

CRYSTAL SHIP



Poster 1986

Crystal Ship 12



Rastus :

Watchin'

The River Flow

Whoopee, it's 1987 at last! Boy, am I glad to see the back of 1986. That was one ba-a-a-ad year, as far as I'm concerned. Both on a personal level, and from the point of view of what was going on in the world, 1986 is something I'm glad is well and truly behind us.

Let's face it, a year that included the Challenger disaster, Chernobyl, the spread of AIDS to plague proportion (and the accompanying upsurge of hideous 'Moral Values': I mean, can you **really** see Chief Inspector John Anderton as the Voice of Ghod?), the Libyan Bombings, and diverse other bad-news items (not to mention Nigel Mansell losing the Formula 1 World Championship to a faulty piece of rubber) is not one to look back on with any degree of fondness. When it also includes six months of struggling against a resurgence of asthma, culminating in a severe attack just before Christmas that put me into hospital for three days, then the fondness degenerates into an urge to forget it as quickly as possible.

Mind you, this year already has a feeling of *deja-vu* about it, and it's a mere two days old! After all, here I am, twelve months on, and using my Christmas holidays to hammer out the final copy for another edition of **Crystal Ship**: this time it's the twelfth issue, rather than the eleventh. I had intended to get a couple more in between, but that ambition sort of melted away under a welter of work, and then ill-health, both of which combined to drain me of the necessary energy to get down and do it. (The alternative view is that work and sickness gave me the necessary excuses to frig around doing bugger all, which might be closer to the truth in some ways.) Oh well, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

It's a strange thing, but it was a severe asthma attack in the mid-seventies that really saw the genesis of **Crystal Ship**. That attack hospitalised me, and gave me a kick up the backside

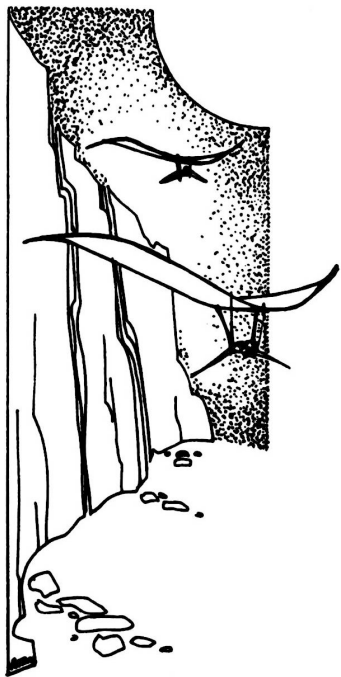
sufficient to start the fanzine. I was then a member of the Tolkien Society, and only just becoming aware of the existence of a larger fandom outside that body. Without the impetus of that attack (mainly from fear, the feeling that I might snuff it without having done **anything** at all), I suppose I'd have meandered along, reading SF and Fantasy, without becoming more involved in fandom, with slowly evaporating enthusiasm, until I finally vanished entirely from the scene, without contributing much more than a limp letter or two.

Looking back on the various issues of both **Crystal Ship** and **Rastus**, I sometimes feel (on days when the only thing really working is the interest on the mortgage) that I'd have been better employed putting that energy into 'proper writing' (whatever that is), and there is a strong temptation now, with another bad asthma attack a decade later neatly bracketing the CS period, to say "enough, that's it, no more", just by way of making a statement of intent to myself that I have to strenuously pursue other lines of creative endeavour, that fanzine production is not enough. And yet, there is still a part of me that refuses to take that easy way out, a large emotional baggage that says there still a lot more that I can do with the fanzine, that wants to go on producing it into the foreseeable future.

You may be pleased (if you're not, tough luck!) to hear that that is the consensus vote of the assembled Body Owen to continue with the fanzine, not necessarily as if nothing had happened, but with a view to pushing ahead with my own version of a fanzine, as much as an alternative to the prevalent British view of doing things as anything else. The methods by which I produce the zine may alter (the new technology I have available to me will see to that, as you will probably see next issue), but the basic ideal I have in my head, that elusive something I've been pursuing for the last ten years, still remains unchanged. The **Crystal Ship** remains a vessel capable of carrying many different cargoes, an incorrigible tramp steamer, rusty, leaky, wheezing at every boiler joint (like its captain), but with a self-effacing habit of always being somewhere in the background, a reminder that fanzines need not be mere gossip columns, or poorly printed, or narrowed in scope by some strangely self-limiting sense of what is 'traditionally fannish'. If that's all that the old Ship does, it'll still be worth producing.

