



BLATANT#17 presents:
THE AGGROCULTURAL REVIEW,
 a journal of reading all
 sorts of things, writing
 similar or different sorts
 of things, checking the
 mail, going to the pub,
 sitting around in hotels all
 night with people who have
 no pride at all when it
 comes to puns, little
 silvery round things that
 make music, home-moanership
 and gardening, published by
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 Dagger Publication #152.
 Don't you think it's about
 time you pubbed your ish?

PROGRESS REPORT After more than a year, the house is pretty nearly the way we want it - at the moment, our plumber is completing work on the shower, having already replaced the old fixtures with shiny new stuff with mixer taps. Isn't modern science wonderful? A few more shelves and some carpeting in the halls, and we can pretty much say good-bye to construction-site living.

I note with growing distress that of the faneds I discussed in the last issue of BLATANT, few seem to be producing fanzines currently. However, Owen Whiteoak has only recently started producing his first zines since moving to London (but he's put out three since Easter, which is better than most anyone else has done). Shiffman has produced one item, and the newszines continue from Mike Glyer and Martin Easterbrook (at least the beat goes on somewhere). But the Nielsen Haydens seem to have dribbled away into pro-ac, Colin Hinz hasn't been heard from, Simon Ounsley's last publication is a dim memory, and so on.

Even Marty Cantor has lost his obsession with putting out HOLIER THAN THOU regularly (or at all). What's fandom coming to?

Prodom has certainly sucked a few former leading lights of fandom away. Given the current climate, it's hard to fault them - being paid is better than getting nothing at all - but a part of me wonders if Terry Carr's death didn't break a vital link between fandom and prodom. Stu Shiffman says that the phenomenon of a fan/pro split seems to be universal these days, and it worries me a lot - I remember the 1970s as a time when fandom's input into prodom was strong enough that it probably had a major influence on professional output, and all to the good. That was an important generative period in SF as well as in fandom.

But fandom itself has been drawing away from SF for a while, now. Book reviews and discussions appear rarely in fanzines, and there seem to be fewer and fewer new books one can assume one's friends may have read - all too many fans confess that they seldom read science fiction at all. Not that that should make a difference - we sometimes used to talk about non-sf books we were reading, but aside from Bruce Gillespie, not too many people are doing that, either. I certainly miss the breadth of subject matter in ordinary fanzines, and I wonder what distinguishes a fannish gathering these days from any other group of drunks going out to the pub.

To make matters worse, SF has been a subject for real dyed-in-the-wool academics, rather than fans. Even if the writing weren't so tediously "scholarly" (and, generally, of low quality), the discussions of SF that have been reaching the ivy-covered world lately would leave a lot to be desired. Deconstructionist essays and books can cover a writer's work in great detail without ever touching on the most impressive and important aspects of the author's output. Examinations of SF by professionals who have no ties to fandom are usually the thinnest and most shallow studies of the field. A well-known British feminist editor who represented herself as an expert on feminist SF once (not that long ago) startled the fans in her class when they discovered she had never heard of Delany. More recently, she has produced a book for the Women's Press on feminism in science fiction (IN THE CHINKS OF THE WORLD MACHINE, Sarah Lefanu) which, among numerous other sins, dismisses Delany, fails to mention Terry Carr even once - a dramatic oversight in itself - and remarks without comment that historically, the feminist SF movement has occurred mostly in the US (perhaps because discussing this subject would have forced her to give more credit to Delany and Carr?).

Back in fandom, poor Harry Bond finds himself alone in the quest for other young, enthusiastic fans, Martin Smith comes close to saying that Trufannish is a dead language, and even Chuch Harris shakes his head and says that he thinks "our" kind of fandom is dying out. In 1982, Gary Farber was asking me, "So can you tell me what's interesting in fanzines that I should be excited about them?" In 1988, it was Patrick Nielsen Hayden asking me that question. Times have changed.

