

95p *Matrix* 97

The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association

**SF Fans Manning
the Barricades**

**SF Mini-guides:
Bob Shaw, Brian Aldiss**

**Obituaries for Gene
Roddenberry and Arkady
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**Tales from Tinsel Town:
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a Laser**

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**Competition Corner
Convention Listings and
Clubs**



December 1991 — January 1992

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Suggestion Box

This was suggested by Ian Sales in *Matrix* 96 and certainly there are occasional queries, suggestions, ideas which are now thrown open for discussion.

Calendar

Is the BSFA planning a calendar like the Irish SF Association have arranged, with paintings by local artists on SF themes? — David Stewart.

[I'm impressed by the ISFA calendar, which was launched on 12th November in a limited edition of 199, price £5.95. Planning a calendar is perhaps a project to plan for next year if committee and BSFA members are interested, in the meantime, I shall be using Ken Cheslin's *Cap'n Hogwash Calendar* which has hilarious versions on one piratical theme].

T-Shirts

T-shirts are successful when produced by societies like Octarine or Hitch-hiker, or, I must say, the Tolkien Society. The BSFA doesn't seem to have that cultish image, or be able to recruit T-shirt designers — why couldn't the BSFA have done a Pratchett T-shirt, for example? Perhaps it's not too late to ask the Octarine people to go shares in a new Pratchett shirt. — Jessica Yates.

[The survey, printed in *Matrix* 92, but available to interested members for a fee, asked if BSFA members were interested in merchandising. Of the nearly three hundred responses, 48 were definitely interested in T-shirts, while 80 said they might be, however 135 displayed no interest whatsoever. Members appeared more interested in receiving a badge and a membership card].

Soapbox

Noticing the recent absence of *Soapbox* in *Matrix*, and the paucity of response to such controversial *Soapboxes* as were published, I have a thought: How about starting a new feature, to be entitled *Softsoapbox*? The idea would be for BSFA members to say important and interesting things with which no members "in their right minds" could possibly disagree. I suspect that the response to *Softsoapbox* would be much greater

than to the former controversial *Soapbox*. — Yours (tongue-in-cheek) Jim England.

Collating

The site used at present for collating the BSFA magazines will be demolished in 1992 and that it cannot be used after, say, June 1992. It is therefore a matter of urgency to either find an alternative site or, preferably, arrange for the magazines to be collated by the printers. Any ideas? — Keith Freeman & Jenny Glover.

Back Issues

Maureen Speller seems to be in danger of premature burial under tons of back issues. My suggestion that back issues could be sent to prospective members seems sensible in the light of her plea for help. Why not print something like *Send £1 for sample mailing* at the end of each advert? Result, diminishing piles of back issues, extra revenue for the BSFA and interested parties getting a genuine taste of what we're all about — Peter Tennant.

BSFA London Meetings

After some thought, and an earnest consideration of the piles of books and notes which are accumulating in here, I am going to have to give up arranging the London meetings on behalf of the BSFA ... honestly, I just haven't got the time to devote myself to both university work and anything which requires me working to a regular deadline. — Maureen Speller.

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Determinants



The Romans definitely had things backwards. For them, War was the usual, even desirable, state of life, when Peace led to all sorts of "un-Roman" vices. So it was not surprising that the doors of Janus' temple were open in time of war and closed in peacetime. We think of Peace as the natural state, with War as the horrific interlude.

Two-headed Janus was also the God of Beginnings—hence our month of January. This was the Roman season for looking both backwards and forwards. We moderns tend to do our looking back at the end of the year, possibly under the benign tutelage of bald-headed James.

This issue of *Matrix* straddles the boundary between years, so we can also look both ways before crossing into 1992. It's not impossible that more nonsense has been talked about 1992 than that last great year of ill-omen, 1984. There is an all United Europe to look forward to in 1992, perhaps some more positive action in South America to preserve some of the Amazon forest and the razzmatazz of a General Election with each party demonstrating how utterly caddish the others are, were or will be.

Looking back over 1991, the first thing was the conclusion of the Gulf War with the recommitments from the "friendly fire" affair and whether the British soldiers would have appreciated that they were killed by their ostensible allies. Hardly was this over when there was the usual mixture of elation and cynicism as the current Yugoslavian crisis started on April 1. However, this time the "usual course" of liberation and democratisation was not followed. It will be a long time before we see a comfortable solution to this latest Balkan Crisis.

In mid-August attention switched towards Russia as conflicting bulletins analysed the current state of play minute by minute: we had our version from the aptly named "Kremvax". A computer researcher was on his way home after a long session when he saw the tanks: he returned to his building to transmit news on the international computer bulletin boards. (See later article on SF at the barricades).

Most recently there's been the hostage anti-crisis, with the last western hostages being released from Beirut.

Science Fiction has its own Janus-aspect as it is always being claimed to be all about looking forward, and yet some of the best exemplars of televisual SF can be dated almost to the year by the costume design, phraseology and (more recently) the ecological disaster-of-the-month.

But let's not become nostalgic — it's a maudlin, unproductive thing.

And yet Science Fiction was presented as nostalgia in the *Past Futures* exhibition at Bradford. The literature of the future, of brave new worlds, was subverted into an exploration of the past, with faded magazine covers and shabby toys. In the background was a radio broadcast with the key words "rocket", "hairy", "ears" and "moon" emerging occasionally from the murk of crackles. The few people wandering round, in a bewildered and dazed way, were there because it was raining, because the art gallery upstairs was closed, because they were bored. And the exhibition didn't help.

The exhibition was a confused muddle with no clear focal point apart from the publicity leaflet which had been handed out with the Bradford newspaper, the *Telegraph and Argus*, in which Councillor Barry Thorne, a double-chinned Chair of Community and Leisure Sub-Committee described the

exhibition as being for all ages and interests because of our common shared dream heritage. "As children we have flown to the moon, fought with the Daleks and battled to save the world from evil forces" he wrote. He emphasised that the exhibition had been designed from both educational and fun viewpoints: unfortunately, like any project which attempts to appeal to all possible markets, it fails.

The educational aspects consists of migraine-inducing flashing lights and distorted vehicles. Perhaps they induce a sense of wonder into children: perhaps children are supposed to be unsophisticated enough to be taken in by elementary light and sound effects. Or perhaps they — the designers, the motivators of the exhibition — have got it wrong. Children are not going to be entranced by seeing a thing in a room with no contextual information or frames of reference.

It's not enough to present replicas and costumes from a Dalek to Robocop, with a Giger alien lurking in the darkness, or to show illustrations dating back to "Scientificism" and expect to produce a sense of wonder instantaneously. The most successful exhibition I have seen is the long-running "Creepie Crawlies" at the Natural History Museum in London, a slick synthesis of marketing, design and scientific knowledge, the highlights being a model kitchen with all the pests lovingly represented and a self-service dispenser with such delicacies as "high" meat or half-digested honey, together with the beautiful insects who crave such rot. The information is presented in small capsules with multiple illustrations, there are plenty of sturdy "hands on" models and people alternate between being actively involved with considering the direction of a water beetle and watching a video of the life cycle of a butterfly, between gazing at the gigantic insect model which dominates the room and the live ant farm where the ants behave away, seemingly unconscious of an audience beyond the glass walls.

My verdict for the Bradford exhibition would be: A Brave Try. It is now at Peterborough City Museum and Art Gallery from December 14, for anyone else to see and perhaps disagree.

And in the meantime, I'm left wondering how to present a successful Science Fiction exhibition, or even if it is possible.



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News

from Geoffrey Hunt, Jessica Yates, Geoff Cowie, Peter Dunn, Mike Don, Steve Grover & Alexander Vasilkovsky, Bridget Wilkinson and your editors

Prologue

The SF community is big enough, like Lake Baikal, to have its own special range of illnesses. Hardly had the latest rash of detached retinas been lased back into place than double hernias took over; chubby Cleveland fanzine editor Dave Wood found last year that hernias and laughter don't mix and now it's Brian Aldiss' turn. Undaunted, he plans to lead a convoy of authors back to China in the Spring, an event to be covered by Simon Long, BBC Beijing journalist more accustomed to covering students' extra-mural activities. Simon Long's thoughts on World SF ("a SF festival in Western China") and the evolutionary suicide of pandas have been published in *The Best of "From Our Own Correspondent" Volume 2* (BBC World Service Publishing/Broadside £10.95).

Gene Roddenberry's wartime past was extensively exhumed immediately after he died: his experiences of an involuntary crash in the Syrian desert surrounded by dead bodies came in useful for *Star Trek*, which he loosely based on C S Forrester's *Hornblower* novels. Isaac Asimov claimed that *Star Trek* was the only television programme he ever watched. But that was balanced by intense creative activity on the part of other authors: for while Colin Greenland sold a new novel, *Harm's Way*, to Avon, Terry Pratchett spent plotting the finishing touches to *Small Gods* (aka *Discworld Vol XII*) though he still finds time for his absorbing hobby of growing carnivorous plants, Chris Priest became a "Media Man" (his words) as he changed the ending of his Radio 4 play "The Glamour" yet again, Peter Morwood's prequel to *The Horse Lords* set a mere 500 years in the past will now appear from Orbit in 1993 and this sentence is now ending.

Greg Bear is scheduled to come to the UK for his first author tour (date flexible, though 1993 has been mentioned) promoting his new hardback *Avail of Stars* and Legend will coincidentally be publishing his back list. Still in the US/OfA, Andrew Porter, editor of *Science Fiction Chronicle* confessed to finding Brits "weird", after misunderstanding the sledgehammer satire of the headline "Joy of Sex reduced by 25%" in a trade bookselling magazine. But things were even weirder in Oz where a bookseller spotted an overzealous fantasy reader trying to conceal a copy of David Edgington's *Servants of Kell* in his outside pocket. The bookseller didn't bother with the police; he merely told the would-be thief the contents of the final chapters. This same laid-back bookseller then haggled with the next customer who refused to pay more than \$25 for the above book, though it had already been reduced from \$29.95 to \$26. Pay up said the bookseller or I'll tell you the ending. Instant capitulation.

There is a major scandal in Greece, with the posthumous publication of Andreas Embrikos' *The Great Eastern*, which concerns the fictional maiden voyage of that boat. Jules Verne is both passenger and narrator, he appears a lot more human than his books suggest. The author, a surrealist poet by night and a Freudian psychoanalyst for money, was struck off the register, presumably before dying.

Ray Bradbury's statue was unveiled in his home town of Waukegan, Illinois. Bradbury, one of President Gorbachev's favourite authors, lives in Los Angeles now and his work includes history research on the principle that you can't do a good job of writing about the future unless you have a keen understanding of the past. Current projects include a 21st century city to be built outside Tokyo, but he intends, preferably, to be buried on Mars in a Campbell's soup can at the right moment in history.

G Q catches up with last year's fashion. According to Anne Billson, Japan is the key cyberpunk nation, having adapted four alphabets into normal use, besides Gibson's hero in *Neuromancer* emerges in downtown Tokyo. She describes cyberpunk as a back-to-the-roots movement, reclaiming technology for the cowboy outsider and the dispossessed rebel elements... [it] allows a hacker-type access to the future. Why does this seem so dated. The future may possibly lie more in on-line journals and territory has been trail-blazed here by

the American Association for the Advancement of Science who have produced *The Online Journal of Current Clinical Trials*, with the aim of publishing material within 24 hours of getting expert approval. As libraries cut down on periodical subscriptions, more medical, scientific, technical and law journals may take this option, once the minor matters of poor text reproduction and copyright have been ironed out. The cost should be reasonable, \$100 or so a year plus access to an IBM compatible PC with Microsoft Windows 3.0, modem and 2 megabytes, though the AAAS add reassuringly that a Macintosh version will come in 1993. Bill Katz, columnist for *Library Journal*, comments ambiguously that *I don't think anybody wants to read popular journals on a PC*.

The computer museum in Boston processes 150,000 visitors per year at \$6 a shot, but connoisseurs may prefer the one in Bozeman, Montana. (Besides, it only costs \$2 admission). It's run by George Kerekesdjiev who is still stunned by memories of his high school computer, a mere PDP-8/L, which contained such power and potential knowledge that not too many years earlier had been the exclusive property of national governments. The museum starts with Egyptian hieroglyphics and Hindu numbers (George mentions at this point that *The Hindus perfected the decimal system which made all the difference in the world*) and ends with a robotic arm picking up wooden blocks to spell ROBOT. In addition there is a "Millionaire", an 1859 calculator the size of a camp stove and as heavy as a stone boulder, and IBM system 3 computer of 1971 which with the printer is too large for the "average" office, hard drives the size of movie projectors and a 1975 IBM advertised as "portable", which is ok if you have your own llama.

Specialist SF TV planned

BBC Select, the BBC's subscription TV venture will exploit the Corporations' back catalogue of SF dramas, now bestsellers like *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7*. All artists involved will need to grant permission, but it is unlikely that they will refuse, given the financial incentive. Jonathan Harris, Dr Smith in the cult series *Lost in Space*, is very much in favour of repeats: *The fringe benefits of cultdom have been enormous he said The repeat fees, the conferences. God, I'm still making a living from "Lost in Space"*.

Although most of these programmes are already available as videos, both sides of the commercial venture seem to benefit. David Jackson of BBC Home Enterprises says that one of the most popular genres is "sci-fi" and that the buyer profile suggests that customers are in their late twenties and thirties with a disposable income. John Keeling, Retail Marketing Director for ITC Home Video says that people are buying nostalgia, which is a very comfortable feeling.

Yet there is still the nagging feeling that the viewers will be asked to pay yet again for programmes financed by a previous generation through the licence system. Is the BBC pulling a fast one with its devoted viewers?

SF scene

Colin Greenland, having decided that *SF these days has lost its nerve*, *Today's authors are too cautious, too much in love with technicalities and that Not everyone wants their dreams approved by NASA* wrote the kind of book he wanted to read and thereby created Tabitha Jute in *Take Back Plenty*.

Ken Campbell is scheduled to talk about his work including *The Illuminatus* at the Royal National Theatre on December 20 at 6pm and Carol Emshwiller won the 1991 World Fantasy Award for *The Start of the End of it All*, proudly announced The Women's Press who added that they are going to be concentrating on horror next year with Suzy McKee Charnas' *The Vampire Tapestry* and Melanie Tem's *Blood Moon* among others like Sue Thomas and Emily Devendorf.

After the success of Brian Stableford's *The Empire of Fear* comes *The Werewolves of London* from Pan in March which entangles the lives of David Lydyard who is doing the Grand Tour in Egypt and Gabriel, who is being brought up by nuns in England. *Interzone* describes it as "a scientific romance of very great scope". Ray Bradbury, who is Mr Gorbachev's favourite author, is scheduled to have a series of graphic novels published in July entitled *The Ray Bradbury Chronicles*, published by Bantam. More graphic novels came as Gollancz launched their new line with Alan Moore's *A Small Killing* and M John Harrison/Jan Miller's *The Luck in the Head*. According to unknown source, Dave Langford, they announced "future genres like the Ian Macdonald-scripted *King Kiang Klack*... which from the specimen on view would appear to be about depraved teddy-bears".

HarperCollins produced a newsletter, *Fire and Water* as a worthy descendant to Grafton's *Beyond the Green Door* with tantalising descriptions of forthcoming SF like the first British publication of Pat Cadigan's short story collection, *Patterns*. For those who prefer full-length novels, there is plenty of choice: Colin Wilson's third *Spider World* novel, *The Magician* in January with the paperback lead being *Black Trillium* from Marion Bradley, Julian May and Andre Norton. Whether this three-way collaboration was a success can be judged by Julian May's solo sequel, *Blood Trillium* which will be published later in 1992. The highlights appear to be Philip Jose Farmer's *Dayworld Breakup* which concludes his story of a world in the future where people are only allowed to live for one day a week due to intense overcrowding and Geoff Ryman's *Was*, which is not quite SF, but concentrates on Judy Garland and *The Wizard of Oz*: HarperCollins suggest that it 'promises to catapult Ryman into the forefront of contemporary literary novelists'. Look out, too, for *Isaac Asimov's Universe*, an anthology from writers such as David Brin and Robert Silverberg, but set in an Asimov-devised universe.

