europe) should be permitted to call itself a Worldcon? That way, whenever fandom has the chance to organise a truly international con, the fact that there's another one taking place half a world away should be regarded as totally irrelevant.

And while we're on the subject of Conspiracy, controversy and explanation ...

Tom Jones

"CONSPIRACY 87" WAS OKAY BUT FAR TOO SHORT, SURELY the Worldcon was worth more than a page and a half? Some bits were also unintelligible to those of us who weren't there, for example, what was the problem with Algis Budrys' speech?

Which leads me to Paul Kincaid's review of *Conspiracy Theories* and *The Last Deadlines Visions*, good reviews but the *Conspiracy Theories* review again assumes we know about Algis Budrys' Worldcon speech and know who/what New Era is; I don't. I'd like to. Indeed I'd like to read both of these fanzines but you don't tell me where to write or what they cost, very frustrating, can you rectify that in the next issue?

Happy to oblige. In fact it was a technical glitch that managed to omit the addresses from those two

fanzines, and I'd like to apologise to both Chris Evans and Christopher Priest for the error. *Conspiracy Theories* is available from Chris Evans, Flat 2, 191 Aserley Road, Penge, London SE20 8EL. *The Last Deadlines Visions* is available from Christopher Priest, 78 High Street, Pewsey, Wilts SN9 5AQ. Neither fanzine includes a price, so you should check it out first, but about £2 should do it is either case.

As to the explanations: New Era and Bridge are, respectively, the British and American publishers of L. Ron Hubbard, and the sponsors of Writers of the Future, which Algis Budrys heads. New Era were responsible for the vast majority of the commercial sponsorship Conspiracy received - a subject of controversy itself, and a large part of the subject matter of Chris Evans' fanzine. Because there has been controversy about the connection between Writers of the Future and Hubbard and hence, by implication, Scientology, Budrys asked to make an announcement at the beginning of the Hugo ceremony. His apparent intention was to publicly disassociate Writers of the Future from Hubbard. Such an announcement is usually considered a breach of the etiquette surrounding the Hugo ceremony, but in this instance it was allowed. The speech Budrys then actually delivered was exactly the opposite of that he had implied he would deliver, being in effect a promotional puff for Writers of the Future, and full of praise for Hubbard. The rights and wrongs of this are more fully examined in *Conspiracy Theories*, but I hope this brief summary of the case is useful.

As for the shortness of the report, I'd have liked to publish a lot more, but not many people seemed interested in writing about the convention for *Matrix*, and my own experience is limited to ten days in the bowels of the Metropole, putting out a daily newsletter. Made *Matrix* seem like a picnic, somehow.

The mention of New Era, meanwhile, raises another touchy subject.

Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh Street, M16 6QJ, London SW1V 2ER

FIRST CONSPIRACY 87 WITH THE COVER OF ITS POCKET programme book resembling a dust jacket for a novel in L. Ron Hubbard's dekalogy. Then *Foundation* 40, with a bookmark bearing a portion of illustration from another novel in the same series. And now the BSFA mailing for October/November 1987, enclosing the same bookmark.

There's nothing inherently wrong with advertising per se. But there comes a point where one has to question both the nature of the product and the purpose behind its promotion. So it is with New Era and the organisations with which it's associated - particularly the so-called "Church" of Scientology.

Scientology pretends to be a quasi-scientific religion whose adherents undergo "auditing" to cure their neuroses - with the promise that at the end of the process their social charisma will have been vastly enhanced and their mental power increased manifold; will have been transformed, in effect, into supermen. Successive court hearings here and abroad have found it "corrupt, sinister and dangerous" and "schizophrenic and paranoid", and have labelled Hubbard, its founder, "a pathological liar" and "a charlatan and worse".

The desire to rewrite the history of science fiction in order to create a more glorious role in it for him is one obvious reason for the ruthless promotion of the dekalogy and - in particular - the "Writers of the Future" contests. The line that leads from these contests back to the "Church" seems to have been overlooked by the otherwise respected writers whose names are used to publicise them - and in this respect they seem to have allowed themselves to be seduced by the

avowed altruism of the venture. The more they talk about the contests, the more like front-men they sound.