There's no two ways about it - fandom isn't as sexy as it used to be. That feeling of an endless stream of new and interesting people to meet simply isn't there anymore. The Baby Bust has reduced the numbers of kids who grow up to be fannish Martians. The kids who do come into fandom today are alienated from fanzine fans rather than drawn to them. I used to be constantly meeting people who turned me on - intellectually, emotionally, even sexually - but nowadays I get that feeling only very, very occasionally. And those who once did turn me on are drifting away. You rarely meet people who are young enough to have the freedom to pursue - or create - any action, and fandom these days does seem to be composed of sedentary couples with the commitments of middle-age taking up all of their time, dropping into fandom rarely. A community whose members die off before they are replaced cannot survive.

But I've always wanted to grow old in fandom, and I hate to see it withering like this. Instead, I've only gotten older. As has fandom. (17/9/88)

"The days of fandom as a Moveable Feast are over."

POSTAL STRIFE Postal workers in London and the rest of the UK (but not necessarily in concert) have been disrupting service for so long that there has been no real normal distribution of mail here since before the August Bank Holiday. In theory, the strike is over now, and as of 16 September we have been receiving mail - all of it postmarked in the US before the industrial action. A short lesson in time-binding.

For a longer lesson in time-binding, we have correspondence regarding the last issue of **BLATANT**. A mere year ago, for example I received a letter from a complete stranger named Jonathan Waite, which said:

You aren't going to believe this, but my boss (Gamma) had a copy of **BLATANT** 16 on his desk, and I accidentally spilled tea on it, and I had to hold the pages apart while they were drying, and so I, er, read it. I don't know - "enjoyed" seems a rather inadequate word. I'd just read **FANDOM HARVEST** (again, courtesy of Gamma) and "enjoyed" that. This was a different sort of thing, and I wish I had known him, or even met him...

Well, now we know how to dig up new fans, I guess. Get them to spill tea on bits of their employer's fanzine collection.

An astonishing number of comments I received on **CLUES** were DNQ (people hate to get maudlin in public, it seems). One that wasn't DNQed came from Walt Willis:

I had to stop and tell you how much I admired and respected **CLUES**. I don't think I have ever read anything like it and I shall remember it for a long time. It leads me on to reflect what a marvellous thing is this recent influx of talented young women writers, like yourself, who are not afraid to say what they really feel. So many men, especially in England, seem to be able to cope with reality only by macho stoicism or defensive sneers.

In a flattering card which had no DNQ, Dave Hartwell said: "I miss him a lot."

One person mentioned Terry Carr's death in his loc but then went on to ask who the guy who'd died was. Hmmm. And absolutely no one showed off their musical knowledge by telling me that they made the connection between the title of the piece and the references to the telephone. On the other hand, Walter Miles sent newspaper clippings about the death of Alice Sheldon, enclosing a note which said:

I was just going to write a description of the time that Somtow and I delivered Tiptree's *Nebula* to her, but it started off so lame and tired that it'll just have to wait.

I'm so sorry about this whole thing. For many months, I had been intending to write to tell her that not everyone is reading goopy fantasy, that some of us are trying to catch up with her fifteen years late. We must never wait.

If losing important people is tonight's topic, then the only time I ever met Terry Carr, he was quite friendly and treated me as though I was entitled to be at Charlie Brown's party at the Berkeley World Fantasy Con. I remember he introduced me to Ed Ferman.

And Mike Glicksohn said:

BLATANT 16 acts as a further reminder of how well you put words together and convey emotional states and impressions when you get around to it. It also acts as a reminder of how unfortunate it is that you seem unlikely to produce a TAFF report since it would have been a significant contribution to the general canon of fannish writing. Perhaps you and Rob and Greg could get together in a mutual support group and act as each others' consciences, reinforcing guilt feelings until fandom is blessed with the simultaneous appearance of three brilliant TAFF reports? Nah, you'd probably just end up two thirds drunk.