Arkady Strugatsky

The last known publication of Arkady Strugatsky appeared in the *Tomorrow* almanac earlier this year. His way of approving this new volume of fantasy and SF was to remind readers of The Ten Commandments and he wrote:

"Moses' bones have long turned to ashes and clay. I have no doubt that many compatriots of mind will declare ancient Jews cut no ice with them, but I will never believe that we are all idiots to a man.

Don't kill.

Honour thy father and mother that thou might live long in the land.

Don't dance round the clock.

Set thyself a purpose in life other than appropriating another man's riches or woman's beauty.

Millennia are looking down at us hoping we shall not turn into beasts, riff-raff, or slaves to gang leaders and dictators."

Alexander Soburov wrote in *Moscow News*: Arkady Strugatsky left, shutting the door noiselessly behind him, as a big, private man, who loved warmth, would do. The door did not creak; many of us did not even notice if anyone had come or gone.

Brigitte Wilkinson writes: Arkady Strugatsky died on October 14th, he was one of two brothers who together made up the best known SF "author" in the Soviet Union. Much of the Strugatskys' very early work was in the utopian tradition of Yefremov and other Soviet SF writers. This was at the time of Sputnik, when it must have seemed that the Soviet Union was capable of anything it wished. During the Khrushchev era they, along with many other writers, explored the role of SF in a society that was not yet utopia, producing *Hard to be a God* (1965) and other works. When Khrushchev was "promoted" to being the manager of a power station, the Strugatsky brothers discovered, along with many fellow writers, that their works were no longer publishable. Then followed a long period during which their books appeared in roughly produced editions in great cultural centres such as Baku or even, in the case of *The Snail on the Slope* in two parts, in two places, in two languages, years apart. Some works, like *The Ugly Swans* were not published in the USSR at all during this period.

These publishing difficulties only increased the demand for their books.

In the West, some of their works were published in translation by DAW and by Collier Macmillan. These are the editions by which Western fans know their work. Emigre Russian language editions were also printed. With the advent of the Gorbachev era, things began to change.

Many Western SF cons over the years had tried inviting the Strugatsky brothers as guests before the British Worldcon "Conspiracy" in 1987, the most recent at that time being Fincon in 1986. In many cases, things looked hopeful up until the last moment when they simply did not turn up because of visa problems. When they did get to Conspiracy, they were made welcome by British fans, but they were deeply baffled by what was going on around them. Anglo-american fandom was just too different from what they were used to. However, when the committee of SocCon '90 invited Arkady Strugatsky to attend their convention by the Black Sea in the Ukraine in September 1989, he accepted and made an excellent guest. Despite his age and difficulties at the convention (both the electricity and the water failed at different times) his

GOH speech was one of the high points and he joined in with the general life of the convention in a way that had not been possible for him at Conspiracy.

Arkady Strugatsky lived to see the widespread publishing of his books within the Soviet Union. With *perestroika*, many of the SF books in high demand were those of authors whose works had previously been published only in samizdat editions. The officially approved writers of the previous era fell out of favour with the readers and sales fell. But the balancing trick that the Strugatsky brothers had been playing for years paid off. They preserved their position as the most respected SF writers among fans in the Soviet Union despite the changed circumstances. And unlike many long established writers throughout the world, their new writing still responded to changes around them right to the end. Arkady Strugatsky will be sorely missed.

The Definition of SF

The list of "talking" books recorded by the RNIB is now available and their SF selection resembles a fishing net in that there are many obvious omissions. Authors most prominent are Arthur C Clarke, Frederik Pohl, Anne McCaffrey, Frank Herbert, Ursula K LeGuin and Douglas Hill; there's David Gerrold's *The Man Who Fought Himself*, Larry Niven's *The Smoke Ring* and Alfred Bester's *Tiger! Tiger!*, but very little contemporary, white-hot SF (or F).

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* read by Julie Christie is available as an "audio" book, but the list concentrates more on detection than SF. It's possible to get Arthur C Clarke and Gentry Lee's *Garden of Rama* in the States (Bantam Audio \$15.99 2 cassettes abridged 3 hours) read by actress Alfie Woodard with some unintrusive musical accompaniment.

The recommended reading lists for the National Curriculum (primary sector) have now been published, but to call any of them "SF" is straining definitions into unrecognisable distortions. The absolute nearest to SF are Joan Aiken's *A Necklace of Raindrops* for Level 3 and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Clive King's *Stig of the Dump* in Level 4 and they would fit the fantasy classification with far more comfort.

Obscenity of Lord Horror

Lord Horror is a fictionalised life of William Joyce otherwise known as "Lord Haw Haw" the traitor of WWII, written by David Britton, who claims that the book primarily concerns art and Schopenhauer. However, the central character, Appleton, is strongly anti-semitic and publishers Savoy are now appealing against a destruction order made by the Manchester magistrate, Derek Fairclough. Finding literary merit in a work accused of obscenity can be difficult, as the legal system found with *Inside Linda Lovelace* and *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, but references come from Michael Moorcock who says that it is one of the most authoritative indictments of the holocaust and Colin Wilson who claims that it is brilliantly funny. Mike Don adds that he has a supply of these comics and that they are definitely powerful stuff and not for the squeamish (Mike Don, 233 Maine Road, Manchester M14 7WG).

Savoy are appealing for funds to help fight this new form of police censorship and contributions can be sent to "Savoy Freedom to Publish Fund", c/o Livingstone & Co. Solicitors, Bridge Street, Manchester. For further details contact Michael Butnerworth (Savoy Books, 279 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4EW) or Geoff Cowie (9 Oxford Street, Blechley, Milton Keynes MK2 2UA).

Books to look out for

Anthony, P & Margroff, R E: *Chimera's Copper* (HarperCollins January). Third in the series of these collaborative fantasies.

Asimov, I & Pohl, F: *Our Angry Earth* (US Tor). This catalogues the world's pollution problems and gives solutions which range from the practical to the fantastical.

Barker, Clive: *Books of Blood Vol 1, 2 & 3* (McDonald £12.95 each). Collections which include "The Midnight Meat Train" and "Pig Blood Blues" in Vol 1; "Dread" and "The Skins of the Fathers" in Vol 2 and "Son of Celluloid" and "Scapegoats" in Vol 3.

Barnard, K: *The Bet Cell* (Souvenir £14.99). A thriller considering the implications of revolutionary brain research and possible consequences.

Bova, B: *Mars* (US Spectra-Bantam March). Fictional treatment of humankind's first flight to Mars, told by Native American geologist, Jamie Waterman.

Compton, G B & Gribbin, J: *Ragnarok* (Gollancz £14.99). Another thriller, this time about a planet on the edge of destruction and a warning of how little it takes to tip the balance.

de Lint, C: *Yarrow* (Pan Hardback February). Cat Midhir lives in a land of dreams happily until a dream thief appears — contemporary fantasy from the author of *Moonheart* and *Greenmantle*, which is also appearing as a Pan hardback.

Duane, D & Morrow, P: *Space Quix: Kill Station* (US Avonova Jan). A team of space marshals patrol the frontiers of our solar system. The next instalment, *Space Quix: High Moon* is scheduled for May publication.

Holdstock, R: *The Fetch* (Orbit: McDonald £12.95). Michael tries to please his parents with gifts from the past summoned by his strange powers.

Kerr, K: *Polar City Blues* (HarperCollins January pb).

Newell, J: *Playing God?* (BBC World Service/Broadside £12.95). This presents the arguments for an increased understanding of genetic understanding. The author, Science editor of the *World Service*, says *Evolution has made us the slave of our genes. In a short 100 years or less we will become their masters, able to cure any disease and to reshape ourselves, our planet and animals in any way we wish.*

Pohl, F: *The World at the End of Time* (HarperCollins January) which shows "the old master" in his best form since the *Heechee* series).

Reeves-Stevens, G: *Dark Matter* (Pan February). Anthony Cross is a genius psychopod with a charming appearance. Definitely fiction.

Rucker, R: *The Hollow Earth* (US Avonova Jan). Witty alternate history involving Edgar Allan Poe and a journey to the centre of the Earth.

Strieberg, W: *Unholy Fire* (Macdonald Futura £14.95 Feb). The normal struggle between religion and all-consuming evil; still this will be a major promotion with *Billy* (Macdonald Futura £4.99 Feb) which concerns child abduction and an unsavoury glimpse into the mind of the deranged killer.

Gene Roddenberry Dies

Peter Dunn

When Jenny rang to ask me to write an obituary for Gene Roddenberry, my first thought was surely there's some mistake here, after all, I am a Prisoner fan, not a Trekker. I would understand if it had been Patrick McGoonan who had popped his clogs, but Gene Roddenberry? Jenny explained, however, that she did not want a slavish Thrice biography and besides had I not just minutes before her call been watching the latest episode of *The Next Generation*?

I had to admit that I had been doing just that I suspect that I was not the only BSFAn glued to BBC2 at that time. 25 years on with a new cast and a new ship, Roddenberry's *Wagon Train to the Stars* still draws the viewers and like it or not Star Trek remains by far the strongest image that the general public associate with science fiction.

Born in El Paso, Texas, on August 19th 1921, Roddenberry could be said to have lived several very full lives before he embarked on his career as a television writer. These previous lives included a time as a World War II pilot with 89 combat missions under his belt, a hero of an airplane crash in the Syrian desert when he was awarded in a Civil Aeronautics Commendation for his heroic behaviour during and after the crash of the Pan American plane he was piloting, a Los Angeles policeman, and later Head of Research in the office of LAPD Chief William Parker (specialising in narcotics) and later a speech writer for that same LAPD chief. Roddenberry really did live that sort of life that a certain SF author of a best selling Dekalogy could only dream about.

During his time as Chief Parker's speech writer, Roddenberry began to expand his creative writing skills beyond political speeches to trying his hand at television (I wonder, however, if any SF his speeches for Chief Parker were later recycled as scripts for *The Next Generation* it would certainly explain why these episodes are so tedious). His early television success reflected and drew on his rich earlier experiences and Roddenberry scripts were subsequently accepted for *Drag Net*, *Dr Kildare*, *Have Gun, Will Travel* (for which he was the head writer), *Highway Patrol*, *Naked City*, *Robert Taylor's Detectives* and *The Lieutenant* (for which he was the producer) to name but a few. Science Fiction did not feature greatly in his writings at that period.

His *magnum opus* is, of course, the *Star Trek* universe, perhaps the earliest example of High Frontier science fiction (after all, it was originally called *Wagon Train to the Stars*). It touched a chord with US society and for that matter all other western societies that for better or worse at that time saw the US as a positive role model. It's virtually all American crew on the US warship (sorry, Federation Star Ship) blasted through space with six guns (sorry, phasers), constantly thwarting those Russian Communies (sorry, Klingons) and the Chinese Communies (sorry, Romulans) and we loved, I loved it. I still do. 25 years on in Star Trek's 25th anniversary, Roddenberry's child still reflects contemporary society now instead of boldly going the *Enterprise* wings around space being nice to people and the Federation has its own form

of *glasnost* with the Klingon Empire. Roddenberry's role in *The Next Generation* has not been as large as a role in classic Trek, yet the series rumbles on led by the time of current US culture much as it probably would if he had full control. When Trek was out of production (it has never exactly been off air) in the seventies, Roddenberry tried to repeat his SF success with disastrous semi-pilots such as *Genesis II*, *Planet Earth* and *The Questor Tapes*. He never found another form of SF television to match *Star Trek*. That hardly matters however, Star Trek is enough of a memorial for any man. So what if he simply took the idea of sending a wagon train to the stars — he did it. So what if the characters were one dimensional stereotypes (the token black women with only one line per show, the Scotsman called "Mr Scott" to let the more stupid US fans guess his identity). I still like them, so what if *The Next Generation* is a pale shadow of the original trading on past glories — I'll still be watching next Wednesday. Even if we forget everything else, he did 74 classic Trek episodes, 100+ *Next Generation* episodes and 6 films which is a big enough achievement for any one man. The Star Trek universe entertained us and for many of us it even kindled our interest in the genre as a whole. (Next issue, Jenny asks a Thrice to analyze the life of Patrick McGoonan ...)

Minds like us?

Dave Gillon

Harlie and Domino, *Neuromancer* and *Colossus*, and above all Hal; some of SF's most memorable characters aren't even living beings, they are machines, computers, Artificial Intelligences. But what is an AI, what is it that makes Hal different from the IBM on your desk at work?

The classic answer is that an AI can pass the Turing Test; this was defined by mathematician Alan Turing and states that if someone can talk via a keyboard to a test group and not be able to say which one is the computer, then that computer is intelligent.

The problem with the Turing Test is that it contains more holes than the average Swiss Cheese: beyond the embarrassing possibility of one of the humans failing the test, the computer might imitate intelligence rather than display it — Eliza is the classic example, an almost trivial programme which turns statements into questions and functions as a primitive form of psychoanalyst. Eliza is only a facade, behind the program lie simple rules and no real understanding: variations on the theme in SF, though of greater complexity include the Ari Emory programme in Cherry's *Cyteen*, Zen in *Blake's Seven* and various Asimovian Robots. Alternatively, the computer might display real understanding, but have difficulty in expressing itself, the Quantum Thinkers in Greg Bear's novella *Heads* suffer from this problem and need another AI to interpret for them. The AI might also be perfectly intelligent, but obviously non-human — Hal would fail on these grounds, its speech patterns are intelligent, its English perfect, but some basic measure of humanity is lacking; or it might openly admit to its artificial nature, corrupting the whole test, *Here I am, brain the size of a Planet*, to quote a certain famous Android. Beyond all this the AI might display a level of intelligence outside human norms; almost by definition SF AI's have been more intelligent than humans, but there remains the intriguing possibility that an AI might actually be less intelligent than its creators, sadly this is a possibility which does not appear to have been explored in print in much detail.

SF writers have tacitly acknowledged the constraints of the Turing Test, in fact, I cannot think of a single story that actually uses it in its classical form. It is just possible to consider Cherry's *Voyager in Night* as an extended example of the test, but the flaws are strongly emphasised, not only do the three humans initially fail to recognise that Trishnamarandu-Kepta, the alien who has abducted them, is an AI, but they are also blind to the fact that two of them have died as a result of the abduction and now exist solely as tremendously sophisticated simulations within the ship's computer system. The next nearest approach is in Greg Bear's *Queen of Angels*, one of the few stories to deal with an AI on the brink of becoming intelligent, where Jill have an alternative built into her checks for the use of "formal AI" as a representation of self-awareness. This may well be the true measure of an artificial intelligence, the ability to know itself, the possession of the quality we label as self-awareness.

An artificial intelligence without self-awareness might well be possible, but would it be truly sentient? Who knows, what is certain is that limited AI's are already amongst us: expert systems can diagnose faults in aircraft electronics, or in the human body, they can tell us where best to drill for oil or tackle grand-masters at chess. Programmes like these aren't generally intelligent, but in their own narrow fields, their performances may well exceed that of any human, particularly over the long term.