Scientology could effectively buy up science fiction piecemeal by a cumulative process of splashing its apparently limitless money in all directions: magazines, conventions, book clubs, mailing lists ...

We do not think it paranoid to expect the worst of a cult whose past record is entirely bad. It is time now for each of us who has some stake in science fiction, however small, to refuse absolutely to have anything to do with the various publishing organisations that front for Scientology: to resolve that, no matter how enticing the money offered or how financially strapped we may be, we will neither sell to nor buy from Bridge Publications, Author Services Inc, New Era and Writers of the Future. They are merely the thin end of the wedge.

My own feeling is that the principles of free speech, if they mean anything at all, have to extend to those whose views we disagree with. And anyway, as you say, "there's nothing inherently wrong with advertising *per se*".

And on the matter of free speech, here's a subject that's still running.

David Mace (address withheld by request)

THE GREAT SOUTH AFRICA DEBATE SEEMS TO BE TAKING A predictable course: the action lobby is producing a thin shrapnel of suggestions, and the liberal opposition is being carefully polite about those notions and dodging conflict. But in *McCannism* we're dealing with an irrational little beastie that can get very nasty indeed.

What Mark McCann proposed in V139, and repeated in M73, is a purge. Andy Mills suggested in M72 that the purge could be legitimised by voting on it. Don't fall for that one - a democratic purge is still a purge. We should not only reject McCann's desire to rid the BSFA of people he personally doesn't want to share a mailing list with (and he retains the absolute freedom to go himself, doesn't he?), we should reject any notion of even considering it.

A purge is an institutionalised witch-hunt, and those things are open ended. I'm amazed at the restraint shown by Nick Shears in M73, considering that he's one of the prime targets of Witch-Finder McCann. Personally, I react less calmly. Alasdair Montgomery and David A. Symes both pointed out in M72 that, if you start purging on an associative guilt of South African oppression and selection by address, it doesn't end there. Economic and cultural support of the RSA government, or of oppression in other forms, is a pretty universal guilt, both governmentally and individually. Let's expel all UK resident writers and readers on the grounds that UK publishers sell in South Africa, and let's forbid all UK non-writers and non-readers on the grounds that the British Government refuses to take effective action against the present regime on the Cape. *McCannism* gets me in the first follow up wave: UK writers. The fact that my next novel rejoices in the future defeat of Pretoria by the ANC need not mitigate in the eyes of the presiding moral infallibility. Anyone who's prepared to purge people on the basis of guilt for where they were born, has no sense of justice whatsoever.

Introducing a pinch of justice would be impractical and illusory anyway: see Martyn Taylor in M72 and Peter Tennant in M73. If we send questionnaires to suspect members to assess their political stance, how do we check they aren't lying? Should we go wholeheartedly medieval and introduce our own trial by water - anyone who can stand reading John Norman is condemned and has to

go, maybe? The alternative, selection refinement according to ethnic category, ignores the existence of black policemen and white liberals in the RSA: ethnic selection is Apartheid. Joy Hibbert's claim in M73 that you can tell your ethnic origins, ie. Apartheid category, by surname is racist in perception and risibly absurd. Consider my case. The name David is thoroughly English, isn't it, while Mace isn't in any obvious way foreign, and I'm resident in the UK. Could Hibbert tell from my name that I'm part German and part Russian?

I find McCann's claim to righteous pre-eminence deeply insulting and feel it harbours the very evils of arbitrariness, dictatorship and oppression that it pretends to oppose. The best response, I suggest, is to confront the idea with its own grotesque and self-destructive implications. Don't apologise to it. Fight it.

Kev McVeigh

ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEBATE: I READ IN THE PAPERS lately that the Tamil in Sri Lanka are being victimised by both the Sinhalese government and the Indian troops on the island. Both these oppressors are government sanctioned, like the South African system, but there it isn't Black and White, it's one shade of brown against another. I don't know the full background to the repression, but I do know that it is wrong. Would Mark McCann support a ban on members from Sri Lanka? I wonder what any famous BSFA members living out there might think of that? I could argue for boycotts on the USSR, Australia, USA, France, Israel, Iran, Ireland, and the UK to name just a few others, but I won't because Nick Shears was absolutely right to say that cultural boycotts of this kind are only harmful.