Hansen has actually written (and published) a few bits of his TAFF report, but my own feeling is that three years writing about life in the UK and keeping my North American audience in mind is practically an on-going TAFF report. (I love the picture of Gregory Pickersgill in a "support group" for anything - in the end, everyone goes out and kills themselves, right?)

Don D'Amassa didn't think I emphasized the other aspect of AIDS enough:

I have a mixed reaction to your piece on AIDS. In general, I agree, but I think you've missed something. Despite all the foofaraw about how the permissive sexual atmosphere is going to die because of the advent of the disease, I think it will actually become even more liberal. Sex is being discussed openly now in places it would never have been before. Condom ads are on TV and radio almost every day. There is mandatory sexual education now in schools which would never have allowed such things in the past. Prostitution is on the decrease, and many of those still on the streets are demanding the use of condoms. People are becoming more, not less, educated about the consequences and responsibilities of sex. And obviously the use of condoms is way up. Sales almost tripled, according to the cable news story I saw recently.

Hmmm. I don't suppose there's a chance we will see a consequent decrease in cervical cancer in future, eh? It would be interesting...

WAHF: Amy Thompson, Steve Miller, Gary Deindorfer, Allan D. Burrows, Alexis Gilliland. And Steve Beiler sent more baseball cards. (19/9/88)

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THE HARD STUFF In the back of my mind I have been compiling an anthology of disgusting feminist science fiction (maybe called THE HORROR OF SEXISM). SF is the perfect genre to illuminate the perilous territory in which women live, and under the circumstances, it seems to me that if you're going to give a reasonably accurate picture of this often hideous world, you really are going to have to write some ugly stories. And so it is. James Tiptree really opened up this field long ago (with a number of stories like "The Girl Who Was Plugged In", "The Women Men Don't See", etc.) but those early stories are relatively gentle, not really disgusting at all. Raccoona Sheldon's "Morality Meat" is fairly disgusting, and I suppose she deserves a slot in this book out of respect to her place in the genre. But Octavia Butler's "Blood Child" makes it on its own, with its blatantly unforgiving approach to the socialization of

members of a victimized caste to learn to expect, accept, and even come to desire their own sacrifice on behalf of the overpeople. The analogy to romance and pregnancy she uses here was so clearly drawn that I was shocked when another reviewer saw this story as coming solely out of Butler's black experience.

Lisa Tuttle's "Bug House" is the gut-kicker that inspired this idea for a collection. I'm sure any reader would find it pretty repulsive, and thank god this can't happen to you, eh? I'd say it was the most accurate portrayal of rape I've ever seen. Some women might think it's a portrayal of marriage.

And finally, if no less an authority than Orson Scott Card can call it, "the most disgusting story I've ever read," Connie Willis has definitely come up with a winner in the sweepstakes with "All My Darling Daughters." I'm not going to spoil the surprise by telling you what this is about, but it's a good one.

THE EASY STUFF After due consideration, I have come to the conclusion that the WILD CARDS series is a far better example of novel-as-comic book than WATCHMEN was of comic book-as-novel. As a long-time Alan Moore fan (why, I read V FOR VENDETTA in black&white, and MIRACLEMAN back when he was MARVELMAN), I was happy to see WATCHMEN and thought it was an interesting addition to the field, but I was pretty disappointed at that old re-vamped SF plot famed of story and TV ("Demon with a Glass Hand" and Watson's THE EMBEDDING are two examples that immediately spring to mind). In the end, I don't see that WATCHMEN is any more a novel than any other comic story. I enjoyed WATCHMEN's added textural depth, and thought Moore & Gibbon did some pretty interesting and exciting things - but I don't really see that they particularly transcended the field.

The WILD CARDS series is, of course, just plain fun, without any pretensions to being High Art. Still, I have to admit I'm impressed with the way certain comic book conventions have been handled here. I suppose some aspects of the treatment must be credited to Moore's discussion of the whole idea of what life would really be like if there were super-heroes, and the very fact that people like Alan Moore have brought comics out of the gutter certainly must have encouraged the sudden appearance of a series by some talented (and in some cases highly respected) members of the SF field in a work which is, in essence, a densely-packed super-hero comic without the illustrations.