The challenge lies in making the evolutionary leap from our current generation of expert systems, with their narrow focus and limited capacity for learning, to a system with a generalised intelligence and the ability to experiment and learn from any task it is set. Computer Science has yet to crack this problem, it has problems even defining it — *If it works, then it isn't AI* was a widely quoted saying a few years ago — but that has never stopped SF writers from hypothesising. Some simply ignore the problem, Budrys' *Dominio* in *Michaelmas* has evolved from a secretarial system, but we are never told how; others have AI's as so normal a part of their society that their evolution is irrelevant, Gibson's *Cyberspace* milieu all but demands the existence of AIs and we accept *Wintermute* and *Neuromancer* without question. When the problem is dealt with, one favourite answer is to link intelligence to complexity, thus when a network of computing devices becomes complex enough to rival a human brain then intelligence may follow automatically: a human brain, then intelligence may follow automatically: Heinlein's Mike from *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, Skynet in the *Terminator* films and Jane in Orson Scott Card's *Speaker for the Dead* are all examples of this. Another approach avoids the problem altogether by transferring human intelligence into the machine, this concept crops up in Brin's *Earth*, in Benford's *Great Sky River* and *Tides of Light*, but perhaps most memorably in Gibson's *Neuromancer* and the stunning *The Winter Market*. It offers a form of immortality, but as Gibson's stories show, one that is not without a price. The likeliest solution remains the traditional one, a long, slow advance in our knowledge until one day we are able to look up and say *Yes, this program is intelligent*, this has made relatively few appearances in print, perhaps because it suffers from a certain lack of drama, but those stories that choose it remain some of the best of the sub-genre. Hal is the archetypal representative of this school, but Gerold's *Harlie* (*When Harlie was One*), Beat's *Jill* (*Queen of Angels*) and Gibson and Sterling's *The Difference Engine* all display it to effect.

AI's are still some way off, the conceptual breakthrough remains to be made, but whatever form that breakthrough does finally take, we can probably bet that an SF author will have been there first.

Information Service

SF Mini-Guides

Phil Nichols

As the nights draw in, what could be more fun than curling up with a good book? Well, a few things maybe, but why not make a point of sampling the works of one of those writers about whom you've always said *I'd like to read some, but I don't know where to start?* Or re-read that volume you last looked at ten years ago? That's the idea of these little mini-guides: to stimulate interest in authors new to you, or to get you to take a fresh look at stuff that may already be familiar.

This time we feature Brian Aldiss and Bob Shaw, and as before I have available some bibliographical details (with notes on what's in print) for anyone who cares to send me a SAE. The address is the usual one: Phil Nichols, 57 Grand Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB. I wish you happy reading — and a happy christmas — and leave you in the hands of Andy Mills and Steve Jeffery.

Bob Shaw by Andy Mills

Over the last quarter-century, Bob Shaw has produced a substantial portfolio of work — roughly a book a year. Two of his novels have picked up the BSFA Award and he has won Hugos for Best Fan Writer. But Shaw is not generally recognised as being in the first rank of SF writers worldwide, a situation which is perhaps unfair as he has given to the genre a number of exciting, memorable and important tales; indeed, his best novels are a match for anything else in the field.

His most notable achievement has been the marrying of "hard" SF concepts to believable, well rounded and often (initially) unheroic characters. Thus he has wonderful ideas such as the slow glass of *Other Days*. *Other Eyes* (1972), the Dyson sphere of *Orbitville* (1975), the anti-neutrino universe of *A Wreath of Stars* (1976) and books with leading characters who are epileptic, phobic

and physically disabled. The *Ragged Astronauts* (1986) began a series which moved away from this model (unfortunately, not altogether successfully) by having a more conventional hero; the books do, though, portray a universe whose natural laws are different from ours. Certainly, Bob Shaw is one writer who believes that his science fiction should evoke a sense of wonder in his reader.

Brian W Aldiss by Steve Jeffery

Describing Brian Aldiss' contribution to SF is like trying to nail down mercury; there are few areas within (or outside) the genre which have escaped his attention.

Novelist, SF historian, a short story writer *par excellence*, biographer, performer and anthologist (like the wide screen space opera of his *Galactic Empires* — one of the rare genres where, as John Clute has commented, though he loves it, he can't write it for beans). His characters can be truly alien, capable of a shockingly casual cruelty for the sake of art or style, while still eliciting our human sympathy. There are no job prospects for bronzed supermen and super-competent space captains in Aldiss' universe; many of his protagonists are searchers, seekers and commentators, trying to survive and make sense of the enigmatic universe they inhabit: creatures of apogee.

Aldiss crosses and re-crosses (or just ignores) the genre boundaries between SF and Fantasy, fact and fiction, seemingly with each new work. He swerves and tacks, sometimes alarmingly, from world building on an epic scale in the *Heliconia* trilogy to his short oblique "enigmas": from the lyric poignancy of his short story "Old Hundredth" to the driven acid-head rollercoaster of *Barfoot in the Head*; from the scholarly, if contentious *Trillion Year Spree* to the role of entertainer in his *Science Fiction Blues* roadshow.

Aldiss has a rare, and perhaps uniquely British, place in SF. If he didn't exist, it is probably that no-one would have the nerve to have invented him.



Media File

Tales from Tinseltown

Ben Wharton

Hollywood isn't famed for its originality.

"Winning" formulas are regularly used again and again either in the form of shallow re-workings or the more obvious sequel. Good ideas are a rare commodity.

Their treatments are worth their weight in gold.

West coast LA, being the non-entirety that it is, looks for source material outside its self-referential shores, and often finds that the world of literature has gold to spare.

James Cameron, a man well-liked and well-paid for his winning formula, has found his pot of gold in the biography *The Minds of Billy Milligan*. Re-titled *The Crowded Room*, Cameron's next project tells the true story of a man composed not of one personality but of many split-personalities. On trial for the rape and murder of a woman, the question is, who is being tried on the stand and did "he" do it? Some might think that Cameron is taking a chance with this non-hardware, non-SF piece, but the phrase is somewhat relative after the success of *T2*. Of course, if he'd taken on the task before *T2* as he originally intended ...

But after chances, back come the "sure bets". Under the broad term literature, Cameron would no doubt include comics and the more high-profile graphic novel. The much abused Spiderman and the much admired X-Men are both on the cards for the ex-truck driver, writing and directing are producing respectively. There's only so much risk a man can take.

Had Brandywine Productions managed to keep Ridley Scott on *Alien III*, then Cameron would be contemplating *Alien IV* at some point in the future. As it is, Scott had more sense than most of those involved and went off to broaden his horizons. First was a collaboration with *Alien* designer H.R. Giger entitled

The Train; somewhere along the line, however, something went sour, and Scott pulled the project. Next up was Scott's entry for a film adaptation of Christopher Columbus' story, but before he could fully concentrate on the 500th year celebration piece, his own history came back to haunt him.

Philip K Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* got the "Hollywood Treatment" in 1985 not so much in Scott's original cut of *Blade Runner*, but in the cut demanded by the studio after disastrous preview audience reaction. Marlowe's voice-overs — dropped from the first draft script by Hampton Fancher — were added, scenes pointing towards Deckard's android status were removed, and the classic sunset ending were tacked on to make the bleak view of 21st century LA more palatable for those still living in 20th century USA. Ever since, the desire around the world for the original cut and the director's desire to get his own vision out to theatres has grown. A few months ago, something approximating the "real" *Blade Runner* was shown in a number of select cinemas around the USA. Rumour is that the director's cut may soon reach video if not a full theatrical release, and finally we'll be able to see Harrison Ford's android-killer in a very different light.

P K Dick was no one-book-wonder and was soon being used again for source material. *Total Recall*, based on his short story "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale", had in fact been in development hell before *Blade Runner*, but had had to wade through a reputed sixty drafts and numerous directors (including the penultimate David Cronenberg) to eventually make it to celluloid reality. Let's hope that the same fate doesn't await *Time Out of Joint*, yet another P K Dick novel, which has become one of several unproduced screenplays by *Batman* writer, Sam Hamm. *The Watchmen*, based on the multi-layered graphic novel by Alan Moore and David Green is another of Hamm's works gathering dust.

Dust doesn't have time to gather when you're writing for a weekly comic and as John Wagner and Alan Grant know, continuing the life of a character who is greatly loved by a loyal readership has its dangers. What if you made a big mistake and alienated your audience? Judge Dredd has been upholding the law in the pages of the British comic *2000AD* for fourteen years now, but has also been re-incarnated by several other writers in the pages of numerous screenplays for the past eight. Wagner and Grant haven't written any of them. Not that they didn't want to, it was just that they had never been asked. Nobody wanted lowly comic writers scripting a multi-million dollar film, especially the people who actually created the neo-fascist law enforcer. I mean, what would they know?

So, while Wagner and Grant groaned to themselves quietly as each new script hit their desk, the film continued not to get made for various reasons including legal rights issues and the appearance of *Robocop*, which drew heavily on Dredd's persona. Finally, independent producer, Edward Pressman, an incredibly successful element in over thirty major films, is hoping to start filming next year. The minor questions still to be answered are who will script, who will direct and who will star? With Schwarzenegger showing interest in the role and Wagner & Grant at last getting the call from Hollywood to write an alternative script, the chances that the film will get made and be any good are increasing.

A film adaptation that has already materialised but in a highly inferior form is J R R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. With such a bad taste left in the mouth of the public after its incomplete release, it will be no small matter for George Lucas, who has bought the film rights to the trilogy, to attempt a live-action version backed-up, no doubt, with a little home-grown wizardry from his own *Industrial Light and Magic*.

Technology's a wonderful thing — you could almost believe you were watching a movie.

The Promised Land

A review of *The Brother From Another Planet* (1984, John Sayles)

lan Mundell

A group of films heralded by the liberal press as a great leap forward — films by Afro-Americans about Afro-Americans — is slowly trickling onto British cinema screens. *New Jack City* has been and gone, *Boyz n the Hood* is here, while *Hangin' With The Homeboys* and *Out of Brooklyn* are still en route from America.

Interesting, then, to see *The Brother From Another Planet* (1984) appear at the National Film Theatre. This is the story of an extraterrestrial who, having crashed his spacecraft near Ellis Island in New York City harbour, tries to make his way in Harlem. Apart from having three clawed toes, and being mute, the Brother is similar to the other black inhabitants of Harlem, and although he is taken variously as a junkie and a lunatic, no-one suspects, or finds out, that he is from another world.

Like most aliens arriving on Earth, he has to go through the learning curve: money, and how you need it live — he can "cure" broken electronic goods, from fans to space invader games, which makes him eminently employable; language — being mute he only has to understand, and he quickly takes on all the languages thrown at him — English, Spanish, creole French — with equal aptitude; and, social customs — shaking hands, kissing, drinking alcohol and drug abuse.

At one point he is guided through the Harlem night by a Rastafarian called Virgil (which makes the Brother Dante), who shows him down-and-outs, junkies and the mentally ill. It is unsurprising that when the Brother walks down the street cheerfully eating a raw cabbage, no-one bats an eyelid.

The Brother has problems of his own. Instead of being just a passing alien who was unfortunate enough to crash on mudball Earth, he is on the run from a planet where he and people like him are slaves. While this might seem quite a crude device, Sayles carries it off quite well — the slavery angle is almost incidental, and all we know for most of the film is that two ridiculously gangling (white) men (aliens) in black are after him.

Meanwhile, he gets on in the neighbourhood. Since he is mute, people seem to think that he is a good listener and proceed to tell him their life stories. When anyone asks him where he is from, he points a thumb hitch-hiker like in

the direction of the sky. Oh, from up-town they say.

Using the Brother as an observer, Sayles shows us quite a large number of well-rounded characters which, at the time of the film's release, drew praise for their lack of stereotyping. However, things do not stand still, and one or two of the characters appear a bit type-ish in 1991.

Stereotyping (crack city, crime and ultra-violence) is a criticism already being levelled at the current crop of Afro-American films, along with the fact that, commendable as the appearance of so many black directors is, the films themselves are not that good. Or, to be exact, not as good as the liberal critics are painting them.

Another warning sounded by the press is that the vogue for black movies is leading to white directors being put in charge of "black" projects by Hollywood, loveable old whore that she is. While fears that this is not such a hot idea are probably justified, *The Brother From Another Planet* is one example, at least, of talent overcoming the predictable.

Afterthought: But then, John Sayles is officially a "genius". *The Brother From Another Planet* was funded by a grant from an American charitable trust, effectively worth \$32,000 annually for five years — tax free. So that he could pursue his "genius", you understand.

Drabble Box

John Madracki

The last spaceship from Earth had reached preliminary orbit and was awaiting its final departure mode.

Captain Erhardt gazed wistfully down at the now deserted planet. A world laid waste by a catastrophic series of ecological disasters. It all began, so the history books, in the latter part of the twentieth century with the reckless clearing of tropical rainforests to provide pasture for more and more cattle, in order to supply the increasing demand of international hamburger restaurant chains.

So T S Eliot was almost right, mused Erhardt.

The world did end, not with a bang but a whimper.

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves

Directed by Kevin Reynolds with Kevin Costner as Robin of Locksley
Jessica Yates

Apologies for this belated review of a summer release: however, the film is still running in London's West End, and at least the review comes in advance of the inevitable video. Although not strictly a fantasy, unless the witchy character (Geraldine McEwan) who has strayed out of *MacBeth* really possesses magic powers (I think she's a fake), the film possesses qualities in common with other colourful blockbusters like *Batman*, *Dick Tracy*, *Willow* and the Indiana Jones series: based on legend with heroic characters and evil villains, well-researched historical background or fidelity to comic-book sources and full of action with cliff-hanger following on cliff-hanger to the extended climax.

The story follows the traditional pattern — up to a point. Robin is outlawed after he returns from the Crusades to find his father has been murdered. Taking the peasants' part, he falls foul of Guy of Gisborne. In Sherwood Forest, the famous quarter-staff duel takes place and he eventually defeats John Little/Little John and becomes leader of the outlaws who already live in the forest. Montage of Robin training the ragged crew in archery and guerrilla tactics. He brings Marian the news of her brother's death on Crusade and a love-hate relationship develops. And of course, the Sheriff of Nottingham wants him dead or live — and fancies Marian as well.

I hadn't previously seen Kevin Costner in a movie, and thought him adequately heroic to carry the part. It was good to know that the script was written first, then sold to the production team who then engaged Costner, rather than that it was created as a vehicle for a star. The script itself was obviously intended to update the legend with new elements for the 1990s, especially Robin's Saracen swordbrother Azeem whom he brings home from the Crusades, and who is played by leading black actor Morgan Freeman. This gives the movie "anti-racist" overtones as Azeem stuns the English peasants and Robin, with his superior Arabic science, his portable telescope and gunpowder. Marian, of course, has to be interpreted in a feminist manner: although she does not become an outlaw in the greenwood, she can handle a weapon and puts up a good fight against the Sheriff.

The most dramatic impression was made by Alan Rickman as the Sheriff: his black humour was often displayed in witty one-liners as he charged around his castle in frustration that Robin remained at large. His chief henchman, Guy of Gisborne, in black with lanky hair, added to the aura of evil. I look forward to a *Rocky Horror* style viewing of this movie where the audience hisses the villains and chants Rickman's lines like *Cancel Christmas or You, ten forty-five. Bring a friend* along with him. Yet more humour was provided by Tom Shippey's review of the film (*TLS* 2/8/91) in which he commented that there were no friars in England for 30 years after the supposed date of the film and listed other anachronisms.

Shippey objects to the bows used in the film like *Dinky toys ... shot usually at fifteen yards' range* he wrote. Certainly they are not long-bows, but according to interviews with the Production Designer and Archery Adviser on the film, they weren't intended to be. I would object on grounds of authenticity that a real outlaw leader would send pregnant women away to a convent to give birth rather than risk the total disruption of camp life with a difficult childbirth. Lucky that Azeem's Arab medical science comes to the rescue.

This mix of traditional legend and 1990s political correctness makes a terrific action movie with painstaking historical detail based on 12th century social life — no jenkins or tightl! Enjoyable escapism: terrific climax where Robin and the few outlaws left after the Sheriff's mercenaries have destroyed their camp, launch an attack from within the castle gates to save members of the band from a mass hanging while within the castle itself the Sheriff of Nottingham plots to force Marian into marriage followed by rape ...

Skywatching

Mark Ogier

One of the problems with the satellite film channels — a problem which is touted as an advantage by the channels themselves — is that of repetition.