Asthma is a peculiar affliction, and something I've had to cope with since I was a child. I can well remember the London smogs of the early fifties as an choking atmosphere which I really hated to be out in because of the effect it had on my chest, and there was many a time in that period when our family doctor was hauled out of bed at night to come and give me an injection to stop a severe attack. Some of my earliest memories are of sitting up in bed fighting for my breath, struggling to remain conscious until the doctor, in his pyjamas with an overcoat over the top, arrived with his magic needle to stop the suffering.

My particular form of the disease is bronchial asthma, the narrowing of the bronchial passages until it becomes impossible to pass air through the tubes, effectively strangling the lungs, making it impossible to expel anything from the chest cavity. Without help, the sufferer ends up dying of asphyxiation, of carbon dioxide poisoning. The condition is not as bad as chronic asthma, which inflicts actual damage on the main lungs. Bronchial asthma is controllable with drugs, and since I was about twelve I've had a fairly reasonable time with it. In real terms, I've had maybe two episodes of broncho-spasm (that is, severe, life-threatening



attacks) in the last quarter-century, both of which resulted in short-term (three to four days) hospitalisation to re-stabilise me. Over the years, though, it has meant a variety of drug and treatment regimes that have often affected me in various ways. The worst was a course of de-allergising treatments which had no effect on the asthma, but which gave me hay fever as well!

Obviously, with such a background, there are aspects of fandom which are unlikely to ever appeal to me. The prospects of spending long hours at a con ensconced in a smokey bar consuming lots of alcohol are guaranteed to make me feel quite wheezy just thinking about it. Given British fandom's predilection for booze, my being near enough teetotal as makes no difference would be a heavy handicap at a convention, let alone the tendency I have of fading into the wallpaper when the crowd reaches more than three in number. The last time I was foolish enough to mix anti-asthmatic drugs and alcohol in any appreciable quantity was nearly twenty years ago, when I left ICI. After a lunchtime booze-up with my fellow office workers, I sat down with a couple of cups of black coffee, took my midday tablets, and promptly passed out for the rest of the afternoon, coming to only enough to be poured into a taxi and

dispatched homewards. Not exactly an endearing characteristic, and something that would be slightly frowned upon at a con, no doubt. Nothing like somebody noisily turning blue in a corner to put you off your desperate fun, is there?

So, I'll just continue to sit out here on the edge, observing second-hand the activity in the fannish maelstrom, no doubt with a wry smile plastered across my face, while trying to control the instinct to poke fun at the more absurd aspects of the passing show. Of course, I may not succeed in controlling myself, and will no doubt end up passing comment on those areas of fandom of which I have little or no real knowledge. No doubt, there will be those who will point out such a lack, forcefully. I doubt that such forthright expressions of disapproval will influence my thinking, but it might be amusing in the loccol, might it not?

There were some good things about 1986, though most of them had to do with the record scene (lots of good stuff around out there, if you give the charts a miss), or with those other passions of mine, namely motor racing and American football. Great to see a British driver doing so well in Grand Prix racing, and equally great to see teams like the New York Giants, the Denver Broncos and the Cleveland Browns doing so well in the race to the Superbowl. By the time this is read, that'll be over, and I then have a lo-o-o-ng wait before the 1987 Grand Prix season starts in Brazil in April. Fortunately, the record buying season never closes!