But George Martin et al have added a dimension in content which, among other things, answers a question which has always kept me up at night: what about the people who get useless or worse-than-useless effects from the cosmic rays, lab accidents, and mutations which have given us all those super-heroes and super-villains? In comics, you get hit by whatever, and you get super powers. In WILD CARDS, you probably die, and if you don't, there's a chance of about 90% you'll be a Joker - someone who merely loses their normalcy (you might bruise at the slightest touch, or your skin might become transparent, or you could have the body of a slug). Then there are the Deuces, who are changed enough to notice it without looking any different or suffering from it - but they can't do anything useful with their "power", either. For years, I've wondered about the people you never hear about in X-MEN - the mutants with Stupid Super Powers. Now we know.

The density of references to other media is entertaining, as well - like the appearance of the word CROATOAN on an underground wall just before the subway alligator ran into all those little albino alligators. (And a recent issue of

EXCALIBUR plays the game when Arcade refers to various talk-shows, including Peregrine's (Perch.)

The handling of real events in history as they affect and are affected by Wild Card victims is treated with a lot more care than comics ever gave them, too. I was particularly interested in how the HUAC hearings hit the Aces, and now that we're up-to-date, I'm really looking forward to the presidential election. Of course, this poses a problem for the creators which previous books in the series didn't have hanging over them - up to now, the events under discussion were long-finished, everyone knew how they turned out, and you had some 40 years to play with. Now we're in real time, and the question is whether the writers can fill as many pages with only a few months worth of current events for their playground as they did with a decade or more of history.

By the way, in a race between Greg Hartmann and George Bush, how would you vote?

MORE GOOD STUFF Most of the SF I've been reading over the last few weeks has been fairly ancient (been on a binge of EFR and Sheckley, mostly), but there've been a few hits among more recent acquisitions, too. A couple of fantasy books have impressed me with their departure from the standard convention of putting everything into a culture which is usually a thinly-disguised and romanticized version of an alien's view of (very) pre-industrial Britain.

First up is Emma Bull's **WAR FOR THE OAKS**, which takes place in Minneapolis and brings elves to the shopping mall and brownies into a modern apartment. This book managed to charm the hell out of me with what felt like a personalized wish-fulfilment fantasy - the brownie does all the housework perfectly and silently, without misplacing cherished valuables, and cooks terrific meals, too, for example. And after I-can't-count-how-many band try-out sessions in which no one was quite what we wanted, how I envied Eddi McCandry when just the right people turned up to fill out her group.

Also recommended is Megan Lindholm's **WIZARD OF THE PIGEONS**, which departs even further from convention, leaving all the world of faerie aside entirely to bring a more subtle sort of magic - and a more personal and contemporary sort of war - to the city of Seattle. Here the very fabric of street life sets the scene and is woven into a tapestry which maintains the rich texture of fantasy without ever really letting you forget how grim, grimy and cold a city can really be.

It's interesting to me that a number of the more inventive books I've read over the last few years do seem to be fantasy novels. Even the boys seem to be at their most creative and impressive in this field (**LITTLE BIG**, **LAND OF LAUGHS**, and **TALKING MAN** leap immediately to mind), and although I have enjoyed all the shiny surfaces of the cyberpunkish things I've read recently, it's really only in these fantasy books that I have the feeling of getting something I haven't seen over and over before. The biggest exception I can think of here is Lisa Tuttle's **SPACESHIP MADE OF STONE** - a short story collection that packs a real punch, and which I also recommend very highly. Like Tiptree and Varley, Lisa is someone who has plenty of talent and controls it very well in the short story form - but unlike Tiptree & Varley, she maintains that control in her novels. (19/9/88)