It's all very well to sneer with derision at the dear old BBC or ITV screen *The Great Escape* or *The Wizard of Oz* for the millionth time — at least these films surface, on average, only once every eighteen months.

When you enter the world of Sky Movies and the Movie Channel, however, you enter the province of an average of twenty three films a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year. As a result of their agreements with the film companies, the channels usually own the rights to a film for a year, so they need to show it several times during that period to make sure they meet the terms of the contract.

The big new titles are screened four or five times in the first month, then reappear in varying slots throughout the twelve months' licensing period. The BBFC rating of a movie tends to dictate in which slot it will be shown, but with a family film, for example, it will probably be screened at 1800 or 2000 hours on several occasions.

If you do not own a video, or fail to catch the film on its first showing, you can rest assured that it will surface again. But if you watch it first time around, the problem then is to avoid it in future. Unless you are a rabid fan of a particular film, the chance to watch it ten times or more is not likely to appeal. In fact, after a while, the reappearance of the same film in the listings can become something of an irritant.

One film that I will not be rushing to see again, but was keen to see on its first appearance on Sky Movies, was *Millennium*.

Adapted from his own short story ("Air Raid") by John Varley, I eagerly anticipated the screening of this time travel paradox movie, feeling sure that with a SF writer behind the script, it would be a major event.

There is probably an entire article to be written about how talented writers manage to ruin their own work when they attempt to translate it to film (cf Stephen King) or — and I suspect this is what happened here — about how scripts by writers get mangled to death by the film/TV company (cf Harlan Ellison).

With such a juicy concept (people from the future appearing moments before a major air crash to rescue the doomed passengers and transport them to the future where the human race is dying out through sterility) one would have expected an intellectually stimulating film, which addressed the paradoxical problems and drew the audience into the fascinating search for answers by crash investigator Kris Kristofferson. The ending would be the solving of the mystery, and the revelation of the time travellers' intentions.

Unfortunately, although at its start the film shows every sign of being such just a gem, it soon deteriorates into an awkward romance between Kristofferson and his female co-star, Cheryl Ladd, who is the "Chief time-traveller".

What makes matters even worse is that sections of the romance between the two are repeated later in the film, as Ladd's character returns to the same moment and attempts to prevent Kristofferson proceeding with the investigation: the viewer knows she will fail, because we have already seen it!

The *Back to the Future* movies made more challenging temporal tales, and as a big fan of time travel stories I felt cheated by *Millennium*. Just to convince myself that this was a cracking story, I re-read the original. What a film it could have been.

Millennium may have been disappointing — and featured some flat performances — but it positively glowed alongside *Eliminators*, a film which mentioned time travel, but did not take it as its main theme.

Coming from the Charles Band stable, I knew not to expect a great deal from this offering (the only good film Mr Band's organisation have made is *Trancers*) and I was not to be disappointed.

The story, such as it is, concerns a Mandroid — formerly a human being (some convincing make-up, but little else) — who seeks revenge on the evil scientist who rescued him from certain death, but turned him into a mechanical servant. He elicits the aid of Denise Crosby as a good scientist whose designs the baddie stole, a cowardly boat owner, who offers to take them to the baddie's lair, and a ninja warrior, whose father was killed by the baddie.

Exciting stuff. The whole film focuses on the unlikely journey of this unlikely bunch of heroes, who are out to get the bad guy before he perfects a time machine to transport himself into the past and make himself the most powerful Caesar in Rome.

There is a trace of originality in the film, but it is overshadowed by some truly naff acting (particularly from Ms Crosby, how she landed a lead role in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* after this outing, I'll never know). What I found particularly surprising was that British character actor, Roy Dotrice, as the evil

scientist. He obviously had a whale of a time, hamming it up for all he was worth, but I wonder what made him take on the part in the first place. It certainly couldn't have been the script.

A couple of years ago, there was a spate of "undersea saga" movies more or less simultaneously: *Leviathan*, *The Abyss* and *Deep Star Six* and the latter two have appeared on one or other movie channels recently, with *Deep Star Six* resurfacing (ahem) last month.

"Alien underwater" was how one reviewer described it, but to compare this soggy monster movie to that atmospheric classic is like comparing *Plan Nine from Outer Space* to *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. An undersea research station finds itself menaced by a fast moving and rather large crustacean, disturbed by the work being carried out by the scientists. Needless to say, there are the usual assortment of individuals on board — the cool headed one, the panicky one, and the ambitious one, as well as the macho hero. Despite some interesting effects (none of which are a patch on *The Abyss*, but that's a low budget for you) the film plots along to its foregone conclusion, with the inevitable "false ending" just to make you jump.



The Periodic Table

A Progress Report for ConFlict has been published, rather anonymously, and with a less than subtle reference to Mabinogion, it offers Ivan Towson to give the Guest of Honour speech "dressed as a carrot". The committee is gloriously miscast with

Ben Yalow on creche, Pam Wells on tech. ops., and Piotr Cholewa as secretary. Tim Illingworth is chairman, fitting this in between his numerous trips to the States to promote Glasgow in '95 and Peter Westhead is in charge of hotel liaison.

Octocon II

(The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, October 5/6)
Dave Harbud

I'd never been to an Irish convention before, in fact the main reason I found myself in Ireland then was that I'd arranged to visit my old friend John, who farms down country, but since we were both fans, we arranged to meet at Octocon. The trip over, either by sea or air, is neither cheap nor particularly quick, but it's no worse than, say, a Northerner visiting Jersey. However, I arrived in Dun Laoghaire on Friday and the local who directed me to the hotel (after he had accepted that someone dressed like me could wish to stay at such an expensive hotel) turned out to be a friend of Harry Harrison. Small world. Actually, the Royal Marine Hotel, an immense and palatial structure, is reputed to be one of the most expensive hotels in Ireland and, according to the Irish fans, even the reduced convention rate was rather extortionate by local standards.

Employing my finely honed psychological skills, I went looking for John and found him in the main hotel bar. The convention didn't actually start until the Saturday, but we had an enjoyable evening with other early arrivals. The hotel price for Guinness was £1.80 a point, but it was reasonable and the hotel did keep serving more or less as long as anyone was still in the bar. Then and later, I found this by far the friendliest convention I have been to for a long time. While I am not generally the most gregarious sort, it seemed that every time I stopped moving I wound up in long and involved conversations about all sorts of things. The majority of the fans were from Ireland (with a few Americans and Canadians) and a common complaint was the lack of SF societies outside Dublin and Belfast.

The convention proper started on Saturday morning and ran through to last thing Sunday with the usual sort of events ie two fairly interesting programmes, two dealer rooms, an art show, film and video programmes and a fan room. I didn't discover until late that the hotel was also running continuous SF movies on the in-house video channel. The video programme was thrown into chaos by the unexpected arrival of a selection of recorded episodes of *STING*. I admit that while I only occasionally watch *TNG*, I was impressed with the new episodes, which concerned an on-going plot involving Wolf's family and Federation and Romulan involvement in internal Klingon politics. There appears to be much more complexity in the plot now. A number of trekkies had been misled by the Dublin press into believing that Octocon

was a Star Trek convention and one enquired "Who does Geoff Ryman play in *Star Trek* anyway?"

What with gophering and socialising, I missed most of the programme, but did get to a fascinating panel on the Future of Myth with Geoff Ryman, Colin Greenland, Scott McMillan and Michael Scott. You can argue for ages about the mere definition of Myth. On Sunday there was a panel on Vampires, ranging over historical sources, treatment in films and literature, why people like vampires, why Vampire Fandom doesn't like *Near to Dark* etc. The scheduled Monty Python Singalong on Sunday night never materialised, but a good time was had by all in the bar. Monday morning, there was a small post-convention get-together for the shell-shocked survivors.

Possibly because of the room prices and the fact that many of the fans were local, I don't think many people stayed at the hotel, in fact I moved down the road to a bed and breakfast for the Sunday night. The result was that, while registration closed at 600 (in contrast to the anticipated 350), the convention seemed a lot quieter at night, and a fair number of the hotel guests were nothing to do with the convention. Apart from the prices and their noxious orange juice, the Royal Marine is an excellent venue, particularly when you consider the problems that have arisen at some British cons with hotel management. In brief, the programme was good, the atmosphere superb and I fully intend to travel over for Octocon III.

Contour Mapping

Holodeck New Year's Eve (Party December 30/January 1, Angel Hotel, Northampton, £35 attending per person, details from Holodeck, PO Box 29, Hitchin, Herts SG4 9TG).

Pentacon (January 25, University Centre, Cambridge, £5 attending membership, details from Helen Steele, Newnham College, Cambridge). This con will offer a strong literary flavour and guests with SF connections.

4 Play (January 31-February 2, Victoria Park Hotel, Wolverhampton, attending membership £18 for adults, £1 for others, details from 2 Craithie Road, Vicar's Cross, Chester CH3 5JL). Guests Cynthia McQuillin, Jane Robinson and Colin Fine. This con will (of course) be terrific good fun with singing until all hours of the morning and all the usual (small) convention attractions.

Trincon (February 7-9, Trinity College & Powers Hotel, Dublin, £15 attending membership, details from The Secretary, 75 Kincora Ave, Clontarf, Dublin 3). Guests include: Iain Banks, Greg Bear, John Brunner, Ramsey Campbell, Storm Constantine, Diane Duane, Stephen Gallagher, David Garnett, Mary Gentle, Katherine Kurtz, Anne McCaffery, Ian McDonald, Peter Morwood, Nicholas Royle, Terry Pratchett, David Pringle, Bob Shaw and David Wingrove.

This con aims to be all things to all people and with the above impressive array of Guests, it is going the right way about it. Programme ideas include "Cyberpunk is Dead, Alas", "Religion, Eschatology and SF" plus there will be continuous online multiuser dungeons (MUDs), a working virtual reality system, continuous films and videos and a special electronic games room. This convention is being run by the Dublin University Science Fiction Society and promises to be one of the most scintillating on offer this year.

Masque (February 14-16, Cobden Hotel, Birmingham, £20 attending membership from Melusine, 27 Coltsfoot Drive, Waterlooville, Hants PO7 8DD).

A convention for costumers and other extroverts not to mention those interested in the creative use of materials such as spray cream. There will be masquerades (of course), workshops, costume/art show, film and general decadence.

Lucon IVy (February 21-23, Leeds University Union, £7 attending membership, details from Leeds University SF Society, PO Box 157, Leeds LS1 1UH).

Guest of Honour: Gwyneth Jones; Guests Colin Greenland, Professor Tom Shippey, free book by GoH.

This hopes to be a fun con run by students with role playing games and hopefully a live demonstration by *The Flight School*, plus there are several local natural advantages such as Cheap Beer.

Anime Day (March 7-8, Rutland Hotel, Sheffield, £20 attending membership, details from Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield S3 8HS). Attendees must be over 16, but there will be a wide range of anime to watch.

Illumination (April 17-20, Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, £25 attending, details from 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield S2 3HQ).
Guests: Geoff Ryman, Paul McAuley; Fan Guest of Honour Pam Wells.
Programme items include the conflict between ecology and technology, a survey of what the Single European Market is going to do to the world and to SF, and the central theme is the fringes of SF.

Freucon '92 (April 24-26, New Congress Centre, Freudenstadt, £15 attending membership to December 31, £20 thereafter, details from Oliver Gruter, Dept of Physics, RHBH College, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX).
Guests: John Brunner, Iain Banks, Norman Spinrad and Daniel Walther.
Since Yugoslavia is otherwise engaged, the Eurocon has been shifted to Germany.

Inconsequential (May 22-25, Aston Court Hotel, Derby, £20 attending membership, details from Inconsequential, 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby DE3 6ES).
Guest: Robert Rankin.

The main aim of this convention is to have a good time, despite being in Derby which will include continuous video programmes and a theme of humour evident throughout.

Protoplasm (June 19-21, Parker's Hotel, Manchester, £14 attending membership, details from 1 Shoemith Court, Merchants Place, Reading, Berkshire RG1 1DT).
Guest of Honour: Bob Shaw. Special Guests: Mary Gentle, Dean Wayland, Mike Gearing.

The programme will be multi-stream, with the emphasis on choice rather than just quantity. The 'heavy' side will concentrate on the biological sciences, including the ethical issues and how these are treated in SF. There will be also a fight demonstration, an early morning tour of local canals, a wine tasting and a cabaret. Rooms have also been booked for gaming and videos.

Scone (August 7-9, Clyde Hall, Glasgow, £12 attending membership, details from Unicorn 13, c/o The Glasgow University Union, 32 University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8LX).

Guest: Iain M Banks; Fan Guest of Honour Anne Page.
The theme is Games in SF and the committee have roamed the known and imaginary worlds for the most unusual games to satisfy the most fastidious of tastes.

Events Horizon

Contact (Easter 1994, Palace Hotel and Casino, Douglas, Isle of Man, £1 pre-supporting membership, details from PO Box 29, Hitchen, Herts SG4 9TG). This is a bid for the 1994 Eastercon and will aim to experience a wide cross-section of what Science Fiction has to offer at a surprisingly low cost. The hotel has a swimming pool and two cinemas. The committee includes Nic Farey, Ian Sales, Robert Newman, Lilian Edwards, Douglas McCallum, Hilary Dugdale and Bob (fake) Shaw.

Sou'Wester (Easter 1994, The Grand Hotel, Bristol, pre-supporting membership £2, details from 3 West Struberry, Redland, Bristol BS6 6SZ). This is another bid for the 1994 Eastercon which will aim to offer British and American guests, all the function rooms on the same level, same site and even a programme. The committee includes Marcus Streets, Gary Stratmann, Pat Silver, Rae Ramsbottom, Robert Maughan, Ben Brown, Chris Bell and David V Barrett.

Helicon (April 8-12, 1993, Hotel de France, Jersey, £22 attending membership, details from 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1LQ).

Guests: George R R Martin, John Brunner.
Besides being the Eastercon, this is the Eurocon and will hopefully widen the normal scope to include aspects of both Western and Eastern European Science Fiction. The programme will include a masquerade, folk concert, a play, "The Stone Tape" and a banquet.

Mexcon V (May 28-31, 1993, The Cairn Hotel, Harrogate, attending membership £18, details from 121 Cape Hill, Smethtwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 4SH).

It is too early to reveal details of the programme, but the committee consists of Mike Ford, Colin Harris, Maureen Speller, Mary Gentle, who will be in charge of the programming, Bernie Evans, Abigail Frost, Eve Harvey, John Harvey, Linda Strickler, Nic Farey and Linda Krawacke (i.e. having fun).

Martian Canals "Real", Says SF Fan! Julian Flood

Being weaned on SF in the days when you could buy good mags at any W H Smith's, I have always had a soft spot for the old Mars, the red planet of the early pioneers. Forget Viking, forget the ultra-detailed maps of frozen and barren desert, my internal Mars will always be the rust-red orb streaked with complementary green that astronomers saw wavering in their telescopes at the turn of the century, the planet transmogrified by their contemporaries into a place of science-fiction magic. Normally I would approve of planetary exploration, but the difference between the SF Mars and the real thing has made my support less than whole-hearted. Up to now.

One of the more irritating aspects of being interested in science but untrained is the urge to think of something new without the mental discipline or equipment. This gives me a tendency to fall for any pseudo-scientific rubbish that is touted with a sufficient show of conviction and complexity, things like astrology, phenology, aromatherapy, Martian canals ... but hang on a minute, I've always had this secret belief that one day I'd notice something the scientists had ignored, some observation they had dismissed as rubbish out of hand. Let's gloss over my independent invention of metal detectors (I assume they work by back EMF, if not, you read it here first) and my theory that chaotic firing of matter from accreting stars by slingshot accounts for the missing mass. I really think I'm on to something with these Martian canals. Lowell actually saw them and so can you.