This issue should, of course, have been out months ago, which would have made the articles enshrined therein somewhat more topical. But, they still seem to read well enough, so I'll stick with them (better than trying to up-date/restart production all over again). Three articles make up a 'music special' that I've been meaning to do for some while, while a fourth sees the start of a column of fanart criticism by Dave Collins, which should prove interesting if it begins to promote some discussion of the merits/demerits of the art that appears in fanzines. It has been said that fanart is often of such a low standard that giving it any space at all is worthless: needless to say, that's not a view subscribed to around the Shipyard. **Crystal Ship** has consistently published artwork from a wide variety of fanartists since issue 1, (and I'm always looking for new artists, too) and I've always regarded that artwork as being as crucial in establishing the tone of the fanzine as the writing: you have only to think back to the Morris issue to realise that I do try and complement the written word with suitable artwork. Obviously opinions will vary as to how successful I am, but the effort is made. I wish I could say the same for every other fanzine that comes through my door, many of which display the graphic design capabilities of a drunken two-year old chimp. (Hmmm, come to think of it....) Sad, but true: I scarcely have to name names, do I? But maybe Dave Collins will get around to that Real Soon Now. Naturally enough, Dave's opinions are his own: I have to say that in case he upsets any of my regular artists. So, if you disagree, feel free to write in and tell Dave what to do with his opinions, but don't assume I necessarily agree with them!

Next issue? Well, that might be sooner than you think, since the main articles for it already reside in magnetic draft form ready to do battle with the complex innards of the Faculty Macintosh/Laserwriter system. April? May? Could be, with luck and a following wind. (Always assuming that this little number gets through the OU Repro Shop by then, that is!)

Ah, just about enough room for the following all important information about the zine.

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I'm on the road to recovery, the doctors tell me, though it's really a little early to say with absolute surety: the dangers of a relapse are still quite high. But, in my own mind, I think I'm back to near-normality again, after a devastating attack of the boogie-woogie flu. Mark you, this wasn't any seven-day infection, headed off with a quick dose of real-life penicillin, but a two-year long affliction that has warped my mind and body in ways too hideous to mention. The worst is past and I'm feeling much more the middle-aged, mild-mannered gentleman I really should be. Of course, I still have to have an occasional hit of the hard stuff, a blast from the past, so as to speak, just to keep the blood flowing during recuperation. But the excesses are over, at least for now, which is just as well -- I don't think my legs would have taken much more punishment; as it is, I'll never be able to walk a straight line again, thanks to "body-poppin'". The dreaded rock'n'roll passion has faded into the background again.

Oh, I know, I know: I should have been over the 'grande passione' years ago, settled down into sensible mediocrity with Chas'n'Dave albums, spinning a Beatles album now and again with misty-eyed nostalgia, just like the rest of my generation. But I had it bad, I tell you, really bad! Don't get me wrong: I was never a *real* addict. Hell, the only way you can get your kicks then is by becoming a record store owner and make the habit pay its way -- that or a rock journalist, but that's only for real down-and-out hardcases, and even then it's probably better to resort to crime first. But I did catch the bug young, in my early teens, and the shrinks reckon that recidivism is highly likely when infected at that wretched age. So, maybe I'll never be free of this invidious disease, forever the freak in the record store queue, clutching records that are much too young for me, forever striving to understand the latest manifestation of teenage angst, forever trying to find gold amongst the record industry's dross.

I suppose I was lucky, in a way: it could have been much worse. You see, I never got bitten by the bug for 'live' music: it was always vinyl for me, the black stuff (and you can forget yer multi-coloured gimmicky picture-disc plastic too, or pre-recorded cassette tapes -- the black vinyl's the only kind you can play over and over again, barring the new-fangled, and over-priced, hi tech 'Compact Disc' that is), and live music never really attracted me in the same way. You were too pegged down by your surroundings to get into the music properly.

I was probably conditioned against live music by Southall Palais. It wasn't an official 'Palais', you understand, that's just what everyone used to call any dance-hall in the early Sixties. Southall

John D. Owen



Palais was just a large, and rather rundown, hall, with a bar on the side. In the mid Sixties, a lot of bands played in Southall, and me and my mates went a few times to catch acts like the Hollies, Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers, Sounds Incorporated, and the Swinging Blue Jeans. We also went to local dos around the Hayes area, at the local college in particular, where I can remember seeing the Zombies. Trouble was, me and my buddies were timid folk, all too aware of the fragility of our tender young hides, and the dance halls used to attract some fairly heavy duty villains and their mates, whose idea of a good night out was a loud band, a gutfull of beer, a quick grope of some bird or other, and a punch-up. Sometimes these dumbos would get the order wrong, and the punch-ups would start about the same time as the music. Doing the twist while avoiding an outbreak of gang warfare got a little bit too much for my tender nerves, so I settled for the more civilised pleasures of the youth club, and the battered Dansette wheezing out the latest hits in the corner, normally my own records, generously donated to be carved up by the Stone Age stylus that was all the club could afford.

