

The Occasional Fanzine #1  
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Produced by Marc Ortlieb of P.O. Box 215, Forest Hill, Vic 3131, AUSTRALIA. Letters can be sent to me on EDMAC (03) 822 4626 if you have a computer with a modem. This is a Quick and Nasty Production. Available only on editorial whim. The editorial whim is a fickle beast, subject to regular lapses of memory and does tend to favour those whose address it can spell when it finds the money for postage.

Okay. I might as well face it. Gone are the giant Ortlieb fanzines of yester-year. The next Q36 is sitting, started, on disk and has been for the past six months. It hasn't moved so much as a byte in that time. It may materialize in due course but that due course is likely to make the publication schedule of Lee Hoffman's *Science Fiction Five Yearly* appear precipitously fast in comparison.

So I thought to myself. (I tried thinking to someone else, but had very little success if you exclude the blonde in the seat opposite me on the train, who slapped me. Why is it that some thoughts are so much more easily received than others?) My train of thought went roughly as follows. What Australia really needs is a good fortnightly newzine, like the sort that Leigh Edmonds used to produce before he devoted all his energies to writing these about The Influence of Sniffing Plastic Aeroplane Glue on the Decisions of Federal Aviation Ministers 1956—1965. Then I realized that there wouldn't be enough to put in a good fortnightly newzine. After all, Australian fandom isn't exactly vibrant with activity at the moment. The only way Greg Hills can keep *Thyme* going is to create implausible fan feuds between people no one has ever heard of, about issues that no one really cares about. That makes about as much sense as two blokes who respect one another strapping on boxing gloves and beating one another more senseless in order to increase the size of their headlines when they are convicted of raping beauty pageant entrants. I note that Tyson's headlines were much larger than those of the bloke who knocked him out a few years ago. Fame is such an evanescent thing.

The next best thing would be a seminal fanzine, one that would give rise to a whole new generation of Australian fans, each and every one of them aching to pub their ish, each and every one of them a potential chairthing for the next Australian WorldCon Bid. But what does it take to produce a spunky little fanzine? I suppose I should ask Ian Gunn or Alan Stewart. *Ethel the Aardvark* has come closer to doing that than any other Australian fanzine in the past five years. It gets back to where fanzines start. It's about science fiction with occasional descents into the morasses of fannishness. There though was the rub. First, when *Ethel* does descend into fannishness it is the cozy fannishness that only a clubzine can engender. It's a lot like early issues of The Birmingham Science Fiction Club's *Anvil*. I am not a club. I don't even own a club. I once had a five iron but I traded it in on my first electric guitar—apt really as I couldn't play golf either. The other problem with the Aardvark Gambit is that it relies on one reading lots of shitty science fiction books and watching lots of shitty science fiction films and still somehow suggesting in your reviews that they have some redeeming merits. I find that difficult. I am a teacher. Hypocrisy is my trade. I tell kids to do all sorts of things that I would not have been caught dead doing while I was a student.

"Okay now kids, make sure that you do at least two hours of homework a night. Those cell drawings are atrocious; at least use a sharp pencil. No, I can't accept English essays consisting of nothing but rehashed plots from X-man comics."

By the time I reach the end of an average school day, my hypocrisy banks are drained dry. When I write reviews, I haven't the requisite supplies of tact or compassion and I tend to write what I really think of the work—an approach not guaranteed to win a ready supply of review copies. It also leads to problems when reviewing local material. I know of a couple of local writers/editors who aren't likely to look kindly upon my requests for interviews now that they are successful authors of the sort of status that makes them ideal people for the sort of in-depth coverage that fills the pages of the best seminal fanzines. I'll leave it for younger fans to conceive of new ways to reincarnate fanzine fandom in Australia.

So what can I do to keep my fannish credentials intact? I can put out the occasional fanzine, one in which I natter away to me heart's delight about anything that takes me fancy. It's not going to be a deep or meaningful fanzine. I don't intend to run five page articles on the state of Australian Science Fiction. I'm not even going to publish a letter column, as such, though some comments from letters might find their way into the zine every now and then. It's going to be unabashedly aimed at Australians too. Though copies will be going overseas, I'll delay sending them until the weight of the combined issues falls just below the cost of the cheapest international mail. What with a mortgage a son and five science magazine subscriptions to support, I really don't have megabucks to toss away in postage. I'll also probably stick to this sort of format—condensed and photocopied—and my apologies to those of you who have opticians and their children to support.

## The Old Phart Natters

### Weddall for Duff

Well, what have they been doing to Australian fandom of late? I note that there is a DUFF Race up and running and that I am one of Roger Weddall's nominators. As such I'm somewhat obliged to push his candidature, something that I'm happy to do. Roger would be a great DUFFER in the U.S.. He is good value at parties, and is fun to have on panels. I've known Roger since I attended my second ever convention, OmegaCon, a small convention held in the Adelaide Hills in January 1976. He was one of the Melbourne University Science Fiction Association contingent that made the trek over. I have very glazed memories of being part of a squad who spent a whole night working on a one-shot. Eventually we realized that dawn was just over the horizon and so, sun-worshippers all, we traipsed out to watch the sunrise. We watched and we watched and we watched and we watched with nary a trace of the anticipated golden orb. It was left to a bleary-eyed congoer, woken by our raucous complaints, to point out that we were looking in the wrong direction and that the sun had risen fifteen minutes earlier.