Take a personal computer. If details are important (research continues) then take an Acorn Archimedes with a standard monitor, draw on a black screen a circle one and a half inches in diameter, colour it a slightly blue shade of pink (Archimedes GC0L 39 TENT 3*64) and stare at it from two feet away in a darkened room. The phenomenon appears quite quickly, the circle seems to be overlaid by a network of faint bluish lines. Not all people can see them, but a reasonable percentage can. The shade of pink or magenta is not critical, but a touch of blue in the mixture enhances the effect, as does the consumption of two pints of home-brew (a fact that makes getting volunteers an easy process). If you can make the image jiggle slightly, simulating atmospheric disturbance, than all the better, although it is not essential if your programming ability isn't up to it. Don't shake the monitor, it's expensive.

What is this pattern? Here we enter the realm of speculation, but I've got this theory. The retina is covered by a network of veins — you can see them in any photo taken with an on-camera flash: they are what causes the red glow in the eyes of party-goers. There are some nice ophthalmoscopy pictures in Gray's *Anatomy* which show what they look like close up, a spreading network of red across the nerve-mat. There must be some brain mechanism to process them out, otherwise the world would appear to us as overlaid by lines, except for the a vascular fovea area which occupies the centre of our visual field.

The artificial environment of my experiment brings about a failure of the processing, allowing us to see the veins across our own retinas in the complementary colour, in this case blue-green. Each "Martian" canal system is unique, a retina print as distinct as any fingerprint. From this pale web of shadows grew all the complexities of early Martian SF. Those scantly clad princesses, blood-sucking kangaroos and spunk-glass cities were not only formed inside the heads of writers, they were in other heads as well, bathed in aqueous humour.

Poor old Lowell, he wasn't the first by any means to see this effect. The Jesuit Secchi had used the word "canale" in 1860 to describe what he thought he had seen on Mars. Schiaparelli in 1877 found the network "just visible in periods of good seeing". Then in 1903, Evans and Mander tried an experiment using schoolchildren and found a tendency for an observer to join irregular and barely visible markings together with string lines, a result that led to the dismissal of the canals as imagination run riot. I cannot confirm their result. Dim spots and streaks on the computer screen Mars remain just that. Actually, I thought "arrant nonsense" when I first read Evans' and Mander's suggestion, but one must try to be open-minded. Now I can say it loud and clear with a pristine conscience. Their suggestion was arrant nonsense.

I doubt if many scientists have bothered to try looking at the sort of image Lowell and the others had to cope with, namely an unsteady, self-illuminated red blob against a black background. It is always easier to use the latest and best data, always easier to use a picture than a projection. The most recent photographs prove conclusively that the canals do not exist. Even so, Lowell

did see them though they were inside his own head, not on the surface of Mars. Oddly enough, the Italian word "canale" has another, biological, meaning, that of tube or duct. Inadvertently, Secchi was correct.

Having solved that problem (and thrown some light on the visual field), I'm now thinking about the coincidence of the initial success and subsequent failure of cold fusion with the 1989 super-nova neutrino flux, while pondering its implication for spontaneous human combustion. The ideas I am chasing may be wrong, but you never know, perhaps they will produce images as strong and enduring as any summoned up by those magical words "the canals of Mars".



Fire & Hemlock

A Fan's (Re)View of Some 'Zines

John D Rickett

Firstly some preliminary throat-clearings amounting to a caveat lector. The 1991 crop of British fanzines has been extensively reviewed over the past months and it is not my intention to attempt to repeat what has already been so admirably done by others — not that I could even get near to such an attempt given the present space limitations. So I shall try to give a very personal view of the "flavour" of various fanzines that I have been lucky enough to receive over the past ten months or so. Here comes the caveat. Although a very long-term SF reader, I discovered the whole wonderful world of fandom only in mid-1990 or thereabouts. Thus I have no memories of any possible Fanzine Golden Ages of the past, nor any opinions to the effect that a lovingly and laboriously produced-by-stencil-and-duplicator 'zine is somehow inherently better and worthier than a DTP-and-photocopier production. Another caveat: those excellent people who guided my first faltering steps in fandom have led me to believe that fandom should be fun. This suits my frivolous propensities to a "T". Last caveat coming up. Some fans would certainly class me as politically and ideologically unsound — but that shouldn't affect your enjoyment of the 'zines, now should it?

The word for Ken Cheslin's *A Child's Garden of Olaf* and its accompanying letterzine, *Out House* is "captivating". The former is an eclectic compendium of mostly light-hearted pieces from various fans ranging from the great and good to newcomers like myself. The issue that I have so far seen have all carried a story featuring Ken's detective, Hemlock Soames, and his trusty (and much abused) aide, Flotsam. A Cheslin speciality, although not evident in every issue, is a Soames story linked closely to an interesting factual article on, as it might be, topophilia or standing stones. The high spot for me is always Ken's cartoons of the cheerfully vulgar Viking named in the title of the zine. I have seen these labelled as "childish" and "dime". Such criticisms seem to me to miss the point of the fun: "full of childlike bravura and gusto" would be a fairer description, I think. Ken has a particular knack of coming up with amazingly adroit captions for his cartoons which imbue them with a wit and style which adds considerably to the verve already expressed in the artist's somewhat "naive" drawing style. Each copy of the zine comes with an individually hand-coloured cover which would brighten anyone's day. The entire letter column grew to such proportions that it now stands alone under its own title, and a lively collection from far and wide it usually is. I find these zines engaging and heartwarming.

Another newer zine is *Gottedammerung* from Tommy Ferguson, Mark McCann and James McKee in Belfast. This describes itself as "Northern Ireland's Leading Fanzine", an assessment I cannot contest as I have seen no others. While the first number was somewhat bitty, No. 2 has got its act together in a much more shapely fashion. Well produced via DTP, it is clearly laid out and easy to read (which is more than can be said of some of the zines I have seen). It tends to the chatty in style and the editors — and, one supposes, the growing list of other contributors — treat us to a variety of articles ranging from Mark's verruca to cold fusion to a survival guide to Northern Ireland. This is a bright and breezy zine, much welcomed at this fan's address (and I hope this paragraph expresses my apologies to G's editors for the fact that I have failed so far to send a letter of comment).

Dave Langford's *Sglodion* 3 appeared at the back end of April. There's not a lot I can say about Dave's writings that hasn't already been said over the years. Fluent and stylish as he is in his treatment of his topics and in his prose style, Dave's articles are a delight to read, and invariably steeped in the delicious Langfordian sense of humour that sees the risible lurking in most of life's little corners. The Christopher Priest article (or perhaps distribe) on his

on-going war with Harlan Ellison had the effect of making both gentlemen involved seem unsympathetic and unlikeable characters. All rather sad, really, so it was with relief that I turned to Dave's piece on the weird insides and other strange denizens of his home and garden. Not at all like the home life of our dear Queen, I should imagine. More recently, Dave's *Anisble 51* appeared. I was given my copy of this two-sides-of-A4 newsheet at the October meeting at the Wellington pub in London. It was a bad idea to read it then and there: I laughed so much I nearly spilt my beer. The word for all this is "classy humour".

"Classy" is a word that applies to John D Owen's *Shipyards Blues* too. Well produced on good quality paper, this A5 zine is a splendid read from cover to cover. John attracts a number of well-known fan writers as contributors, and manages to achieve a blend of varied styles and topics that maintains one's interest throughout. There is a wide-ranging and extensive letter column that is itself or more than passing interest. With its coverage of subjects from the serious to the light-hearted, this is an excellent fanzine with something for everyone. Very highly recommended.

Michael Ashley's *Saliromania 3* is a fish of a different flavour. Called a "solipsism special" it lives up to its subtitle and presents Ashley in the raw. My initial reaction was somewhat unsympathetic, but reading more carefully I began to appreciate the scarily bitter humour that colours his outlook (or that did so when writing these pieces). In idiosyncratic style, Michael relates his problems with his memory, with booze, with lack of a sex-life. He tells of his experiences at and around his job at a local Advice Centre; and of how loudly he plays white trash music. This is a typed-and-photocopied zine, so don't expect any big production numbers, but if you like the one-man's point-of-view slice of life with all the warts on, then you'll enjoy this. Well worth the reading.

HdF or Helicon's discussion Fanzine is edited by Tim Illingworth and published by Helicon '93, the 1993 Eastercon. This is a fanzine "intended to deal with the issues and decisions involved in bidding and running Eastercons, especially but not only Helicon '93". Most of the articles were written as internal committee working papers, and some tend to be highly specialised as a result. The article on voting systems in issue 5, for example, set this fan's head spinning. I rate these zines as serious and interesting, but with a limited appeal. If you are, or dream of becoming, a conrunner, I should think they are absolutely essential reading.

Phil Probert's *Hot Waffles* is another one-man effort. This is a delicately written zine where Phil shares his experiences and thoughts with us. To say that he writes of meeting God might sound as though it is a boring piece of born-again propaganda. Not so. Phil (literally) sets the light after treating us to side-trips to his newspaper office and an unfruitful job interview. There's a drive and a flow to this zine that caused me to enjoy it very much indeed. Another word that comes to mind is "honesty" — one feels that one is sharing the author's true perceptions and feelings, and a life-enhancing experience it is. I hope I get to see more of these.

Would that there were space to comment on others of the many fanzines I have read and, yes, mostly enjoyed this year. We SF fans are a lucky community to have such writing circulating among us.

Notes:

Most of these fanzines will be available for "the usual" — a polite request (large, stamped self-addressed envelopes) are a polite gesture), a letter of comment, an article or graphic contribution, or your own fanzine. The exception is *HdF* which is 50p an issue or, according to the August issue, £5 for issues No. 5 to end. Not bad value when these are expected to appear quarterly at least up to the 1993 Eastercon.

A Child's Garden of Olaf and *Out House* from Ken Cheslin, 10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 1YA

Gottedammerung from Tommy Ferguson, Flat 1, 33 Camden Street, Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 1AT

Sglodion and *Anisble* from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading RG1 5AU

Shipyards Blues from John D Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnall, Bucks MK16 9AZ

Saliromania from Michael Ashley, 9 Blakely House, Kelmor Grove, Woodside, Bradford BD6 2RF

HdF from Helicon '93, 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1LQ

Hot Waffles from Phil Probert, 20 Birch Terrace, Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham

Behind the Eight Ball?

The Mouth of Sauron (Mark Nelson, 21 Cecil Mount, Leeds LS12 2AP). Border territory between SF and postal gaming. This is a classic example of why people should not publish their own articles: they don't wield the editorial scissors. The fanzine review article meanders over 14 pages but could have been edited down to half that, even given that it was partly explaining SF zines to postal gamers.

An Occasional Axolotl (Steve Jeffery & Vikki Lee France, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA). Frustrating articles: I wish they'd been longer. There's a snippet on censorship, for example which doesn't even get to the definitions, let alone on to discussion; a vague article on non-rational beliefs and experiences - the fanzine is fuzzy right now. But that doesn't stop it being interesting.

Erg 115 (B T Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ). Reviews, factual articles on animation, lifting bodies and a trip to the Boston World SF convention, plus letters interspersed with comments. Some fiction. This is very close to a "cult" fanzine, in that it is an acquired taste, well worth trying. But you'll have to respond in some way if you want a subsequent copy.

The Light Stuff (Rhodri James, 25 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD). Rhodri discusses music (both choral and folk), electronic networks and that perennial complaint "lack of response". There may have only been one letter on the first issue, but it was well thought out and clearly expressed.

Folly #10 (Arnie Katz, 330 S Decatur Blvd, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107, USA). I never know why I like this, it's chat written with subtle skill and much experience. Arnie is looking for anecdotes in which fans describe the pivotal incident which turned them into full-fledged fans. By the way, Robert Lichtman writes in the letter column that he has received 89 fanzines by the October of 1991. Not bad.

Lip 6 (Hazel Ashworth, 16 Rockville Drive, Embay, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD21 6NX). Loosely based around travel, there's a long self-indulgent editorial binned by a Harry Turner memories of post-Hiroshima India and SF in the RAF and Allyn Cadogan's letter describing the most recent San Francisco earthquake. The cartoons, though brilliant, sit as uneasily with this as Michael Ashley's download article ("1988 saw me waking up most mornings in a pool of vomit and urine" ...)

Shudderdugullion (Nigel E Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG). Nigel pursues his very ordinary introverted life while Russia blows over: he notices that something is going on. It's fascinating to read once, but doesn't bear re-reading.

Sallromania (Michael Ashley, 9 Blakeley House, Kelmor Grove, Woodside, Bradford BD6 2RF). Michael won the Nova fanzine award for this fanzine and also for his writing. It's a fair cop: his writing is memorable, if not always pleasant to read. The letter column is edited to a knife point: I know that Michael is meticulous in quoting exactly what people said, but I'd still like to know the circumstances in which Terry Broome wrote *I've often been mistaken for a dead slug*.

Laserzone

The Ultimate Challenge

Martin T Potts

Who'd be a mercenary I was crouching in the near darkness of that nightmare world, where shapes move just out of view and I can see the firing of red laser beams as battle commenced all around me. A dark reality where I held my own laser weapon ready for defence or attack, stalking prey in a decaying city where you need nerves to prevent being another victim, but where a feeling of isolation and the necessity of self-dependence have become frighteningly paramount. The hissing of steam pipes and semi-melodious background noise scrambled the tread of another's approach. Roving searchlights created and shattered shadows as I waited ... waited ... then out of the murky air I saw a figure slowly take shape, recognisable as one of the enemy, apparently oblivious to my existence. My heart pounded as I raised my gun into a firing position ... when suddenly my own body pack screamed *Hit! Hit!* and at the same time a beam of red death pierced my chest. It was too late. Too late.

Fortunately this was only a game called *Laserzone*, and the "nightmare world" is on the third floor of a building in Constitution Hill, Birmingham. But during the 15 minute "gametime", the tension is such that it feels real enough to get

the adrenaline going. The directors of *Laserzone* are father and son team, Peter and Graham Edwards, who have had a very busy time since it opened in August.

Laserzone is an indoor combat game where each player is armed with a lasergun attached to a chest pack which houses the power for the laser. The laser is a Class 1 Helium-Neon 1/3 Second 1 milliwatt scarlet beam, which gives a player a great deal of satisfaction as it leaps from the gun with pinpoint accuracy and, both Edwards' assured me, is as harmless as a domestic torchlight beam. The object of the basic game is simple — hit others but do not be hit yourself. Points are awarded for successful shots and deducted for hits on oneself to give a net score. The highest net score wins the session. A player can be hit on the front of the pack, on the read and on the gun — preventing the cowardly tactic of standing around a corner and just thrusting the gun around the other side, from being totally safe. When a player is hit, the pack is "dead" for ten seconds and the player can neither fire nor be hit — allowing a little time to re-position — then the face becomes active again and you're in business. This is a major attraction as no matter how many times you are hit you can still come back for more and get the full fifteen minutes' worth of game time.

The arena would look very familiar to fans of movies like *Alien*, *Total Recall*, *Blade Runner* and other SF films *noire*. The scenario is a near future industrial city with passages, gantries and walkways which provide plenty of defensible positions and attack approaches, even the most welcoming crook has its own exposed area. The atmosphere is smoky dark (and old dark clothes are recommended). Permeated by flashes of multi-coloured searchlights to harry each player's vision and a soundtrack of "city music" makes it hard to discern the movements of other players. Clearly, with ramps and stairways and up to twenty people in dark clothing moving around the arena, there are certain safety measures to be followed which are explained before entering the arena from the "airlock". These include no running, lying down or knocking the gun from another person's hands. Staff walk round to make sure this happens (or doesn't) which is a real occupational hazard since they tend to be shot more times than the players.

My game was basic with twenty participants. Some players introduce a role playing element by choosing to defend a stairway or friends act as a pair to defend a certain position. I was to be a mercenary, hired to clear the area of "the enemy", though I was not too successful (but at least I had a positive score). After living on your nerves for fifteen minutes, the game is over except for analysis of hits and misses and post mortems as you realise that you have shot your friend five times by accident.