As for Peter Tennant's suggestion of "adopting" a detainee, I like the principle, but I wonder if a better way would be to assist the education of a black child, and perhaps to promote an interest in literature and hopefully SF, so that we might eventually see some major works of black SF? Would this be practical, I doubt that it would cost much, but I don't really know.

Tom Jones

I THOUGHT NICK SHEARS' LETTER ON SOUTH AFRICA WAS very well reasoned and it changed my views as I had been in favour of banning South African members, now I'm not.

Dave Parsons, 110 Flore Close, Westwood, Peterborough, Cambs PE3 7AB

THANK YOU FOR PRINTING NICK SHEARS' LETTER. WHILE not having his understanding of South Africa I am inclined to agree that a cultural boycott is harmful to the anti-apartheid cause. Isn't this what oppressive governments themselves try to do, stop their citizens from receiving influence and information from the outside world?

Jennifer Cobbing, Flat 12, 419a Harrow Road, London W9 3QJ

I TOO HAVE LIVED IN SOUTH AFRICA AND KNOW WHAT AN insular people the South Africans are. I can't see the logic behind culturally boycotting a country that needs all the outside influence it can get.

How can the rest of the world have any impact on a society that it refuses to communicate with?

Which seems a suitable point on which to bring this correspondence to a close. A final word from Sue Thomson, and on to a new subject.

Sue Thomson, 31 Barfield Road, York, North Yorks YO3 9AV

POINT OF INFORMATION ON THE ETHNICITY OF SURNAMES

with reference to Joy Hibbert's letter. I wouldn't presume to speculate on the ethnic affiliation of a BSFA member called Singh, though I might have a good guess at his religious affiliation (or her religious affiliation, if she happened to be called Kaur). As far as I know it is an important tenet of Sikhism that no distinction is made between persons on grounds of race, caste or gender.

I feel I must respond to the "Soapbox" in this issue. I went to a meeting of the York SF Group some time ago, and the subject of first contact came up. The general feeling of the group was that the only safe and sane thing to do with an alien spaceship was to blast it out of the sky. One member quoted a story about a psychology experiment in which a number of realistic mockup space vehicles were constructed and unobtrusively placed in various locations. A number of official bodies (Police, the Army, etc) were then contacted by "frightened locals" and their responses observed and monitored. The Army bravely and unhesitatingly blew their capsules up.

This doesn't sound like a true story to me, but it's an accurate illustration of the mind-set. The alien is the Other, and one of the most painful and continuous strands of "Western" history and culture is our fear of the Other, our utter rejection of the Other, our hatred of the Other. If we can't let the Shadow of our culture fall on women (burnt as witches), then let us project it onto Jews, Blacks, Communists, Imperialists, Evangelicals, Argies and Homosexuals. Perhaps if we're down to projecting our hatred onto archetypal images drawn from the animal kingdom (which is what the Evil, Chitinous, Sluglike, Amoeboid, Tentacled, Bug-Eyed, reptilian aliens really are, after all; *Furry* aliens are usually much sweeter and nicer) we are close to realising that in the One World we inhabit there is nobody left to hate. Not that I think hating the animal kingdom is a good idea either; the only solution to the Alien problem is to realise that We Are All Alien ...

And that, when you think about it, ties up the South Africa debate with the topic of aliens raised in the last "Soapbox". And since we're on the subject ...

Cecil Nurse, 49 Station Road, Haxby, York YO3 6LU

WHILE I APPLAUD JOHN PETER'S SENTIMENTS, I FEEL that he has got it backwards on two counts. First, he is not talking about an "instinctive response", he is talking about an "instinctive response". Call it xenophobia: the morbid dislike of foreigners, my dictionary says. We've had it since we were cavemen. Second, we don't have to worry about how we will react to alien life in the far future: the aliens are already here.