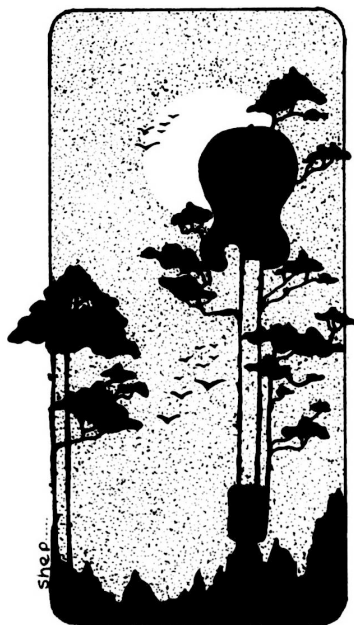
I suppose I should be thankful to those idiot thuggees really: if I'd become addicted to rock music of the live variety, I'd have been bankrupt long ago. Concert prices have far outstripped the price of the vinyl disc. So, when I look at my record racks, I can at least sigh with relief at being spared the worst ravages of the boogie-woogie flu. Ghod, I might never have met my wife if I'd been truckin' off to the next must-see gig, rather than feeding discs into the youth club grinder. My whole life would have been changed beyond belief.

As it was, I simply accumulated plastic by the hundred-weight. When we first moved to Milton Keynes, in 1969, there were only two items of baggage that really necessitated us hiring a van to do the moving: the first was the pile of books we had both accumulated, the second was the record collection. When we later moved across to Newport Pagnell, in 1979, the heaviest items in total that had to be lugged out of the old house were the records, which took something like five trips to move in our hatchback, with the car's tail practically dragging the ground each trip. Even now, demand for record storage space exceeds supply, and stacks of records tend to turn up in odd places, needing to be moved to and fro while housework is in progress. It's muscle-building having a record collection, I tell you!

It was punk which effectively cured me of my longest attack, during the seventies. Punk managed to put me off the whole idea of rock music, which was what it was designed to do, naturally. The punk rockers didn't want no thirty-year olds bopping to their beat, thank you very much, and so set out to be the very antithesis of the established rock star. (Hmmm, now I come to think on it, there seems

A Bad Case Of The Boogie-Woogie Flu





a fannish parallel in there somewhere.) I mean, the Who might break up their guitars on stage, or their hotel rooms afterwards, and Alice Cooper might bite the heads off chickens, but I got the definite feeling that Johnny Rotten and Co might just break up their guitars over the bitten-off heads of any person over the age of twenty that was found in their audience. I could take a hint. I left, harrumphing loudly, to piddle around in jazz and blues, occasionally sneaking into record shops to buy the latest release by a disappearing breed, the non-punk rock star. Ten years on, there are very few punk bands I can listen to without wanting to vomit. I can quite understand why all their fans wanted to spit on them so much. From that period, the only bands I genuinely liked were Blondie, the Pretenders and the Stranglers (the latter largely because of their Doors affinity): the rest's albums could cheerfully be made into ornamental potholders for all I care.

What re-kindled my interest was the re-emergence of rock music based on older forms, on pre-punk mores. Both in Britain and America, there was a re-awakening of interest in the music of people like the Byrds, Creedence Clearwater Revival and Neil Young, which gave bands like the Long Ryders, R.E.M., Green On Red, Jason & the Scorchers and the Beat Farmers a certain frisson for an old rock'n'roller like me. After all, I knew where they were coming from, having already been there already. Yet the music wasn't the same as before: it was alive, fresh, reincarnation rather than resurrection. Punk had made its mark, and given energy to the newer guitar bands (the absence of synthesisers being the main distinguishing feature of many of these groups). Those bands led me back into the fold, into the morass of rock music, and before long I was buying not only the new releases by the Blasters, Los Lobos, Big Country, Katrina and the Waves, Lone Justice, even Husker Du, but also voyaging back to the roots: I bought all the available Creedence Clearwater Revival albums, for example, which I'd unaccountably missed out on first time around. I digressed into U2, the Eurythmics, Sade, the Cars, Echo and the Bunnymen, re-investigated the Police and their offshoots, re-discovered Robert Fripp (both in and out of King Crimson resurrectus), while continuing to buy records by Van The Man, John Martyn, Joni Mitchell, Richard Thompson et al. In short, I was up to at least two albums a week, and in danger of becoming a permanent feature in the sale racks of Our Price Records, forever searching for the bargains which would lift me up the three or four albums a week.