The game has that addictive arcade element that makes you sure that you can do better — so you naturally want to go straight back there and try again. The phrase *I'll be back!* is often used. Like anything in life, you get out what you put in. The Edwards' have created the environment, now it's up to you ... enter and take up the challenge ...

[Martin thanks Peter and Graham Edwards for time and co-operation in researching this article. For further details, please telephone Graham Edwards on 021 236 3311.]





Clubs Column

This is the core of an annual update on clubs throughout the country, all of whom would welcome new members. If you know of any clubs which haven't made it, please send details and they will be mentioned later. Many thanks to all the contacts who described their club activities.

Birmingham

The University group meets at the Student's Union, Wednesday and Friday lunchtimes from 1300 to 1400, although there are evening and weekend events with videos and games playing. Contact David Wake (160 Beaumont Road, Birmingham B30 1NY tel: 021 451 2287).

Plus the "Bum" group meets on the 3rd Friday monthly at the Australian Bar, corner of Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street. Subscription £6 per person payable to the BSPG (Treasurer Richard Standage at meetings or to Mick Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 2SH tel: 021 558 0997). There is a monthly speaker, like David A Hardy, plus a monthly newsletter with reviews and some SF news, in addition, members from the group are involved in organising the annual Novacon. There will be no formal meeting on December 20, but a Christmas meal at the Wagon & Horses, Oldbury instead (contact Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG tel: 021 327 3023 to book). The 17 January meeting will have the AGM and Auction and Greg Bear has expressed interest in speaking to the group while on his author tour in 1993.

Bournemouth

We meet at the Dolphin, Holdenhurst Road twice a month and mostly talk about SF. One on-going project is making a video film about an astronaut who crashes on Mars. As he dies, he has flashbacks to when he was a child, for example he thinks of the authors he enjoyed reading, like HG Wells. There is also an annual yearbook containing letters, stories, quizzes and competitions on things like SF poetry. The 1st meeting of the month tends to have a scheduled event, the second is more open for drink, chat, drink, chat. Occasionally there will be an extra meeting to see a particular film. Typical events include a quiz on alternate histories, narcotics and drugs in SF, Utopias, fashion and clothing in SF, selecting pictures with potential for caption competitions. Contact David Syme (3 Hannington Road, Bournemouth BH7 6JT tel: 0202 432489) or call at Wonderworld (803 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth East tel: 0202 422964).

Bristol

Meetings here changed to The Cat and Wheel Pub (near the Arches on Cheltenham Road) from 2030 onwards on Thursday nights. Events include meals out, occasional discussions of SF authors and cinema visits, but we mainly meet in the pub to talk about anything which happens to interest us. Contact Christina Lake and Peter-Fred Thompson (47 Wessex Avenue, Horfield, Bristol B37 0DE tel: 0272 514334).

Carlisle

This group is informal and small but welcoming. Contact Shep Kirbride (42 Green Lane, Bellevue, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7QA tel: 0228 27168).

Croydon

This group meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month and has a social atmosphere with occasional parties. Topics of conversation tend to be politics or the poll tax rather than SF. Contact Rob Newman (136 North End, Croydon, Surrey CRO 1UE tel: 081 680 3128).

Dundee

This group has effectively folded: it is down to 3 members who meet socially at The Globe, a quiet pub close to the University which has Belhaven on tap, the usual Scottish beers and German and Mexican lagers. Anyone interested in reviving this group, please contact Jon Wallace (21 Charleston Street Dundee tel: 0382 623399).

Edinburgh

Forth meets on Tuesdays at the Malt Shovel 2 in Cockburn Street, which has an excellent selection of beers. Contact Jim Darroch (8 Montague Street, Edinburgh EH8 9QU) or Keith Mitchell (43 Iona Street, Edinburgh EH6 8SP tel: 031 553 5478).

Glasgow

The Friends of Admiral Benbow are meeting at the Press Bar, Albion Street on Thursday evenings: contact John Mooney (tel: 041 952 9286).

It also meets every Tuesday night at the Queen Margaret Union, University Gardens for socialising, videos and killer rpg scenarios. Contact: Jo, c/o The Glasgow University Union, 32 University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8LX, also S4 meets to discuss space and SF contact S4 c/o GCCS, The Union, 90 John Street, Glasgow for more information.

Hull

This energetic group meets monthly and has arranged a turkey/short story reading on December 10, SF art on January 14, Modern Technology in SF on January 28, Idiot's Guide to Lit Crit on February 11, Colin Greenland on February 25, Feminism in SF on March 10 and a talk on R A Lafferty on March 26. Contact Carol Ann Green (5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JB tel: 0482 445804).

Leeds

The Leeds Group meets on Fridays at the Adelphi pub, Hunslet Road, from about 2000 onwards. It's a social club with occasional out-of-towners. Contact Dave Mooring and Sarah Dibb (tel: 0532 741004) or Mike Ford (27 Stanmore Crescent, Leeds LS4 2RY tel: 0532 753663).

Then the Leeds University Andromeda SF&F Society meets at the Packhorse on Woodhouse Lane (opposite the Engineering Department) on Wednesday evenings from about 2030, ready for the committee who meet about 2100. There is a library (Basement, 27 Cromer Terrace every weekday lunchtime during term), a noticeboard upstairs in the union for messages and notices and a club fanzine, *Black Hole*, produced termly in ideal conditions. Video evenings are held every week in committee room C on Monday evenings from 7pm and films will be shown in the RBLT every month or so at a ridiculously cheap rate for members. The group is also organising Lacon IV, a SF con with Gwyneth Jones and Colin Greenland as Guests to be held at the Union February 21-23.

There is also a smaller group being formed to talk about SF which will meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month (2nd Thursday in December) at the Victoria Hotel, Great George Street. Contact Jenny Glover (16 Aviahy Place, Leeds LS12 2NP tel: 0532 791264).

Newcastle

This group is temporarily defunct although some members do meet occasionally socially. Anyone interested in resurrecting the group could contact Ian Bambo (tel: 091 284 6913) or Harry Bell (091 478 2559).

North Cheshire

This was recently formed from the merger of the Warrington and Chester groups and meets in the Hollow Tree pub on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, starting at 2030. The pub is on the A49 about 200 yards south of junction 10 of the M56, though lifts can be arranged from Chester and Warrington on request. Contacts: Mike and Alison Scott (2 Craithie Road, Vicars Cross, Chester CH3 5JL; tel 0244 342396) or Margaret Toot (tel: 0925 754463).

Norwich

We meet at the Plasterer's Arms, Cowgate, Norwich, a friendly intimate pub with a veritable farrago of beers, stouts, ciders, lagers, soft drinks, you name it, they've almost certainly got it, including their own rather good bitter and mild. For a Norwich pub, it's cheap and good. Plus it's a free house. Events are many and varied — discussions and arguments on all aspects of SF, F and Horror, role playing sessions, music and other quizzes. Guest speakers to date have included Craig Charles from *Red Dwarf*, Mike Cule and Josh Kirby. In all, a wide range of "wine, cheese, goats and other things" as the ginger-haired aromatherapists would say. Meetings are every second Wednesday as from



December 11 from 2000, admission free plus there is an irregular fanzine. Contact Paul Curtis (24 Garrett Court, Gertrude Road, Norwich tel: 0603 487202) or Ken Shinn (9A Howard Terrace, Sussex Street, Norwich tel: 0603 762966).

Peterborough

This club was founded in 1976 to promote SF and meets every Wednesday. The first Wednesday is an organised discussion at the Bluebell Inn, Dogthorpe and the 3rd Wednesday is a social night in the Poachers Bar of the Great Northern Hotel, opposite BR station. Frequent trips to theatrical shows and cinemas are organised. Typical events are having Ian Watson for lunch at the local Nepalese restaurant, dubbed locally as the "Yak and Yeti", participating in a spoof quiz show "Sticky Moments through the Keyhole" and having speakers like Iain M Banks who "writes SF through love of the genre".

Plymouth

The Drake SF&F Association meets fortnightly on Saturday nights at the Kings Head pub, Bretonside for outings, quizzes, debates and just socialising and publishes a magazine *Drake's Drum* quarterly, containing news, reviews, stories and other regular items. Contact the DSFA Secretary (c/o 22 Arkwright Gardens, Kings Tamerton, Plymouth PL5 2BJ) or telephone either 0752 360063 or 0752 267873.

Preston

We meet on alternate Wednesdays at The Bear's Paw, Church Street, Preston, where we have our own room and the beer is Bass. There are regular guests: the most recent have been M John Harrison, Brian Lumley, Iain Banks and Ramsey Campbell. The group has also published a comic in aid of group funds called *Frank Falakery*. *Space Ace* of the *Future* by Brian Talbot in a limited signed edition (available from G Hurry, 52 Cadley Causeway, Fulwood, Preston, price £1.50). Contact Keith Marsland, 1 Northgate, Goosnargh, Preston PR3 2BB (tel: Goosnargh 865672).

Saltscoats

This group is still meeting on Wednesday evenings at The Crown Inn, Chapelwell Street, which serves Scotch beer. There are no current plans to put out a new fanzine, the group is "resting on its laurels", but please contact Dave Ellis (Top Flat Left, 26A Chapelwell Street, Saltscoats KA21 5EA tel: 0294 603184).

South Hants

We meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at the Electric Arms, Fratton Road, Portsmouth (4 minutes' walk from Fratton Railway Station). The 4th Tuesday meeting has a programme item (a quiz, game or talk by a member) while the 2nd Tuesday is purely drinking and talking. Members come from all over Hampshire including Winchester and Eastleigh, not just Portsmouth and lifts may be arranged for far-flung interested parties. Meetings and membership free. In addition, we publish our group newsmagazine, *Cyberspace*, about 6 times a year which gives details of the weekly Role Playing sessions, the Mah Jongg league, mini bus trips and restaurant visits that we organise occasionally. We try to have at least one guest speaker a year like Neil Gaiman, Dave Langford or Terry Pratchett and the group is involved in the running of Wincon, [which is intensely successful this year and made about £900 profit - Ed.]. Contacts: Mike Chester (38 Outram Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hants.) or Keith Coslett (12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7TS).

Making its first appearance in this list is the **Bath SF Discussion Group**. As you can see from the poster above, they meet on alternate Wednesdays at "The Smith Bros.". The bit you can't read says: *Informal discussions on a wide range of SF topics: from space opera to new wave, from hard SF to fantasy, from Anna Karenina to Timothy Zahn, from publishing to purchasing, from books to films...* Contact Simon Bission (on Bath) 826826 ext 4315 or Steve Andrews (on Bath) 448595.

The NSSF Association Andrew Adams

At the first proper convention I attended - Novacon 19 - I met a number of people from various other student SF clubs, particularly Manchester and Birmingham. For years people had been talking about organising a national federation of student SF clubs, but no-one had ever got around to doing it. So we talked and then went away again and forgot about this for the most part. At LUCONinited, the subject came up once more, specifically in the person of Ivan Towson (aka The Fluffy Yag) who once more broached the subject. Once again the subject seemed to die out, apart from a mailing from Dave Wake of Birmingham who had assembled bits and pieces from various societies and mailed them out as an APA/fanzine.

The first real attempt to get things going then occurred at Eastcon (the 1990 Eastercon, held in the Adelphi in Liverpool) when there was a meeting as part of the programme which attracted representatives of more than 20 groups. Birmingham presided and offered to be the central agency for collecting and distributing an APA style newsletter. So we all gave Dave Wake our addresses and went home. And waited ... and waited ... and in our case, sent off our entry for the APA. And waited. I have now been informed that Dave received so few entries that he decided to give up. So a long silence settled over the student SF world broken only by the occasional furtive meetings at conventions between people from different groups.

At the next Eastercon (Speculation, that well-known success story of convention-running) the subject was aired again by representatives of the Glasgow and Strathclyde Uni clubs. They were intending to bid for the following year's Unioncon, and were interested in setting up a national student SF Association. We in Leeds, together with Manchester, agreed to meet the Scots again at Mabinogion (1991 Unioncon held in UCNW Bangor), since this was felt to be the ideal forum for setting up such an organisation.

Mabinogion came and went, unlike Anne McCaffrey, and right at the end we had a meeting between representatives of: Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, Bangor, Cambridge, Strathclyde, and Oxford Universities' clubs. At this meeting, like the mug I am, I volunteered to run the Association in its inaugural year, being replaced at the first official AGM at Scone (the successful 1992 Unioncon bid by the Scots). The name National Student Science Fiction Association was adopted, shortened to NSSF Association for short. It was decided that where an institution does not have an SF society as such, that we would allow membership by one of the allied clubs: RPG, Wargaming etc. We reluctantly agreed


that a nominal fee of five pounds per society per year should be paid to cover the secretary's incurred costs.

So what has gone on since then I hear you ask? I produced a newsletter which was sent out to all the universities and polytechnics in the country, aimed at the SF society where we knew it existed and otherwise sent via the Student's Union Secretary with instructions to pass it on to the most appropriate club.

Since then I have not had any response from the mailbox. I have talked to members of various different clubs over e-mail, and had only one direct refusal: Heriot-Watt SF society claim they can't afford it! So, are you out there? Is your society a member? If not, why not? Please hassle your committee to join. If this attempt fails then another may not be made for years.

The original newsletter is hopefully the only one which will be sent out in bulk by post. From now on the majority of our business should be done by e-mail over JANET. For more information please contact me as UNIOSFS on UK.A.C.LEEDS.CMS1, or: A.A.Adams, Flat 18, 26 Brudenell Road, Leeds LS6 1BD Tel: (0532) 786031

BATH SF DISCUSSION GROUP



Alternate Wednesdays
From 7-00 pm
At
"The Smith Bros."
Westgate Buildings
(Next to the Co-Op)

Informal discussions on a wide range of SF topics: from space opera to new wave, from hard SF to fantasy, from Anna Karenina to Timothy Zahn, from publishing to purchasing, from books to films.

Want to know more? Contact Simon Bission: Bath 826826 ext 4315
Steve Andrews: Bath 448595

Milford 1991

Ben Jeapes

I ducked and the laser beam splashed harmlessly on the wall above me. Through the gloom I saw the enemy approaching, humanoid shapes with flashing circles on their chests, guns held at the ready. Somewhere in the labyrinth lurked the self-styled Laser Queen in her hidey hole, little dreaming that her days were numbered ... I raised my gun, and the instructor's words rang in my mind: *Aim for the chest unit!* My own laser lanced out and caught the enemy warrior full in the chest. *Bastard* he said.

Laser tag — just one of the attractions that Margate had to offer. Alternatives were bowling, the Dreamland funfair, the arcades, whappa-snappa (no, don't ask) ... oh, yes, and some kind of writing conference was going on. Milford, after its brief sojourn in Cheltenham, was back at the seaside again.

I'd expected a typical, cheapo Margate-type hotel, and since that was exactly what we got, I wasn't disappointed. Veterans of Cheltenham and other venues were, but what the hell, they looked after us. And the conference? My dear, I loved it. Fifteen attendees, working out at three stories a day to read and about three hours an afternoon of intelligent discussion, criticism and dissection, and the rest of the time simply an atmosphere of SF, an awareness of the genre that for some reason the Basingstoke Writer's Circle (great chaps, all) just can't provide. People I'd heard of and read (Alex Stewart, Charles Stross), people I'd read but not heard of (David Redd, Andy Lane — I really tickled him by approvingly citing a story he's written), people I knew but hadn't read before (Molly Brown, Chris Amies) and total strangers (the rest). Stories of time travel, dystopias, magic, art, solipsism, and a couple of anthology ideas (to be pursued, or not). Sharing ideas, tips for markets, hints on style. And perhaps most valuable of all for my first-timers, being taken seriously as writers of SF! Learning that even the established pros face unbelievably obtuse editors who wouldn't recognise Hugo material if it was served on a golden platter! Sheer bloody encouragement to keep at it! Milford is an enriching experience all round, but I think it's my new boys (and girls) who are most enriched of all.