A lot has been written about the xenophobic tone of sci-fi of the 50s, and how it reflected the Cold War and the McCarthyist pogroms of the time. The fears of both internal and external enemies can be identified in the stories. Looking at something like *Alien* and *Aliens* in more modern times can be instructive.

Alien was a highly effective sf horror. The creature was clever, it was powerful, it was unavoidably inimical to human life, not through any direct malevolence but by the nature of its reproductive process. (It happens all the time in the insect world). There was a sexual element to its threat. It was *inside* the human corpus, literally as a larval stage, and as a danger that could only be defeated by destroying the ship itself. The crew was inadequately armed, and there was a "collaborator" with connections to big business at home who was also an android. Creepy. Then came *Aliens*, a Namah war story in SF colours. Here the creature had already destroyed a right-thinking colony somewhere, and a heavily

armed platoon was sent to teach them a lesson. The creatures were no longer clever, they were just hordes of gooks getting blown away. There was no sexual threat, and to top it all off the collaborator was ineffectual and the android was a good-guy. The film was an exorcism of the spectres raised by *Alien*, and we all went home feeling that our forces of might and right were sufficient to deal with the alien threat. The sheer bluster of the film, the metamorphosis of a qualitative into a quantitative danger, the solution by violence/technology, prove to me one thing: that people wish it was that simple.

Meeting of minds or a clash of wills, Peters asks. Has he ever met minds with a Japanese woman? An Iranian zealot? An Indian untouchable? A Uruguayan peasant? A Mozambican soldier? An American businessman? An Ulster protestant? I could go on indefinitely. If he has, how did it feel? If they expressed disagreement with his own attitudes, or even contempt for his society, what did he do? Agree? Disagree? And if they see *Star Wars* or *Aliens*, what do they think? These are all alien cultures, just as British culture is alien to them. The problem of "the alien" is a very real one in our time, and violence is one of the very real responses to it. After all, there are more people dealing with the situation of contact with a technologically-more-advanced alien culture than there are people who have ever seen *Close Encounters*.

Julian Bille, 3 Roseville Gardens, Codsall, Nr Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV8 1AZ

I HATE TO DISAGREE WITH A CYNIC'S VIEW BUT JOHN Peters has got a few things wrong. It seems an unacknowledged fact now, after the Hungerford massacre, that television violence causes people to behave violently. There is an equally good case that the reverse is true: Japanese TV is extremely violent yet they have a very low crime rate. I'm not saying this is true, it seems that violence has more to do with society and nationality, but we must not make assumptions.

Aliens at present, as John Peters has pointed out, are badly presented in films, as are humans. David Brin recently suggested that aliens would recognise a more realistic viewpoint from watching our soaps and sit-coms! The point is that soaps and sit-coms commonly portray one of our best traits of all: tolerance. Brin maintains that wars are a result of political, religious or racial intolerance not lack of resources. If television can convey any message at all, it is that intolerance doesn't work.

Ralph Moyes, 9 Oakley Street, London SW3 5HH

POOR OLD UFOS! POOR OLD ALIENS! THEY DON'T HALF get a bad Press: mocked by the BBC, sensationalised by the "gutter Sundays", and now savaged by John. Mind you, he's right in saying that we, the SF buffs and the writers who feed our fictional nightmares, must take much of the blame for the shape and unappealing characteristics which they have come to assume in the public imagination in recent decades. It wasn't always so. H.G. Wells' Moon-people, Edgar Rice Burroughs' Martians, and the many other sympathetic or at least quasi-anthropomorphic images persisted until about the late 1940s and early 1950s - into the era, indeed, in which George Adamki and kindred cooties felt quite comfortable with those willowy, slightly puffed or sexually ambiguous man-sized creatures, with blonde hair to shoulder length and a sheaf of platitudes. They seem a far cry now from Whitley Streiber's close encounters in *Communion* (and I leave it up to grabs whether we take that remarkable and chilling book as a piece of fiction or some kind of semi-fact). The SF imagination seems to have darkened over the years. Once they were golden-eyed and bearing a suspicion of wings - a little like the better class of angel or the "shining ones" of Greek

mythology. But now their eyes wrap round and they have grown squat and somewhat surgical.