I'm not ashamed of my addiction: after all, there is no law which defines the perversion of being a rock fan past the age of thirty, and yet there is that feeling of sleaze as I slither into Virgin Records, and paw over the rock sections. I only feel I am being my age when I march up to the counter with an older person's selection in my hand, someone like Barbara Dickson perhaps, but that only

happens at Christmas, when I'm buying presents for my sister or her husband. The only other reason to buy Ms. Dickson's records that I can see are as a cure for insomnia. No, my taste is warped, there's no doubt of it. I mean, I can't get the same lift out of Bach or Beethoven, Ellington or Miles Davis, that I can get out of a simple three-chord rock'n'roll song. Now that's really perverse, don't you think? I mean, the greatest names in the classical and jazz fields, and I'd cheerfully trade all of their works in for another version of "Blue Suede Shoes".

Oh, don't get me wrong: I'll listen to all those guys, and when I'm in the mood I'll enjoy doing so. But the one sure recipe for getting my attention isn't a symphony orchestra, or a big jazz band. It's a guitar riff, fuzzed-up, strung-out, maybe even out of tune, but played with energy and conviction, and a sense of the dynamics of rock: that'll get me every time, right down deep, where John D. Owen lives. No schmaltzy Sinatra/Streisand love song will bring tears to these eyes, thank you very much: but give me a snatch of Eric Burdon in full animal cry, of Dylan biting down hard on Amerika, of Clapton swinging into "Layla" (a love song, a love song, I know, but one with balls, I tell ya!), of Sting putting a bit of social conscience on the line, of Ry Cooder resurrecting and polishing up an ancient gem, of Chrissie Hinds gasping her way to rhythmic ecstasy, of Bono howling his faith at the moon, of Robert Palmer oiling his way past a girl's defenses, of Garcia chugging into the sunset, of Slick revving for take-off, of Van the Man merely opening his mouth, of the Band mythologising, of Hendrix screwing his guitar, of Benatar stripping paint off the walls, of Bowie's dramatic character acting, of the Doors spinning webs for the unwary, of Sandy Denny tale-spinnin', of Fripp and the Crimson King roaring into schizoid action, of Curtis and Joy Division descending into darkest night, of the late and marvelously great Lowell George strapping on his Sailin' Shoes, of John Martyn's growl, of Stevie Miller's machine-gun gangster guitar, of Oregon's blissful fusions, of R.E.M.'s murmuring fables, of Brooce's wildly innocent E Street shuffle, of Becker and Fagin's steely thrills, of Richard Thompson's spine-tingling guitar, of Reed's wild side thrillers, of the 'Oo in triumphal mood -- ahh, then I'm long gone into ecstasy. You can't get fooled again with those guys on your side, no sirree!

Oh dear. That's done it: that last paragraph pushed me over the edge again. I can feel an urgency building up inside of me, the urge to go out and savage a record shop or two. You'll have to excuse me while I go and get a shot of the rhythm and blues. I'm a hopeless case, I have to admit, and you'll undoubtedly find me emblazoned across the front of your seedier Sunday newspapers one day, a victim of my addiction. I don't care anymore (cue for a song!): Rock of King, Rock is Master of the Universe, Rock is Gargantua of the Galaxy, Rock is...is... Oh dear, I do feel strange! Sorry about that. If you'll excuse me, I'll just go off and lay down quietly somewhere, with something soothing to my ears -- a little live Springsteen perhaps? Ahhh, that's better...



If Music Be The Food Of Love, Book Me A Room In Heartbreak Hotel

"...Will be doing a music special soon," said the editor of this esteemed fanzine, "and I thought you might like to write something for it. Alternative Music and all that..." Ah, mother, the Owen is abroad tonight, bushy eyebrow (unbroken from eye to eye, naturally) arched and hot-coal eyes able to spot a pentagrammed palm at fifty paws. But the moon is full, the chicken entrails divined, the gerbils liquidized, and it is ten years after the birth of Punk Rock/New Wave -- from the same firm that also brought you such notables as The New Romantics, Blitz Kids, Powerpop, Electro-bop, Leather Punks, Thrash, Slash, and Garage Trash Revisited.