(If anyone out there remains sceptical, let me cite the beneficial effects of the Milford experience. During that week, Andy Lane sold a book, I got a new job and the BBC started showing *Thunderbirds* again. Milford works!)

It doesn't seem right to pick out just some of the stories and leave the others, but I will pick out one (Editors, look out for it should it turn up in your post box). Nicola Griffith's "Touching Fire" — by almost universal acclaim best of the bunch. Nicola, and Kelly Eskridge, tragically had to leave halfway through the week — they were missed.

Other vignettes that I'll present anonymously (the writers know who they are): the elf called Nobby, and the heavy metal band whose singer outraged an audience of Druids by biting the top off an oak sapling; the Chinese warrior riding in full armour down Shaftesbury Avenue in pursuit of the Triads; Reuben Tuesday, the time traveller in the '50s with a prescient knowledge of pop music; the Jonah who swallowed the whale; London abandoned and ruined, the population driven out by dinosaurs (and not a drained swimming pool in sight). They lodged in my mind. Good luck with the stories, people.

And, of course, the traditional silly games (hint: Doris Lessing provides great source material for titles in charades. How would you act out *The Sentimental Agents in the Volyn Empire*? Most holidays have at least a couple of boring spots, but I think I can honestly say this week in Margate didn't have one.

Hasta la vista, baby. I'll be back.

Noticeboard

Fanzines wanted: I am interested in fanzines, contacts in England, an exchange of news and general communication. I'm 17 years old and like Alfred Bester, H P Lovecraft and also play Blood Bowl, V I P E R and Call of Cthulhu. Please write: Thorsten Pankin, St.-Juergen-Strasse 92, 2390 Flensburg, Germany.

Clarke's Odesseys by Peter Stockill contains reviews and analysis of Arthur C Clarke's 2001, 2010 and 2061. Please send cheques for £1.25 (incl. p&p) to Peter Stockill, 8 Barsby Green, Berwick Hills, Middlesbrough, Cleveland.

For sale: Large selection of books, film/video magazines and movie publicity packs. List sent on request. John Peters (299 Southway Drive, Southway, Plymouth, Devon PL6 6QN).

Wanted: *The Mightiest Machine* J W Campbell, any edition; *Venture SF* (USA) May 1969 and UK edns 3, 4 & 5 1964; *Cosmos* 1963/4 Nos. 2, 3, 4; *Original SF* (UK) Nos 9 & 12; *SF Yearbook* No. 4; *SF Digest* (USA) May 1954; *Spaceway* USA June 1970; *Satellite SF* (USA) April 1957, December 1958, May 1959; *Great SF* from *Amazing* Nos 6, 9 & 10; *Doc Savage* pgs 95, 101, 102; *Space SF* August 1957; *Star SF* pgs No. 4. I'm willing to buy or trade — please get in touch. Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ.

Search for Belgian fans: Fiona Anderson (120 Clegrave Road, Stratford, London E15 1EA) has a special interest in Belgium and would like to get in touch with an active Belgian fan.

For sale: (another baby has arrived and more space is needed). Lot 1: preferably to be sold as a lot, ideally for £50 plus carriage, a range of SF, mostly Art Picture Books. All hardback unless otherwise stated, all are as new except for Holdstock/Edwards *Alien Landscapes* which has a slight tear at the top of the spine:

Steven Caldwell: *Dangerous Frontiers, Space Patrols, Aliens in Space, Worlds at War, Fantastic Planet*; David Kyle Pictorial *Illustration of SF, Illustrated Book of SF Ideas and Dreams*; Steven Eiser *Alien World — Illustrated Guide, Space Wars — Worlds and Weapons*; Stewart Cowley and Charles Herridge *Great Space Battles, Spacecraft 2000 & 2100 AD, Starliners, Spacewreck*; Robert Holdstock & Malcolm Edwards *Alien Landscapes* (pb); *Tour of the Universe* (pb); David Wingrove *The Immortals of Science Fiction* (pb); Anthony Frewin *100 years of Science Fiction Illustration* (pb); Alan Frank Sci Fi Now (pb).

Lot 2: about 130 paperback books for sale. These all have creases down the spine — some bad and some not. These consist of Heinlein x 30, Van Vogt x 22, Moorcock x 15, Aldiss x 12, Clarke x 6, H Harrison x 5, Wyndham x 4, Asimov x 8, Doc Smith x 6, Zelazny x 3, Blish x 2, Anderson x 2, Simak x 2, and one each of Herbert, Williamson, Pohl, Leinster, Silverberg, Le Guin, Dick, Vance etc (all well known).

I would prefer to sell each as lots, but would be prepared to split. Malcolm Parker (60 Selbourne Ave, Tolworth, Surrey KT6 7NT).

Penfriend required: I would like to have a penfriend in Great Britain who is interested in Science Fiction. I am 38 years old, an economist. My hobby is SF (particularly hard core SF), modern and classical literature, chess. I look forward to hearing from you. Frantisek Nespar, Narodni odboje 18, 690 02 Breclav, Czechoslovakia.

Wanted: *The Warrior Rearmed* and *The Warrior Challenged* by Sharon Green. Please contact T Morris (16 East Towers, Pinner Middlesex HA5 1TL tel: 081 429 1470).

Vectors wanted: Nos 100-106, 114-120, 122, 124-126, 131-133, 138-144, 146, 147, 154, 155. I would like to trade for these magazines various issues of *Asimov's*, *Analogue*, *Fantasy* and *SF* from the years 1970 to 1990. I can also trade for *Vector* some of the comic magazines or comics. One to one trade is what I have in mind. I have come to be a member of the BSFA once again, but I am missing some of the magazines. Since I particularly like *Vector*, I am hoping to fill in some of the gaps in my collection. Ziga Leskovsek (Gospodka 9, Ljubljana 61000, Slovenia, Yugoslavia).

For Sale: (P&P included in price). AMX Mouse and Interface £36; Business Controller (PCW 3" A: Drive, unregistered, unused) £45; x7 rolls Amstrad FXP96 fax paper (x6 new, x1 half-used) £15; x4 Star LC-10 Colour Ribbons (new, unused) £13; x9 Star LC-10 Colour Ribbons (used, re-inked) £11; ProSCAN to Facsimile Cable £6; PCW8256/8512 to Facsimile Cable £5.50; PCW9512 to Facsimile Cable £5.50; Star LC-10 Multi-Colour 9-Pin Dot-Matrix Printer, with Ivory coloured dust-cover and connecting cable (boxed) £85; Amstrad FX9600AT Facsimile Machine (12 months old, boxed) £300; 8000 PLUS Soft Options Disk (PCW machines 3" A: Drive) £5.

Also various pre-recorded (VHS) video films in excellent condition £6 each plus postage.

Also large selection of paperback SF&F from as little as 10p each plus postage. Will also consider swapping some SF. Send your wants and swap lists — my list sent on request. Chris Bailey (52 Druids Walk, Great Western Estate, Didcot, Oxon OX11 7FP).

Dave Carson designed t-shirts for sale - £9 each (p&p included), large and extra-large, details from Linda Krawiec, 28 Duckett Road, Harringey, London N4 1BN.

Human Rights and SF

Jim England

Things are not "fair" in the natural world. Nature is notoriously "red in tooth and claw", a "dog eat dog" affair. And God, if he exists, is not "fair" to us. How can he be when he allows some to be healthy, wealthy and wise, and others to be unhealthy, unwealthy and unwise? Where was he, where there were Nazi concentration camps? The saying *God helps those who help themselves* is a smug proposition with unprovability built into it. If God was the government, there would be revolutions all the time, because he would be the worst tyrant there has ever been, making us the victims of his divine "acts" on a whim, or operating with bumbling inefficiency.

Human beings, in contrast, seem to have had some idea of "fairness" throughout recorded history, even though it has been very strange at times. Can we expect it to be any less strange in the future?

Seen in historical terms, talk of human "rights" is a fairly recent phenomenon. The American declaration of the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is a prominent landmark, and it is not generally known that these three were strung together largely because the phrase was considered euphonious and suitably high-falutin' for the occasion. But what are human "rights"? Do we discover or invent them, like T S Eliot's "unreal cities"? The word seems to describe things we ought to have and that governments ought to grant us — like the right to vote, the right to a fair trial when accused of any crime, the right to free speech, and so on. We want governments, in other words, that are "fairer" to us in a number of respects than either God or Nature. It does not seem to be asking a great deal, at first sight.

But — "human rights"? Let's be honest: the phrase has hints of ridiculous, political rhetoric about it. It suggests some non-existent parallel with the laws of Nature, something "out there" in an absolute sense to be discovered, when we know very well that human rights must be rather arbitrary, invented, man-made things. We are rightly suspicious of anything man-made, especially if the makers are politicians, well-known for telling lies and making empty promises. What is said to be our "human right" this year may cease to be next year, or we may be told that something is, in theory, our human right but, in practice, we can't have it.

Deciding on a set of human rights suitable for an ideal society would seem, at first sight, to be a potentially useful exercise for Science Fiction writers. But I suggest that the whole idea of human rights involves paradoxes and contradictions. Consider the very first of that trinity referring to life, liberty and happiness: life. A right to life seems primary. Surely our right to life must be granted before we can even consider other rights? But what does a right to life mean — that the state should not, under any circumstances, be responsible for the loss of our lives? What about murderers in countries where there is a death penalty? What about countries which conscript their citizens (or even invite "regulars" to fight in wars in which they have a good chance of dying) and whose whole object is to cause the deaths of people? And if we accept that no state should execute its citizens or be responsible for their deaths in war, why at about such states which require their citizens to pursue dangerous occupations such as being in the fire service, to be pedestrians or drive vehicles which are known to cause thousands of deaths per year, to live in the vicinity of nuclear or toxic waste dumps. Are they not "responsible" for such deaths as occur?

But suppose we accept that a state has no right to endanger the lives of its citizens in any such ways, does this not imply that their lives are not only a "right" but "compulsory"? In other words, the state must do everything possible to keep people alive even if they are ill in hospital and suffering intractable pain: if they are deformed babies doomed to a life of suffering. So our primary right in a hypothetical utopia would not be a right to life, but a right to be free from pain.

One right can conflict with another. For example, suppose that citizens demanded the right to walk city streets in safety. Closed-circuit TV cameras could become ubiquitous as in 1984, which would interfere with the "right" to privacy. The "right" to have certain kinds of information and Press freedom would conflict with the right to privacy also. More importantly, the rights of certain groups and classes of people can conflict with those of people in other nations, for example, the right to a high standard of living in a rich country may be achieved at the expense of a poor one. At the present time, rich nations do little to feed the hungry and house the homeless in poor nations; they have hungry and homeless citizens themselves. Right-wing opinion would even be that the poor (whether nations or individuals) should only be helped up to a point, otherwise improvidence, inefficiency and dependence are being encouraged and rewarded. But can anyone with numerous "rights" in a rich country ever be happy about people in other countries having no rights at all?

Attempts to list human "rights" in order of priority for the future may sound feasible, but little thought is needed to see how futile they might prove. Priorities change over time. Before the nature of air was learned, no-one could have listed "the right to breathe oxygen" as a fundamental human right. The same would apply to hypothetical rights to breathe air free of many kinds of pollution and bacteria, to be housed far from dangerous sources of radioactivity, before such things were discovered. How do we know that there are not unknown entities in our environment which will be known in the future to be as important to us as air, water, food, warmth, sleep and the like? (Yet even these necessities are ignored by politicians, giving a hollow ring to their speeches about the right to "freedom" and "liberation": abstractions which no-one can define). Where would such rights as the right to have many children be on the list in an over-populated world, the rights to abortion, health care and euthanasia? How about the right to have a home of one's own, "free" education and garbage collection, the right to travel abroad, to own pets, to take drugs, to have cosmetic surgery, to change one's name, to watch TV (or its future replacement), to use a phone, to have an interesting job, a pleasant view, to own certain books — or not own them, to pass exams, to own a spaceship? Who can say which of these rights will appear most ridiculous in the future? The scope for consideration of such things in science fiction is infinite. One final but important point: if we have "rights", what about animals? If they have no rights, do we not have "responsibilities" towards them and all the things to come, whether they are "more" or "less" than human?

Empire Dreams

Kev McVeigh

I spent the last weekend raising the profile of the BSFA and soliciting material for *Vector*. Actually, I spent the weekend having a good time at Fantasycon XVI, but significant business was conducted at the same time. Besides a couple of interviews, several prospective writers were charmed, cajoled and, at the bar, bribed into contributing to *Vector*. In discussion with publishers, two advertising deals were developed, and contacts made for future advertising and promotional deals. I believe it can only help if the publishers know us and we know them. So things are getting better, though it is still only regaining lost ground. We still need an Advertising Manager, and there have been no offers so far. It isn't a difficult job, but it needs access to a daytime telephone. If you are interested, give me a call, and we can discuss it with no commitment. If you're worried about the cost, we refund most expenses. In addition, most publishers will telephone you once you've made that first contact. In general, they want to advertise with us, you only need to confirm the arrangements. After that, you will be responsible for invoicing publishers and liaising with me. Simple really.

We also need somebody to organise the London meetings. Maureen Speller has returned to university and, obviously, wishes to devote more time to that area of her life. Her replacement will take over booking the room, arranging the programme and collecting the money. Obviously, this post needs someone who will be able to attend the monthly meeting, but we can provide help otherwise. Maureen has reported a good relationship with the venue, who are prepared to take on a long term booking. As far as guests are concerned, again publishers are often keen to help, and Maureen and I can provide introductions as required. Again, it should not be too difficult.

The thing both these positions do need, is a willingness to do the job for some time to come: it is essential that we develop some stability in order that recent achievements do not disappear. I would hope that an Advertising Manager would be prepared to stay a couple of years, the Meetings Organiser at least a year. Of course, circumstances change but I'd like somebody to offer us a couple of hours a week for a couple of years. After all, people like Maureen Speller, Paul Kinciad, Andy Sawyer and others have given up ten years and are still working for us. So give me a call, please!

If we don't have a volunteer for the London meetings, they will cease. I live too far away to do much of it myself, besides which I feel it would be unsatisfactory for me to do everything anyway. If you want these meetings to continue, make sure of it.

So 1991 is almost over. Thank you to everyone who has done anything for the BSFA this year, even if it was only writing a letter disagreeing with me.

Beyond the world of SF, for a moment, this year has seen great joy. Who will ever forget John McCarthy's release, and great pain. As I write, who knows what hell the Yugoslavian people are facing. Let us hope that 1992 has more joy than pain and let us do what we can to achieve that.

My Part in the SF-Lovers War

Iain McCord

"SF-Lovers" is the informal name for the Usenet newsgroup "rec.arts.sf-lovers" for the discussion of SF and Fantasy. Usenet is somewhat like an electronic conferencing system with world wide distribution. The main difference between it and a bulletin board is that there is no one machine on which the messages are stored. Instead, all the messages are mailed to all the other machines, which keeps costs down for each user.

Next, SF-Lovers is popular — at any one time there can be several hundred messages to be read. This can cause problems and, to cut a long story short, it was decided that SF-Lovers could be split into more groups, ie a science group, a tv group etc.

The way the Usenet works is as a co-operative effort, no one person is in charge, so for the proposed split to go ahead, a vote had to be taken. That's when the fun started, since the ballot was stated in such a way that to split SF-Lovers you had to agree to re-name it. This I thought was not fair. The ballot also gave you the option of re-naming rec.arts.startrek as rec.arts.sf.startrek. I thought this was unfair and unnecessary. The way in which the ballot was brought to my attention was also fun. An article was posted by one of the vote organisers about another user on the net (Usenet) which I found incredible in that he, as a vote taker, proposed ignoring some votes that were against the proposed split. I felt I had to act.