Perhaps John is suggesting that SF writers have a duty to return to the more congenial images lest our nerves become so strained by the grotesque that we shall automatically reach for our shot guns when they come. If so, I like his good intentions but somewhat doubt his wisdom. It may be far safer in the long run to accustomise ourselves to the likelihood that they will be so vastly different from ourselves as to produce the instinctive horror which we tend to feel when we encounter other kinds of alien life on our own planet: those with eight legs or six, those with exoskeletons of chitin, those whose blood is cold, those who have no blood at all. Perhaps we need to get used to the weird and the hideous so that we do not shoot them when they come.

And perhaps John should view with a little more sympathy "the UFO hysteria", as he calls it. Perhaps that "hysteria" is nothing more than an echo in the public mind of the SF imagination. And perhaps both are trying to tell us something we need to know.

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

I GROANED INWARDLY AS I READ "GIVE THE ALIENS A Fair Break". For years we have been warned about the detrimental effects of films and TV programmes on children and potential psychopaths (despite, as far as I am aware, a dearth of statistical evidence to support such contentions). Now John Peters wants us to consider the possible effect on future human/alien contact.

Firstly, benign aliens are not as few on the ground as John suggests. Secondly, as John himself grudgingly admits, hostile aliens usually deserve everything they get. Thirdly, some films explore without condoning the mindless xenophobia of humans that leads to violence. And fourthly, what exactly does John want when he is, apparently, so dismissive of films like *Close Encounters* that do attempt to portray first contact seriously.

Fear of monsters and the unknown (terms that are often but not necessarily interchangeable) is deeply rooted in the human psyche. Better to tackle that direct rather than seek to repress its outward manifestation in films, literature, etc. These things only reflect the way we are.

Peter himself prompted another exchange with his comments last issue about John Featenby's review of *Superman IV*. John leads off.

John Featenby, 6 Mount Gardens, Alwoodley, Leeds LS17 7QW

ADMITTEDLY I WROTE THE THING VERY SHORTLY AFTER I'd laid out two and a half quid to see the film, and as such it probably contained more heart than head, but I stand by most of what I said. As for my "almost wilful misinterpretation of the facts", well I can only promise that any wrong ideas I picked up about what was being implied sprang directly from stupidity rather than cussedness.

Peter's first complaint is that I unfairly ascribe nationalistic tendencies to Supes, but my allegations still seem reasonable to me. Yes, I know Superman acts globally, addresses the US, etc. in fact I make a point of mentioning that he starts out as a global ideologue but the fact remains that on re-reading the world he makes that remarkable speech about "good fighting evil"; and we've already seen that it's Old Glory Superman salutes, that it's America where he makes his home. The sides are clearly defined as East and West, and Superman is not seen to be fence-sitting.

As for the "strongest is best" philosophy it strikes me that this is implicit in Superman's re-introduction of the arms race. He has successfully demonstrated by this stage that he can instigate and police global disarmament yet he chooses not to. He leaves the world unstably balanced in a situation where neither side can win. We aren't left free to choose at all.

Surely it should be Superman's responsibility to disassemble the whole ugly mess and then let us choose for ourselves from a basis that is not potentially catastrophic. This couldn't be seen as an abuse of his power because it would disadvantage nobody and it would restrict no freedom other than that of one nation to annihilate another. As it is his abnegation of this responsibility simply encourages the strong to get stronger. It promotes hostility.

The bit of Peter's letter that ultimately I can't disagree with though comes right at the beginning when he says of the film "I found it innocuous and mildly entertaining". That's the bottom line really. I didn't find the movie innocuous or entertaining but that's just my opinion and Peter is equally entitled to his.

I strongly believe that films are more than just something to keep your eyes busy while you're eating popcorn, and accordingly I try and drop small shavings of opinion into my reviews, but I don't know if this is what you, or any other members, want. I hope you'll put me right if my approach is incorrect.