Yet....what do you do when 'Alternative' is now the 'Normality' of a culture that has become a sub of a club of its own cult creations? When 'Weird' is possibly now a three-piece suit in a classic design and colour, wearing no make-up, no jewelry, and 'Acceptable' becomes the imposed dress restrictions such as **Naked Lunch's** gig: "Dress Restrictions: Dress For Sex". Ten Years? Ten years?

Ten Years ago there was no such thing as an 'Independent' record label, with the major labels also able to corner the distribution/management side as well. Now you even have 'major' and 'minor' Indies (ah, that all-important street slang) with the likes of **Stiff Records** breaking their contracts with **Island Records**, **Rough Trade**, **Mute** and **Factory** getting worried over the loss of such bands as **New Order**, **The Smiths**, and **Depeche Mode**, while at the same time matching products price for price with such as **Polydor**, **RCA** and **EMI**. There again, the reverse is also true when you come to such labels as **Cordelia**, or **Alternative Realities**, who are pressing records in short runs -- sometimes as short as 350 copies in the case of **Cordelia**. As has become recognised with the fad for videos, the key is correct public exposure, and who better to turn to than National Radio (complete UK coverage), and that bastion of 'Alternative', John Peel.

Ten years ago, John Peel was still playing tracks from Hendrix, Floyd, Doors and Tull, going a little "unusual" by playing some 'safe' soul or reggae. It was the time of the "Supergroup", who had cornered the price market for tickets to gigs, usually only held at venues like Earls Court, or Wembley, or The Rainbow Theatre, and London was the centre of the musical universe (something that caught in the throat of Manchester when even the New Wavers moved from their Northern homelands to the corrupt South). The Buzzcocks, Magazine, Stranglers, Damned, Joy Division, Television, Members, Patrick Fitzgerald, Adverts, Banshees, Slits -- the Sex Pistols at this stage were more concerned with image than with freedom of style and music -- and the 'sillies' such as the Desperate Bicycles, the Pork Dukes, the Table, Matt Vinyl & the Undercoats.... But the past decade has seen more death than glory.

If you'd said to someone following the 'scene' (to use such accepted labelesque words) that the Banshees would sign to a major record label, and play at such places as the Albert Hall then you'd have

Chuck Connor



been more as likely laughed off the dance floor. They still didn't have a recording contract, and the only available record of their songs was the now infamous **Love In A Void** bootleg (which is an almost perfect **Polydor** imitation, and prophetic in that the band finally did sign up to **Polydor**). Yet who could've predicted that, by 1984, the Banshees would be doing world tours, and expensive videos to help sell cover versions of old Beatles songs.

Even the Damned have risen to play again. Oh, true, it isn't the same line-up as the original 1976 band, but who the hell cares? I mean, they're now getting in the charts (okay, with a terrible cover version of **ELOUISE**), and isn't that what counts? Even as I type this, Captain Sensible (who used to always perform on stage in a tutu) is being played on the radio. The trouble is that the time is 4am in the morning, and the station is Radio 2. But at least there's consolation in the rumour that the Clash may be coming back... just as soon as they can tidy up the outstanding royalties, and sort out the court actions as to who actually has the rights to the name Y'see, they split up, didn't they (obviously really, like the Boomtown Rats, out of favour due to lack of popularity and also musical style and originality somewhat akin to a dead hedgehog), and then reformed into two separate bands, now madly squabbling over who can use the name. As if it still meant something to anyone these days, let alone a recording company. Do the kids of today, when buying copies of Public Image Limited's latest single (video screened on **Top Of The Pops**, naturally) ever think of buying a copy of **NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS?** Or do they find it just as dull as the rest of their parents' record collection?