Roger has been one of Melbourne fandom's fixtures for ages. He wrote me some of the first letters of comment that I ever received. And what letters they were!

*We all love cats. Personally I slobber over them. I call them Szchedecs and toss them like Caesar salads in the air, and they seem to put up with it. In return, they expect (it is their right) to be treated like royalty. "Why, how could it be otherwise?" (they tell me.)*

*In her Guest of Honour speech, Ursula leGuin asked the question of us, "Why are we here?" and then answered herself—"...to meet each other, because we know we like each other." When I heard that, I was knocked right out—for the rest of the evening, at least, I was on a natural high, a thousand feet up. I knew that I liked every one in the entire Hotel, even if they were all Mormon, racist Nazis.*

Yep. Roger wrote great letters. When cornered, he'll even admit to a long history as a faneditor, having produced several issues of *Yggdrasil*, *Thyme* and even one issue of *Sri Lanka*. (The promised sequel *Ceylon* never did materialize.) He's helped to run science fiction conventions and MUSFA and has run assorted parties and picnics that seem to attract the widest cross section of Melbourne fandom, both old and new.

I note that the MSFC agree that Roger is the ideal choice for DUFF. On the ballot they circulated with *Ethel the Aardvark #41* they had Roger's name in bold type, while Greg Hills' name was left in plain. (Thanks fellas, but that sort of thing is only likely to cause ill-feeling in Melbourne fandom.) Regardless of that, vote for Weddall. He'll be a great Australian representative at Magicon.

*Since writing that, I note that the DUFF deadline has gotten far closer that it should have and Roger has pubbed his ish again. LHYFE #2, which features a 1979 interview with Terry Carr, comments by John Foyster on William Atheling Jr, and a lively letter column on Roger's previous LHYFE, a transcript of a live fanzine, is available from Roger for the usual. (Roger Weddall, P.O. Box 273, Fitzroy, Vic 3065.*

### We'll Have Nun of that Around Here!

As I mentioned in the most recent issues of Q36, Anne Revell was a wonderful source of disgusting jokes. The only person who does better is my principal, who has, on two occasions, phoned up to where I was teaching to tell me a disgusting tale. It's difficult to walk into a Year 11 Chemistry class with a straight face after one's boss has just told one a joke that would get the students thirty minutes of detention were they to use so much as one of the words from the joke in class. But I got my own back the other day, with one from the bloke who supervises the night school at John Gardiner Secondary College. Russell told me the following, which I was glad to pass onto the boss, knowing that it would circulate well from there.

*There was this bloke who had a thing about nuns—the result of a Catholic School upbringing. He was sitting at the front of a bus one day when day, when a nun, in full habit, got on and sat down next to him. He tried to restrain his unnatural passion, but the rustling of the black cloth and the residual smell of incense finally got the better of him. He turned to the nun and said "Give me half a chance and I'll pull up your habit, rip down your knickers, and screw you right up the arse."*

*The nun jumped to her feet, pulled the cord and rushed off the bus. The bus driver noted her behaviour and, at the next stop, he got out of his seat and confronted the bloke.*

*"I happen to know Sister Angelica," said the bus driver, "and that wasn't her stop. Have you any idea why she rushed off?"*

*The bloke was so embarrassed, that he told the whole sorry tale. "Well no wonder," said the bus driver. "Don't you know that nuns aren't allowed to do that sort of thing with anyone except a priest in full clerical gear? I suspect that, if you were to dress up as a priest, she probably wouldn't object. Knowing Sister Angelica, she might even like it. You see, Sister Angelica takes a regular contemplative walk in the gardens outside the convent at eight thirty every night. If you were to hide in the bushes and surprise her..."*

*The bloke tried to put temptation behind him but 8.25 the next night found him, in full clerical regalia, hidden in the bushes outside the convent and, at precisely 8:30, a nun walked along the path. Quick as a wink, the*

bloke was behind her, had her habit up, her knickers down and was hard at at, aided, much to his surprise by her. When he had finally had his wicked way, his conscience pricked him."

"Sister Angelica, I have a confession to make. I'm not really a priest. I'm the bloke who made an indecent suggestion to you on the bus."

"That's all right my son. I have a confession to make also. I'm not really a nun. I'm the bus driver."

I know of all sorts of reasons why I shouldn't laugh at a joke like that. It is sexist. It makes fun of religion. It portrays gays as nasty deceivers and it certainly does not promote safe sex. None the less, I find it to be a classic joke. It has literary features that few short stories manage to achieve. There is pathos, a plot with a superb twist and the characters have motives that I can understand. There is social comment and it raises issues that the Catholic Church would probably rather ignore, without actually involving a member of the Church, other than peripherally. True, the gullibility of the protagonist smacks somewhat of deus ex machina but I've encountered stories in which protagonists are far more gullible and far less rational. Perhaps we should make all exponents of the loosely plotted story/novel/trilogy... take a course in joke writing.