Terry Broom, 101 Malham Drive, Lakeside Park, Lincoln LN6 0XD

Peter Tennant's comments on the *Superman* film stunned me. He says Superman "ultimately ... 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". But isn't that what governments do, especially when they "go to war"? Peter concludes "Night is not right at all. We are left free to choose". But from what he says the film's message is: night should stay in the hands of the world's governments, not in Superman's, not that it is not right at all. We, the populace, are not left with a right to choose, the governments of the world, with the might of the nuclear weapons, are. To the people the choice was between the nuclear threat of the world's governments and the potential for destruction within Superman himself. I don't know who is the more reliable and sane - paranoid megalomaniac or morally corrupt and stupid superheroes.

And still on the subject of the media, we come to *The Human Factor*. My review of this programme has already prompted a "Sopbox" from Bridget Wilkins, but there were two other letters on the topic.

John Featenby

THE FIRST PART OF YOUR REVIEW OF *THE HUMAN FACTOR* touched a chord. It seemed to contain that righteous anger we all must have felt when trying to defend our reading habits against people who really know nothing about the genre. It's not just SF fans who come in for the stick though. I mean when was the last time you saw something about Western fans that didn't show them eating beans and shooting cap guns? Or anything about mystery fans where they weren't all dressed up as Sherlock Holmes or on a Murder Weekend? Generally speaking a minority group is only as interesting as its eccentricities.

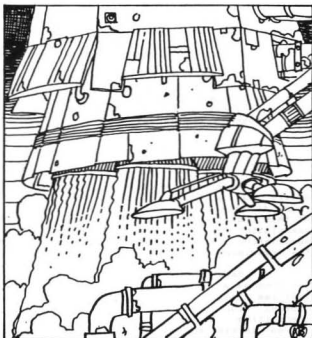
There's also the possibility that the whole media misconception is not deliberate. We know that we are normal folks whose only special quality is that we don't let simple labels prejudice what we

read, but has anyone told the vast army of documentary makers out there?

Essentially I agree with your view of the programme, that it approached fairness, and I'd have to temper any criticism of it with the fact that TV is an extremist medium. Either we are unusual enough to make documentaries about, or we are a thoughtful denim and sweatshirt sub-culture; probably not both.

Just a few weeks ago we were listening to a radio programme about the Sherlock Holmes Society, and the interviewer spent a great deal of time talking to a number of women members about the detail of the period costumes they wore. Paul's immediate comment was: "Ah, the costume fans!" We ended up wondering just what they thought about the emphasis on lacy underwear in a programme devoted to the Society as a whole. Anyone happen to be a member, and care to comment?

But back to the subject, and ...



James Parker, 18 King William Street, Old Town, Swindon, Wilts SN1 3LB

YES, I GROANED TOO WHEN *THE HUMAN FACTOR* PROGRAMME chose to concentrate on the more exhibitionist faction of the SF community. Quite predictable, of course. Brian Aldiss did his best to suggest that there *might* be some intellectual nourishment beyond the gaudy facade of the pantomime beasts and beauties; and Paul Kincaid pondered the sociological aspects of fandom. Both made serious and perceptive observations about the strange, compulsive (not to mention often myopic!) mania that swirled about them.

Unfortunately, Brian and Paul's passion for the genre was a bit too measured and reflective for mass television consumption. Good grief, a television producer's innocent preconception of what SF fans are like was nearly undermined by these two "straight men". The result? The more visually striking fans and events gained more attention from the television cameras than perhaps was deserved within the overall context of the convention. The more "bookish" - and therefore usually more reclusive - fan didn't get much of a look in. Pity.

I'm just a little concerned about this idea of the "bookish" - and therefore usually more reclusive -

fan. Obviously I'm one of the myriad exceptions. Digressing, if you want to know the reaction of one woman, for whom all explanation of the phenomenon has totally failed to convey any idea of fandom at all (and that, after her son has been involved for thirteen years), thought about the programme, Paul's mother's sole comment was 'Are they all as short-sighted as that?' I'm happy to report that, despite both wearing glasses, for reading is my case, for not falling over in Paul's, we still hold the book a reasonable distance from the nose when reading SF. Clearly, she'd never noticed. Of such things are preconceptions etc ...