INTRODUCTION TO BINDWEED The hedge around my parents' property had a single shoot of morning-glory winding languidly up and across the edge of it, with the occasional soft white flower resting gently atop the bushes in benign adornment. It wasn't until months after I moved to Plashet Grove that I was to understand the degree of ravaging malignancy that this apparently harmless treasure was capable of. The leaves and the flower, they were the same, but my neighbours knew it as bindweed, and all agreed that no garden, nor even garden wall, was safe near it. I dutifully clawed it out, to their congratulatory approval, but in no time at all it returned, twisting its way in from Zubeyda's garden next door through the concrete border which the late Mr. Pinckney had constructed to protect this parcel of land from this very danger. It came from out of the wallwork like the subject of an old sci-fi movie (possibly starring Steve McQueen) and reached up with grasping talons to strangle my struggling roses. It reminded me of someone.

Roz and Abi told me horrible stories of bindweed devastation which had tested even the Kaveney musculature. I had visions of bindweed tendrils burrowing through my kitchen wall and consuming my entire refrigerator. Most importantly, I had sworn an oath to preserve and protect the slender yellow rose bush under which rested the ashy remains of Mr. & Mrs. Pinckney themselves, so I was duty-bound to investigate some solution to the problem. I liked morning-glory all right, in its place, but I did not like this bindweed thing stifling all variety and colour in my garden. Yes, it reminded me of someone, and so I realized what its true name must be and cursed that name. The bindweed died. (Actually, Anne Hammill's prescription for a weed-killer called Tumbleweed may have helped...)

But the word had crept into my vocabulary, and I learned to associate it with the tendrils of a social cancer that seemed to have crept into my life concurrently. It seemed as though I could hardly ask a simple question or make an innocent remark without some twisted and ugly re-working of it beginning to circulate and eventually come back to me.

Like morning-glory, gossip was just a flower in my garden at home, it carried news, conveyed information, kept everyone up to date with each other. But again, I found that it served a more sinister role for my fannish neighbours here, stifling the growth of friendships and the blossoms of creative effort. I had seen its tendrils in their own gardens and not understood its meaning, and now it had worked its way into mine. The gossip about my neighbours in fandom had it, for example, that Deroy Kettle, who is still the funniest man in the world, had become blunted, dull, uninteresting, since he got married. I heard this even from people who have never met him, and felt a chill - a similar rumour, soon, was circulating about my own partner. Indeed, I even heard of a supposedly eye-witness report by someone who was not there of terminal rifts between us. Reports of the death of our union being greatly exaggerated, there was no need to wonder whose unkempt garden this weed originated from - it had all been seen before. Unfortunately, my fellow sufferers seemed unable to name a suitable weed-killer - most of them had simply bricked over their gardens.

"Oh he's just an excitable boy."

- Warren Zevon

THE SAGA CONTINUES With the let-up of the strike, we've actually been getting a trickle of fanzines through the slot. Right now I'm trying to decide whether to give my award for Worst Repro to Harry Bond (NOWHERE FAST) or Tommy Ferguson (TASH - despite having been produced on the same mimeo that used to turn out HYPHEN, it is not the same). It's hard to comment on the contents when it's so hard to read. Harry's BOGUS wasn't bad, though, and Tommy's heart seems to be in the right place when you can read around the smeary ink. (TF - 60 Melrose Street, Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7DN; HB - 6 Elizabeth Avenue, Bagshot, Surrey GU19 5NX)

Before the strike started, we got a few fanzines that left me sort of baffled with wondering where these people come from who have more time and money on their hands than any four fans have ever been known to before. For example, DELINEATOR, from, uh, Rampant Nun (or Alan White?) has a glossy colour cover on heavy stock that looks so expensive I could only ask myself, "Why didn't they save up for a laser printer instead to get rid of that crummy dot matrix?" It also contains lots of photographs, and at 97 pages is coming perilously close to being a "magazine". The contents are fairly interesting, though, and there are lots of good quotes (from Marilyn Chambers: "You can show a breast being cut off, but you can't show it being kissed."). Fanzine reviews, too. (455 E. 7th Street #4, San Jacinto, CA 92383-8401 USA)