The situation was one where people were flaming (writing articles in an inflammatory manner) about each other. Nobody seemed to be paying attention to the issues. Who said what about whom seemed to be the criterion. I then stepped in and tried to start a debate. My strategy was as follows...

- 1) Start with a basic objection to one facet of the issues at hand.
- 2) If I received a reply that used abusive language, I would most likely ignore anything in that reply.
- 3) If I received any other reply, I'd concede the point, or treat it seriously.
- 4) Start weak and grow stronger in my debate (hopefully fusing the opposition into not treating me seriously).
- 5) Don't ever state whether I was for or against the split.
- 6) Keep those who seemed to be causing the most damage on the far side occupied, and if possible make them look good (one person definitely needed that sort of help).
- 7) Try to limit the damage my opposition caused as much as possible.

If the above strategy sound schizoid, then rule 8 fits right in:

- 8) Stand on a platform of "Truth, Justice and The American Way".

Did it work? Well, part of my objective was that all the doubts about the way the ballot was being conducted be addressed before the actual results were announced. That happened. Next, I wanted people to vote the way they felt, if they didn't share my objections, then I'd accept that. The Startrek re-name failed, which was fair enough. A last minute action by one person, however, meant that the results of the whole ballot were thrown out. I was less than pleased by that turn of events.

The next thing to happen was a pleading on technicalities that since the ballot hadn't actually failed as such, but had been annulled, then the 6 month delay asked for by the "guidelines" before a re-vote be waived. That happened and a ballot modified to escape my (and others') objections was issued. The results of the second ballot were very similar to those of the first. The differences are that the Startrek and Doctor Who groups were off the second ballot, and the re-naming of SF-Lovers was optional rather than mandatory. I'm happy with that.

Since we received this article, it turns out that the rec.arts.startrek people who were against the idea of splitting newsgroups have decided that r.a.s. needs to be split as well. Of course, some of the erstwhile r.a.s.f. people have found this rather amusing and plan to be "just as helpful". Not to mention the fact that some sites have refused to transmit the new groups... Who said computer people had to be intelligent and adult?



WriteBack

If something in this issue has caught your attention (say, perhaps, the Suggestion Box on page 2), if you have something to say on SF, the BSFA or anything else, then please write to Jenny and/or Steve Glover, 16 Avary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP by the deadline

January 15, 1992

On Matrix 96

from: Peter Tennant, 9 Henry Cross Close, Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 7LQ.

Jan Sales' suggestion for a media magazine doesn't really appeal, primarily because there are specialist magazines to fill that niche with *Matrix* plastering over the gaps. I do think, though, that *Vector* should pay more attention to SF in the media, with articles and interviews. We could provide a more intellectual approach than magazines such as *Starburst* are able to. With it's irregular appearance, *Focus* is the odd one out in the BSFA stable of magazines. It's difficult to see what purpose it serves. Surely, people who want to write would derive greater benefit from the "how to" books that are plentifully available, while the interviews could just as easily be published in *Vector*. Wouldn't it make sense to ditch *Focus* and put the resources thus released into improving the other magazines?

Brian Aldiss' account of his visit to China was a delight to read. Despite commercial success, SF still isn't taken all that seriously in the West. The idea of writers being feted by civic dignitaries and welcomed by banners and cheering villagers is enough to please anyone. We should not let the sudden rush of good feeling undermine our critical faculties though. Did the villagers cheer because they liked SF or would any Western visitors have done the trick? Perhaps they only cheered because orders to do so had filtered down from above. I scanned Brian's article looking for a clue, but found none.

I would dearly like to know more about Professor Harold Cohen's painting robot. It sounds fascinating and great fun. Perhaps Aaron could be "persuaded" to illustrate a SF magazine. Art is something that eludes definition as readily as SF, perhaps more so. I can't agree that art is purely something that comes from the human mind though. Such a contention would exclude the aleatory work of people like Jackson Pollock. Also, you can't dismiss the artistic merit of a photograph simply because a machine was involved in its production. Aaron seems like a camera, albeit working with paint rather than film.

On Fanzines

From: Joseph Nicholas, 5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH

I'm slightly amused, and even slightly flattered, at the proportion of Michael Ashley's fanzine review column that is taken up with references to me. One might wonder why, if he believes that my arguments have such little merit, he devotes so much space to refuting them.

But in fact, I might be more flattered if this refutation paid closer attention to the issues I have sought to raise. He claims there is no reason why filkers, masqueraders, con-runners *et al* can't produce fanzines as well as filking, masquerading and con-running. It might be reasonable, and there's no reason why filkers *et al* can't produce fanzines as well — but the fact is that they don't, and an argument which fails to acknowledge this is entirely without point because it is proceeding from what its propounder wishes were the case rather than what actually is the case.

What counts is not the number of titles reviewed, but the frequency of their publication. Unlike the fanzine fandom of the fifties, seventies and early eighties, the fanzines published today manifest no awareness that they are part of a shared community, or demonstrate any sense of collective endeavour. The cross-references and cross-fertilisation that characterised earlier eras of fanzine publishing, the sense of purpose that the whole business once possessed, has vanished utterly.

The Corman Connection

Ian Mundell

Gas-s-s-s! (1970) was an important film for its producer and director, Roger Corman, for as a consequence of AIP's post-production re-cutting of the film, he decided that his 16-year old relationship with the distribution company had to end. He formed New World Pictures and, after *Right of Passage* and *Brown the Red Baron* (1971), did not direct again for nearly 20 years.

Roger Corman was in London in September as Dean of Studies for the BFI low-low budget film-making seminar, a sort of father figure for the present art-cinema vogue in low- and no-budget films. The strange thing here is that Corman's films bear little or no resemblance to those being made by the low-low directors of the 1990s — Aki Kaurismäki, Wim Wenders, Jim Jarmusch, Derek Jarman, to name a few.

Today's low-low directors are making films with a high degree of creative integrity, but which essentially address a limited audience. Despite low costs, they are unlikely to make a great deal of money, although a break-even must be reached or future projects might not happen.

Corman, on the other hand, was working in the mass market, making genre films — SF, horror, westerns and teenage movies — as quickly and cheaply as possible. *Gas-s-s-s!* was the 33rd film he had directed for AIP, his 48th feature in 15 years.

I was becoming more radical as AIP became more conservative Corman said during an NFT/Guardian lecture. This is an important point, since it is independents that allow a director to make the film that he wants to. But if you want to be an independent, it usually means having a low-budget or not making the film at all.

The market for Corman's productions is now syndicated tv and video, with a cinema release to get some publicity and a few quotes for the jacket. Hollywood has taken over the genre movie and there is no way that the low-budget can compete on the most basic level of special effects.

The reason, though, why Corman is guru for the 1990s low-low vogue is because they know about him. The art-house films that they might seek to emulate form half of the staple diet of the repertory cinemas, the remainder being new and vintage schlock. Jean-Luc Goddard one day, Corman the next.

That there is a link between these diverse tastes is shown in Corman's own activities as a film distributor. In the 1970s he began to run "new" art-house films alongside mainstream movies in venues like drive-in cinemas. He raised the profile of and interest in such films when the American establishment had all but wiped out the art-house circuit.

Finally, the list of film makers who learned the trade on Corman productions contains many of the most respected and successful at work today. Alumni from New World Pictures and now Millennium Pictures include Francis Ford Coppola, Nic Roeg, Peter Bogdanovich, Joe Dante, James Cameron, Jonathan Demme and Martin Scorsese. He hires for next to nothing, puts people through the mill, but he lets them do the job.

As delegates to the seminar reported, and as was evident from the lecture, Corman is still a source of energy, and regardless of the nature of the film, he is a proven master of production.

A Fan on the Barricades

Alexei Bezooziy

Western mass-media gave full account of all the events during the coup, so I think you know what happened in those days in Moscow rather well. It's not necessary to speak about these events in details. I'll tell you only about the impressions of the events my friends, editors of SF newspaper *Plus-Minus Infinity* and me, officer of SF&F club, *Brothers-in-Mind*, took part in.

August 19, 1991. The first news of the coup were announced everywhere in the morning.

But here, I feel necessary to tell you some words about history of SF&F literature and sub-culture in our country. In the 70s and 80s, during the time of totalitarian leadership of the communist party, the development of SF&F literature was practically suppressed.

It was considered that nobody but the party could see the ways of construction of everybody's future and any attempt of reflecting the other ways of living in future and different ways of achieving this future were totally forbidden. Any literary work about sex problems, global catastrophes and different social problems couldn't be published. Fantasy was considered bourgeois, occult and clerical by the party censors. But in the times of *perestroika*, all obstacles and barriers were broken. New authors and new literary works talentedly reflecting the previously forbidden topics appeared in print. There was a lot of such manuscripts in the editorial office of *Plus-Minus-Infinity*. But the sight of the tanks standing in the vicinity of the office reminded us of the events of 1937, the time of Stalin's purges.

We began the preparations to save or even to destroy the newspaper's archives, manuscripts and information stored in our PCs. We had things in our lives we didn't want to lose. That's why learning that on the 20th of August a meeting will be held to support Boris Yeltsin and the legal government of our country, it became clear to us that we had to be among the defenders of the Russian Parliament. We didn't want "the Dark Side of the Force" to take power in our land.

August 20, 1991. In the morning, we were in the meeting in front of the Russian Parliament. Tens, hundreds, thousands of people of different nationalities, religious and atheists, gathered there, everybody listened very attentively to the speakers. We could see the flags of different republics and parties above the people. The idea of all the speeches was the same: "Down with Yeltsin! We'll defend our freedom and democracy!" After the meeting, we went back to the office, gathered all the necessary things and good, called to our families trying to calm them down and started our way back to the Russian Parliament where barricades were being constructed.

There we got acquainted with the girl who showed us the way to the barricade where her friends were. This was the one on the Krasnopresnenskaya Embankment, directly under the Kutuzovskiy Bridge. The people who were defending this barricade had absolutely different social backgrounds: men, women, students of Moscow colleges, a Jewish lawyer who eagerly shared with us his legislative experience, young engineers from Moscow, industrial enterprises and two tattooed men, recently out of jail. What struck me most of all was that there were about six boys of about twelve years old, on the barricade. They would not agree to leave the place, no matter how hard the grown-ups tried to make them to do it. And finally, there was our leader, Stas, also a student, his appearance reminded on a "Russian bear" which is often a symbol of Russia abroad. We watched attentively — we were planning our actions in the case of different types of attack.

August 21, 1991. Since the first day of being in power, the junta forbade all the mass-media that wasn't under the CPSU control. On that day at the editorial office of the *Literary Gazette* there was a meeting of the editors of the forbidden publications. We hurried there too, because our *Plus-Minus-Infinity* was one, too. There we discussed the ways and methods of underground work: where to find paper, printing facilities, transport, and how to distribute the print runs. After that, we went home to have a short nap and to get ready to defend the barricade at night.

Our night duties were approximately the same as they were previously — the most difficult and depressing ones (an information about the possible attacks was on the air all the time was on the air all the time. During that very night of August 20-21, three people were killed, some people were wounded). The tension wasn't less the second night either.

There were several radio sets on our barricade: we listened to all the news broadcasted both from the Russian Parliament and foreign countries as well. The news that Gorbachev came back to Moscow was met with loud hoorays and applause.

August 22, 1991. Early morning. Taxi men from a taxi company next to the barricade who helped us not once during those hard days and nights appeared with vodka. We, grown-ups, drank it with the thoughts about better future. We congratulated each other with victory and left the barricade. There was a lot of work ahead of all of us.

Competition Corner

Roger Robinson

Report on *Matrix* Competition# 96

A very good entry of 18 this time, with 12 completing the grid successfully. As there was not a unique solution, I allowed either of two possible arrangements for the bottom right hand corner. I owe all competitors an apology for my lack of knowledge of the alphabet — MARGE should be before NIVEN. However, I don't think it fooled anyone — unless they tried to fit LARRY in — but there again this doesn't start with an N.

The 18 authors and the resultant grid were as follows:

alan burt AKERS
BARRY bayley
joy CHANT
arthur byron COVER
joseph GREEN
HARRY harrison
fred HOYLE
JERRY pournelle & niven
k w JETER

pournelle & larry NIVEN
MARGE piercy
PETER s beagle
PIERS anthony
e e doc SMITH
TERRY pratchett
jack VANCE
jules VERNE
jane YOLEN

CYHVAH
LOVTNC
GEPIME
RNEJSB
ATPRRA
MKEJYH

The first out of the hat for the £5 token was Rosemary Scott with runners up Kev McVeigh, Andy Mills and Stanton Hatch.

Other all correct entries were received from Mike Damesick, Vaclav Kriz, Dave Langford, Catie Cary, Terry Hunt, Peter Tennant, Caroline Mullan and Nigel Parsons.

Matrix Competition #97 An Xmas Triple Decker

Once again, we have been able to get sponsorship for the Christmas multi-part competition. £20 of tokens have been donated by Roy Peyton of Andromeda Books and £10 has been donated in memory of Philip G Wall. This gives a prize of £10 for each of the three sections. I have tried to make each section very different from the others, so it will be difficult for anyone to win all three prizes — or will it!?

Competition 97a — "All the Way"

Some book spines give a very odd impression when read "all the way". I am thinking of such classics as —

The Sheep Look Up John Brunner
Inside Dan Morgan
Gordon R Dickson On The Run

Please rush me a list of 5 other odd, amusing or downright bizarre examples.

Competition 97b — "Short Synopses"

Write a plot synopsis of any 2 of the following books between 25 and 30 words each. In order not to task your minds, befuddled as they may be by Christmas cheer, you should restrict yourselves to words of 5 letters or less, the only exception allowed is the author's name, if included.

Lord of the Rings
Mort
Dune
2001
Dr Adder
Nova
The Zap Gun

Tolkien
Pratchett
Herbert
Clarke
Jeter
Delany
Dick

Competition 97c — "Your Number's Up"

The list below gives coded clues to 20 (well-known?) SF short stories or novellas. Can you crack the code to reveal the titles and authors?

The codes work as follows —

3 B3E 6 4TER by 4AS 1 3CH

The figures in each word should be replaced by that number of letters. This gives the pattern for title and author as —

??? B77TE ???? ????TER by ???AS ? ???CH

which with a little deductive reasoning, knowledge and/or luck reveals —

The Brave Little Toaster by Thomas M Disch

Easy, isn't it? No? Oh well ...

i)	H6 H6 2 3 4	by	4S T6 2
ii)	4 N2S F3 3 V6	by	6 8RG
iii)	9	by	S5 3 J5 5SON
iv)	F6 3 7N	by	6 2YES
v)	5Y 2GG2 3EY2Y2	by	6 4SON
vi)	2CON5 2ON	by	5 5
vii)	5 4 Z7	by	4Z 6
viii)	B4 4C	by	G2G 3R
ix)	3 4 2 3 WIN7	by	6 W5
x)	F5 F9	by	3RED 3TER
xi)	3 4 EQ7	by	3 G5
xii)	3 1 G3 L3	by	6 2X2
xiii)	3 6 2 4 CM3	by	9R S4
xiv)	M3Y 4 3 2ROG4	by	L4 P6
xv)	K6K2K9K2K	by	5 7
xvi)	1 M6 2Y3Y	by	6Y 1 W6M
xvii)	3 3 26	by	6 1 3N3N
xviii)	1 4 2 5 3 1 4 6	by	H5 E6
xix)	S6 6N	by	J4 3SH
xx)	1Y1 3 5RAH	by	SA4 1 5Y



By the way, I reckon this last part may be the most difficult competition I have set yet, and would therefore be very surprised if anyone correctly identified all 20 stories. Then again, I may be wrong ...

All answers, bribes, comments etc to:

Roger Robinson,
75 Rosslyn Ave,
Harold Wood,
Essex RM3 0RG

before January
15, 1992.

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