Now on to a topic prompted by a news item in the last issue.

Stuart Falconer, 70 Willow Way, Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE20 9RG

I SEE FROM THE NEWS PAGES OF *MATRIX* 73 THAT Michael Moorcock has joined a committee founded by Clare Short to fight pornography as a civil rights issue. This is very interesting, though perhaps only in the Chinese meaning of the word.

I wonder if Mr Moorcock's committed friends have read any of his fiction, particularly *The Brothel in Rosenstrasse*. Perhaps he might be prevailed upon to make a token gesture, as an act of public atonement, to add a few copies to the bonfire when the storm troopers arrive.

Joking apart, I happen to believe that censorship is also a civil rights issue. With the machinery for political control of the media being erected all around us, and Mary Whitehouse calling for the kind of powers only enjoyed by totalitarian governments, are not the anti-porn brigade in danger of handing us all over to the thought police?

And we end this letter column as we began, with one more comment about the BSFA.

Tom Jones

YOUR COMMENT ON POLITICS AND THE BSFA IS ALSO WELL founded, most members would wish the BSFA to be apolitical I'm sure. And we must try to ensure it does not become a soapbox for certain committee members' views as happened not too long ago. This is not to say there should be no political debate, politics isn't something you can separate off and put in a box, it is an inherent part of our lives, nor do I object to BSFA committee members printing their own political broadsheets but I do object to my membership money being used to pay for these views to be publicised. Fortunately none of the current committee seem intent on doing that.

And that's it, the most substantial letter column we've had for some time. And even so there's not been space to quote from all the letters I've received. So, thanks also to Nicholas Mahoney, most of whose letter was off the record, Ben Stavelay-Taylor who sympathises with my problems editing *Matrix* then goes on to joke that the answer is to pay contributors. Oh, if only! Theo Ross adds to the South Africa debate by asking about Arthur C. Clarke and the Tamil of Sri Lanka; Jo Elaine points out: 'We may be called the British Science Fiction Association, but we have members worldwide, which is how it should be. Science Fiction is bigger than one nation, one colour, one political or religious creed. We should be also'; while Bridget Wilkinson suggests we leave the decision to Mr Botha: 'If we were to send carefully marked copies of the last few editions to him personally we might well find ourselves relieved of the necessity of making this painful decision. We might endanger the members concerned too ...'. And Patrick Lee eticks to every word of his review of *Star Cops*. Thanks to you all, and I can only hope that debate will be as lively in the next issue of *Matrix*, so remember the deadline:

Friday MARCH 18th 1988

Hope to see you at the BSFA London meeting on March 18, or at Eastercon, or even at a mailing session sometime. Bye!

SOAPBOX

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

by Bridget Wilkinson

SINCE THE HUMAN FACTOR BROADCAST I'VE HEARD AND read large numbers of complaints about the portrayal of fans in the media. The review of this programme in *Matrix* was simply another such complaint, if more moderately toned than the others. In some sense there was something to complain about: the use of closeups, camera angles and telephoto lenses was often less than flattering. I would have been seriously worried had I been one or two of the people concerned, but those interviewed must have been aware how the programme would be likely to come out. TV companies, and for that matter tabloid papers, are after entertainment not serious analysis. Everyone reported by the media complains about the image given them (including the government). Are we still so trapped by the ghetto mentality that we can allow this to seriously worry us?

In the BSFA, and in fandom in general, we consider that the Science Fiction that we are interested in is worthy of serious comment. The British SF journals are respectable literary journals rather than the pulp of the fifties. *New Worlds* changed all that, I very much doubt that anyone would bother to put brown paper covers around a copy of *Interzone*. Many of my colleagues at work happily admit to reading a lot of science fiction, far more happily than they would to reading Mills and Boon or much other genre fiction. And yet, and it comes across in the things that people write to the BSFA, many within fandom still react as if SF were a scorned sub-literature. Is this nostalgia for the ghetto? Do we like feeling persecuted? Surely, gross misrepresentation of some individuals apart, we should be able to laugh this off as the media out after entertainment, rather than as a serious image problem.