Rosalind Malin & Dick Pilz also seem to have time on their hands - RENAISSANCE FAN is one of the most ambitious fanzines I've ever seen. There are pages with magazine cut-outs pasted in, bits of green construction paper appear as grass, stickers are stuck hither and yon, real trash is falling out of a drawing of a trash basket, drawings are coloured in, and there is a profusion of artwork. Christ almighty - did they send out more than 10 copies? Contains short articles, fiction, poetry. (2214 SE 53rd, Portland, OR 97215 USA)

Pat Mueller's PIRATE JENNY has all of the classy production we've come to expect from Pat's desk-top publishing empire, and then some. It's clean and readable, with easy-on-the-eye layouts (tasteful use of white space), and large type. With a wrap-around cover, it definitely looks like a magazine, but retains the elegant friendliness of a Pat Mueller production. (618 Westridge, Duncanville, TX 75116 USA)

More closely adhering to the "fannish" tradition, we have the third issue of THE CAPRICIAN from Christina Lake & Lilian Edwards. Langford's advice on how to survive TAFFdom seems to be missing a line ("You are a child/fluke of the universe, you have a/no right to be here"), and Taral is of course wrong about a number of things, but overall I have to say that this was the most engaging read of the lot. (LE - 1 Braehead Road, Thorntonhall, Glasgow G74 5AQ; CL - 47 Wessex Avenue, Horfield, Bristol BS7 0DE)

One thing Taral is wrong about is the virtue of stirring up shit by saying insulting things about people who he apparently perceives as "idols of current fandom" because they happen to manage to publish something occasionally which is sent to North America.

If the publishers of PULP and BLATANT are "idols of current fandom," it comes as news to us, Taral. (Go back up there and count the number of locs I got on 200 copies of BLATANT 16 - note, while you're at it, the number of miles between me

and anyone who wrote to let me know they appreciated it. The only one who lives in London is a total stranger.) While I realize that these fanzines may enjoy a certain caché in the States due merely to being British, I thought you'd be bright enough to understand that the same is not true over here. And we live here, where the closest we get to being idolized is getting insults from Michael Ashley. If you imagine that saying nasty things about fanwriters and editors will improve the quality of their work, think again - Walt Willis quit writing for PULP because the kind of feedback he was getting convinced him that modern fandom didn't really want to hear anything from him. I'm sure he appreciated your comments.

And just exactly who is "smug"? What "idols of current fandom"? Where? The only people I can think of who might fit these definitions were certainly not mentioned in your letter to THE CAPRICIAN. But then, they wouldn't be - because the ability to write brave, interesting, ground-breaking things depends largely on overwhelming confidence that no one worth mentioning is going to be taking pot-shots at you for daring to say them. After four years of being bashed all over the place by insects like Bergeron, Mayer, Locke and Pickersgill, it took me an enormous amount of courage to publish the last issue of BLATANT or to contemplate publishing this one (notice a mere year or so has gone by from one to the next, for example). You want to be brave and stir some shit by attacking the current idols of fandom? Throw your bricks at D. West, someone who most people haven't the nerve to criticize and who seems to be an advocate of that sort of criticism anyway and he can bathe and bask in the glory of it, if he wants to.

If you don't believe me, let me ask you one final question, Taral. Did you ever like my writing? Things you have written in the past lead me to think that you once did. But that was years ago, wasn't it? - back in the days when I fearlessly said anything I felt like saying because I was fairly secure in the knowledge that no one with higher status than a slug was going to say nasty things about me, and in fact I couldn't publish an issue without reading several laudatory (and no disparaging) reviews of it within the next couple of months, in numerous other fanzines. That was before certain individuals spent eight years dismissing the "boring" feminism of the '70s and insisted that "nothing" happened in US fandom during that period; before sexism and bigotry became fashionable again; before four years of the afore-mentioned insects; and before the supposedly creative minds of fandom decided that the only interesting writing was that which was personally insulting to other fans.