Ah, me. But this isn't going to be an "Everything's Commercial Today" thing -- hell, that was part of the reason why Punk Rock was accepted as quickly as it was, because it was cheap -- because you could say that about any era. The early Seventies, for example, when Glam Rock minced and wobbled its way on stage. Gary Glitter (no longer topping the charts, but apparently trying to top himself all the same), Bolan/T-Rex, Mud, Bowie/Spiders From Mars, Merlin, Mott The Hoople, the Sweet... all as squeaky-clean and moulded as the Osmonds or the cutesy Partridge Family; cover material for the likes of the Teenie magazines of the time, **Jackie**, **Pop Swap**, **Record Mirror**, **Pink**, etc, which, after hacking through all the pseudo language/reportage (a legacy from the likes of Beatles fan magazines, and kept up as part of the mythos that each fad creates for itself, its image having an associated slang), adverts for skin cleansers (and we're talking about a time when a pimple was almost as depressive as a scratch on your copy of **BALLROOM BLITZ** or **JEAN JEANIE**), and the like, you came across the childish (as in 'child-like innocence') 'on location in the studio, or the local park, just for you' photo poses that sparkled back at you with hair full of glitter, eyes full of mascara and shadow, and sheens of lurex -- normally skintight, until the paunches became too much to

suck in for the cameras --
topping stax shoes which, if you
had tripped over, would've taken
at least ten seconds to fall off
of.

According to several reports, the
Sweet, Mud, and a couple of
others are still together,
touring the likes of Germany,
France, etc, playing the same
songs they did over a decade ago
where they still have a
following. Nostalgia is fine, but
I draw the line at necromancy,
and I keep having visions of
their audiences of successful
German businessmen going 'wild'
over the weekend.

But even my own tastes were
becoming jaded in the early
seventies. I was never attracted
to the likes of the Bay City
Rollers, or any of the Jonathan
King produced plastic one-hit
wonder bands (their hits being
based around the novelty and a
hell of a lot of hype, payola,
and DJ self-censorship). I had
been fed such things as Led
Zeppelin, Sabbath, Beefheart/
Magic Band, SAHB, Clapton,
craving raw blues from the likes
of Mayall & Spencer Davies,
Hartley and Korner, music that
had bite to it and lyrics that
actually said something.



Yet even those seemed somehow too full of pomp and inconsequence, bloated with self-importance -- Emerson, Lake and Palmer were a prime example, the Moody Blues doing yet **another** concept album (FOR OUR CONCEPT'S CONCEPT'S CONCEPT??) Anderson disbanding Jethro Tull overnight because the reviewers gave their PASSION PLAY album a thrashing, with Anderson saying that they just didn't understand it at all. Later on, in the early Eighties, Anderson stopped review copies of Jethro Tull albums being sent to SOUNDS, NME, etc, because they constantly gave the band "bad reviews".

Then, in 1974, something happened. A small review in the back of NME, of an import album by an American band. I didn't normally read the import reviews (cost being one reason, and at that time the number of importers in this country was almost as rare as rocking horse excreta), but I was in search of info about Lou Reed's earlier recordings with Velvet Underground. In fact, the name of the band seemed really cutesy, prissy even, and the review was the usual over-the-top rave review of anything imported at that time (I suspect mainly because the British were in awe of American material and wanted to keep things sweet). But the name stuck for some reason. The New York Dolls.

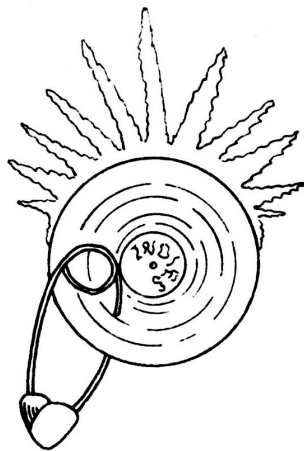
They had their debut album released in the UK on MERCURY, and as I was a little flush at the time (Pink Floyd hadn't released an album