To turn the issue on its head, how would we have liked to have been represented? As noted above, SF cons, along with other pastimes and sports, are reported for their entertainment value, not for serious analysis. We surely can't expect long, respectful broadcasts of panel discussions or GON speeches, many of them dull enough to see live! I'm not sure that film of the "silly game" or "SF quiz" part of programming would make us look much more literary than costumes, although it would show that some people wear what passes for normal clothing. It wouldn't make nearly such good TV either.

Given that the press at such an event will always look for a story, and not merely film along the lines of the press packages handed out, we might reflect what could have been made into such stories.

Before the con itself there were problems with the post, parts of the con did not run like clockwork either. "The Great British SF Cock-Up"?

Throughout the con the Scientologists, in the form of New Era books, had a considerable presence, particularly through the "Writers of the Future" events. These have caused considerable ill feeling within SF fandom and have been much written about in con reports. Exchanges involving Dave Langford have been widely published, but still only within fandom, not in the outside press. Despite many worries about the all Pervasive New Era publicity stunts, shared by myself, nothing appears to have leaked outside the walls of fandom. Probably just as well. "Sci Fi Loonies Worship Men From Mars!"

After the fireworks there was a near riot outside the hotel as a large number of fans,

many of them desperate to get to hotel facilities other than the bar, were kept waiting outside for twenty minutes. Filmed from inside this would have looked gratifyingly intimidating. "Fannish Thugs Threaten Security Guards!"

On the last night of the con, as a reaction against the disdain with which we were treated by the management of the Metropole Hotel, Hotel Manager jokes were fixed to the walls and a song "What shall we do with the Hotel Manager" was sung to the tune of "What shall we do with the drunken sailor". I shall leave the details of these to your imagination.

Any of these events taken out of context would have been far more damaging than images of a group of people prancing around harmlessly in costume.

Even more fun can be had if a liberal sprinkling of paranoia is added to the stew. I have up until now been treating SF, and SF fandom, as if it were of no consequence. Look at other features of the con in a different light.

Before the con actually started a letter writing campaign took place to encourage the Soviet authorities to let the Strugatsky brothers attend. I know this, I organised it.

Because of an organisation called Fans Across the World the largest number of Eastern European fans ever to attend a worldcon came. Many thanks to those of you who bought raffle tickets, etc. Thanks to the Independent for a nice report too.

Ken Livingstone gave a well received interview to Ian Watson.

More than two American book dealers were openly selling copies of *Spycatcher* in the book room. At IFLA the week before the gift of a copy of this book from the head of the American Library Association to the head of the British Library Association had been made into a media event by the organisers.

Next time you are drifting around the fan room at a con, have a look at some of the old fanzines lying around through the eyes of someone looking for radicals, or even just for obscenities. Anyone well acquainted with the current fanzine scene will be aware of editors who would not cut material out of a zine simply because there was an outside chance it might offend our lords and masters, or the gutter press. A political trial of a fan ed is the sort of thing fandom can well do without. Even an anti-fandom letter writing campaign could leave us without con hotels for quite a while, or with very high room prices. Such a campaign cleared Dungeons and Dragons out of all of my local toy shops, apparently for good.

SF fandom could all too easily be taken for an ever so slightly subversive movement. We pride ourselves on the fact that SF fanzines contain discussion of everything except SF. Those outside fandom seem unaware of this, it might be just as well. As for SF itself, as Sturgeon said, 90% of SF (and everything else) is trash, most of it is also anything but radical. Still, the pulp, frivolous image appears to have contributed to the charmed life American SF led during the McCarthy era when ex-members of the American Communist party merrily went on publishing short stories and novels while outside, in the real world, writers went to prison. It may pay to look frivolous.

So, do we really want to be taken seriously? After all seriousness has its serious side. We, at least, know that we don't all of us spend all of our time in fancy dress. If outsiders think that we do, well, why should we care?