Well, I've got a surprise for you, Taral. It's easy to be abusive and insulting. It's not the least difficult to un-leash one's anger or put one's worst, most supercilious and condescending voice on and trash the shit out of people - if you're insensitive enough and don't care who you hurt and alienate. If that's the best way you can find to make fandom interesting, we might as well bury the corpse right now, because creativity is already dead.

I like to reserve my anger and invective for those things which are genuinely offensive - and I am offended by the casual glee with which people are willing to attack, insult, and offend people for no better reason than sheer entertainment.

Also appearing in the Offensive category, we have the journalistic standards of Steve Green in CRITICAL WAVE. In the current CW, Steve says that in the previous issue, Robert Lichtman wrote that he refused to stand for TAFF if the winner must

go to the Eastercon. A reading of Robert's own words in that issue shows this is hardly the case. Lichtman in fact had written asking which convention he would be expected to attend if he won, since some unidentified person(s) had led him to believe he might be expected to attend the Mexicon instead. (We can't help but note that it seems unlikely the UK TAFF administrators would have encouraged this point of view, since they are running the fan programme at the Eastercon in question and would probably prefer to have the TAFF winner present - and since, traditionally, TAFF candidates have been required to pledge to attend the worldcon or Eastercon as is appropriate. Who started this rumour?*) Green also says that Charlotte Proctor, who also intends to stand for TAFF, is refusing to attend the Eastercon on grounds that she won't be able to get the holiday time off, and if I had any reason to believe anything Steve Green says I'd think this was a bit presumptuous of her - those of us who have already borne the burdens of TAFF are interested to know that we could have run on a platform in which we refused to fulfil any of the requirements - but given the context, I have every reason to doubt that Charlotte Proctor has said anything of the kind.

In any case, Robert Lichtman has since written to me saying he has no objections to attending the Eastercon, and Luke McGuff is apparently planning to stand in the race on a platform supporting Robert Lichtman for TAFF.

Meanwhile, more than one individual has complained that material submitted to Green for CW has undergone serious damage once it reached his hands - complaints abound regarding his ability to edit errors into already correct text.

When the mails fail, of course, you can always buy something - on the professional side, that is. The third issue of SCIENCE FICTION EYE turned out to be an instructive and worthwhile investment despite the unwieldy size and painfully high price. There's a great piece by Steve Brown about Writers of the Future, Author Services, et al and Hubbard's DEATH QUEST (Volume VI of the dekolgy) - not to be missed if you are one of those folks who wonders how offensive these people can really be. Too bad the Conspiracy committee didn't have this article in hand before they agreed to let WotF/Bridge choose their pocket programme book cover. And where more serious SF authors are concerned, there is a terrific interview of Samuel Delany by Takayuki Tatsumi wherein Chip comes to the defence of '70s SF. When Tatsumi says, "If we are taking the viewpoint of cyberpunk, I think it is possible to reconstruct the American history of science fiction, beginning with Bester, Chip Delany, John Varley, and William Gibson," Delany replies: "Well, again, you're indulging that same cyberpunk patriarchal nervousness. You're omitting the Russ/Le Guin McIntyre/Vinge axis, without which there wouldn't be any cyberpunk. Is it this macho uncertainty that keeps on trying to make us black out the explosion that lights the whole cyberpunk movement? without which we wouldn't be able to read it? without which there would not be either the returning macho or the female cyberpunk characters who stand up to it?" My hero. However, the coffee-table sized format is a real pain in the ass and makes it difficult to read comfortably.

* And does it have anything to do with the apparent need of the previous UK TAFF administrator to cast doubt on any enterprise involving a woman who has failed to go to bed with him?