## Triffids Rule

Occasionally I'm pulled up short in my magazine reading, much to the surprise of whoever is sitting on the train seat opposite me. The most recent shock to the system came from an article in the Summer 1991-92 edition of *Australian Natural History* a superb little publication if you haven't seen it. The article, by Philip Weinstein, was about spitfires, the larvae of the sawfly *Perga dorsalis*. The larvae, which feed on gum leaves, travel in large groups and defend themselves by forming a circle and regurgitating eucalyptus oil in the direction of their attacker.

What caught my attention was that each group has leaders, which assemble their followers by tapping the tips of their abdomens on the branches beneath them. In describing the noise, Weinstein has this to say: *The tapping is audible to the human ear as a series of slow, dull thuds, eerily reminiscent of Triffid noises*. This has me worried. Where and when has Weinstein heard triffids? He's a reputable scientist working at the Australian National University. If he's heard triffids then who has been breeding them? Australia in in the forefront of genetic engineering—the same issue of *Australian Natural History* features an editorial discussing the incorporation of a pesticide gene into cotton plants in which the safety problems inherent in genetic engineering are discussed. The editorial notes *The potential hazards of releasing genetically altered organisms into the environment are enormous—* granted that, then who has released the triffids huh? And why haven't we been told?

I suppose we should be on the lookout for mysterious disappearances. Unfortunately for the legal system, triffids find corpses delectable and so corpus delicti is out of the question. Besides, the Establishment is sure to cover up anything that lead the public to suspect that they've been tinkering with giant carnivorous vegetables. All I can say is watch out for moving greenery. That rustling in the bushes may well be the bushes.

## Science Fiction in the Media

Until eclipsed by the deaths of Benny Hill and Frankie Howerd, Isaac Asimov's recent death got science fiction a high profile in the media. I will miss Asimov's science articles. I haven't enjoyed much of his recent fiction, but his science articles embodied some of his best writing, in that they were clear, entertaining and informative.

Paidraic P. McGuinness, a columnist for *The Australian*, with whom I rarely agree, writes an impressive tribute to science fiction and, while tossing around names such as Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke and van Vogt, has the following to say in his column from *The Weekend Australian* 18-19/4/92:—

... one of my favourites among recent Australian science fiction stories is a humorous and humane exploration of what living in a closed lesbian community might be like—Lucy Sussex's *My Lady Tongue*, one of the best short stories in any genre published in Australia in the past decade.

I suspect that McGuinness wouldn't get on very well with fandom as it now exists. He's very much a John W. Campbell Jr man (although the name is typoed as *E. W Campbell Jr* in the column.) He has the following to say about the current science fiction scene:—

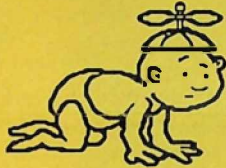
*Unhappily, the vogue for sword-and-sorcery fantasy kicked off by the 60s craze for Tolkien (though of course it goes further back than that) has poisoned most of the science fiction world, which is now dominated by illiterates playing games like Dungeons and Dragons on computers which 50 years ago were unimaginable except in science fiction.*

Terry Dowling got a guernsey in the previous weekend's *Australian* reviewing a Philip K. Dick biography, the latest in Clarke's books about Rama and a fairy tale anthology edited by Lester Del Rey and Risa Kessler.

*The Australian* 8/4/92 noted that the transvestite D&D player, serving a sentence in Tasmania's Risdon Jail for the murder of a fellow D&D player was found dead in his cell.

A photograph of Galaxy Bookshop appeared in *The Australian* 15/4/92, in connection with Asimov's death. It headed a Robin Williams article about Asimov's predictions for life in 1990.

Irwin sent me the following for Q36, but, since it looks as though that may not eventuate for a while, allow me to present:-



### The Fannish Baby's First Record Book

Irwin Hirsh

(Bold print = Delete as applicable)

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I was born on \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_.

The fanzines which published the news of my birth were \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. They mostly got the birthdate, birthweight, etc. **right/wrong.**

The first three people to ask dad/mum if he/she was going to publish a special fanzine to celebrate my birth were \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

The first fanzine I ripped to shreds was \_\_\_\_\_. Dad/Mum had left it **within/out** of my reach so was asking for it/it was all my fault.

The first convention I attended was \_\_\_\_\_.

The first convention where I had a paid membership was \_\_\_\_\_.

The first interstate convention I attended was \_\_\_\_\_.

The first panel I disrupted was on the topic of \_\_\_\_\_. The panelists were \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

The first time I filled in a Ditmar nomination was in 19\_\_\_\_. Dad/Mum **helped/did not help** me fill it in. **His/Her** fanzine **was/wasn't** nominated.

The first time I did a drawing of a spaceship was when I was \_\_\_\_ years old. Dad/Mum **did/did not** publish it on the cover of a fanzine.