Meanwhile, I can always re-read some of these things Stu sent in one of his care packages, including the latest instalment of Sax & Violet, which asks: "What does it all mean, dear readers? huh?" and then suggests: "Shiffman is the proud possessor of a jello brain 'cause he's in love and can't keep his mind on his work..." Light entertainment for some, but the spectre of New York without Shiffman is a scary thought (and I bet Moshe wasn't so delighted once he learned Stu was planning to move up to Boston). I phoned Shiffman for the news, and he reports that CAP CONFEDERACY will be revamped after Stu destroys the world ("Yeah, I destroy the world, but, you know, life goes on..."), but he should still be doing stuff for it. He also gave his worldcon report: "Gosh wow! Had a great time! Jarrold was fun. The other Brits were a disappointment, though. Alun Harries, what a downer. And if only Nigel Richardson would come out of his shell or something. Gregory was another depresso element - he just sat in the corner getting drunker. And Ted-the-new-father White didn't show up at all." We, on the other hand, went to lovely scenic Newbury and had a pleasant fun-filled time at the Chequers where we didn't have to put up with any of that crap. Even the September Welly was reasonably tolerable without some of the more down-beat elements in attendance. (Further worldcon gossip from the usual sources casts vile aspersions on Lucy Huntzinger. Don't worry, Lucy, we won't believe the stories about your deplorable taste in men until we hear it from you.)

We all had a great time reading the George Bush quiz in SPY, too. It's hard to imagine a guy like that being taken seriously as a presidential candidate - but then, I still can't believe Reagan is president.

Wow, the afternoon mail delivery has come. This is exciting - I've got my provisional driving permit! My Maryland licence expired around Xmas (in the States you have to renew them every couple of years; in the UK they expire when you're 70), and I can't visit my mother unless I can drive a car, so this is necessary. Merely having this licence gives me a wonderful false sense of freedom, even though I can't go anywhere (I mean, I don't have a car here, for starters). (And for that matter, it's exciting just to get a mail delivery.)

So Kaveney let me tape some of her compact discs (Michelle Shocked, Gershwin, Beethoven), and what amazes me is that the tapes sound so much clearer than some relatively new recordings I have on vinyl.

The other day Whiteoak showed me a draft of yet another issue of his fanzine (which he'll probably have distributed before I even run this off, even though I already had five pages finished by the time he'd done one paragraph). I was so impressed with his bizarre science fiction convention report in GOOD TASTE IS TIMELESS (nearly every SF cliché you can think of - for free!) that I was completely unprepared when he started putting out a small frequent fanzine immediately thereafter. This follows a year of producing nothing whatsoever - I mean, I had started to think he'd given up publishing. Great stuff - and yes, those conversations really did happen, although there has been some slight splicing and moving things around.

Around the house, Hansen has been tapping away at the keyboard (when I'm not using it) and writing up the 1950s. In a show of trufannishness and romantic sentiment, he has produced pin-ups of the very hotel where TAFF was born, which he keeps showing around at the pub, along with the photos from Follycon which he took with his camera which automatically focuses on Brian Ameringen. (Me, I'm

going to start using very fast film so I can avoid the red-eyed effect you get from a flash when you take pictures of these blue-eyed folk.) Anyway, the first issue of THEN was all stuff I'd been hearing about every day from Rob as he dug up one thing and another - it was pretty interesting and exciting as it went along, too, but by the time it was in print, I'd heard it all. This time he's being a bit quieter about it, so I'm looking forward to THEN 2.

Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas are making sounds about another issue of FTT, too. Hmmm, maybe fandom still has life after all. (20/9/88)

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CONVERSATION FROM REAL LIFE

"Oh, egoscanning to see if anyone said anything nice about you, I see."

"Actually, these days it's more like looking to see if someone said something nasty about you that you're going to have to feel the repercussions of."

"Yes, and make you wonder why you bother with fandom at all."

Credits: Title art by Arthur Thomson; e-stencils thanks to Vinç Clarke; music by Katrina & the Waves, The Academy of Ancient Music ("Eroica"), Jefferson Airplane (Baxters), the Bangles, George Gershwin (Second Rhapsody), with thanks to Roz Kaveney & Owen Whiteoak; other general thanks to Dave Langford, Eve & John Harvey, Chuch Harris, and of course Rob Hansen & Warren Zevon.

Blatant #17:
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