that week, or something) I ordered a copy from my local record-electrical-goods-hardware-and-TV-rental shop. I got a few funny looks from the staff when I collected it the following Friday, and it was wrapped in a stuck-down paper bag. When I got it home and unwrapped it I couldn't see anything to get excited over (my education was furthered a little while latter, discovering such things as Transvestitism, Oral Sex, and Athlete's Foot -- the album cover didn't feature the latter two essentials to growing up). But, what I did get excited over was a form of Rock'n'Roll that was more pepped up and raw than I had ever thought possible, and lyrics that went well beyond Lou Reed/Velvet Underground's coyishness. When Johnny Thunders said he'd been up all night long, baby, just looking for a kiss, then you really knew about it, from his compact case to his slingbacked stilletos. Even now I still listen to such cuts as TRASH, PERSONALITY CRISIS, NEEDLES AND PILLS, VIETNAMESE BABY, SUBWAY TRAIN and LOOKING FOR A KISS, to blow away some of the cobwebs. Technically it has become dated, but the raw power and burning energy still gives the sound and songs a physicality somewhat akin to being on the wrong end of some assault and battery with a blunt instrument.

Thankfully, that album wasn't a one-off sound, and a couple of months later I discovered the Australian bands, Skyhooks, who also recorded for MERCURY, and who called their album EGO IS NOT A DIRTY WORD (another album I've kept and still play now and again). And, two years later, when it was all happening, when the Pistols were automatically banned, when Magazine's song SHOT BY BOTH SIDES only rated one minute and thirty seconds of TV exposure, when X-Ray Spex had a sax player who couldn't play a note (and is still in the music business, recordingwise, known as Lydia Lunch), and you couldn't find a copy of the Buzzcocks' EP, SPIRAL SCRATCH, for love or safety pins, who should turn up on a New Wave-Punk compilation on the MERCURY label? The New York Dolls, and Skyhooks -- old friends.

But old friends also include the likes of Marc Bolan and T-Rex, when RIDE A WHITE SWAN ripped up the charts and marked a highpoint in Bolan's career. The ground floor of the high rise that was to become Glam Rock.

They also include such things as Bob & Marcia, Dandy Livingstone, Dave & Ansel Collins, from back in '68/69, when 'Hippy' was getting introspective, and Ska and Bluebeat were the alternatives, brought to you by those wonderful people at TROJAN RECORDS. Does anyone care that these black artists, soul artists, ska artists, the previous generation's TWO-TONE, for want of honesty, were not only recording for a black following but also a white following in the form of the original skinheads? Ever wondered where the band Sham 69 got its name from? During that original period the National Front hadn't infected the UK with its propaganda and neo-Nazi skinheads of today. Then such bands as Mungo Jerry could record albums called BOOT POWER (at least half the band were coloured, including Dorsey, the lead guitar/vocals, and the driving force behind the band). I never



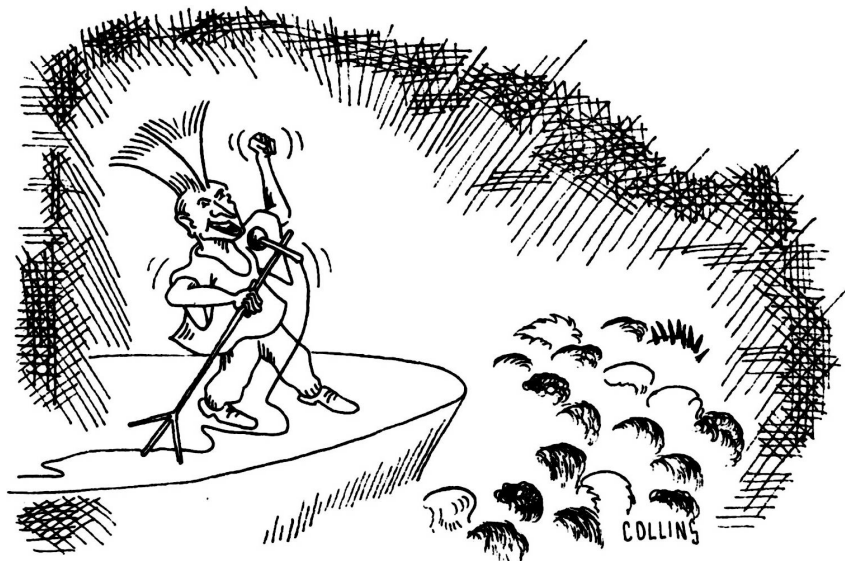
followed the original skinheads, only their music, but I can also feel a little sad that their original image has been poisoned by racial hatred.

Old friends also include some of the Merseybeaters, from a time when girl groups such as the Cascades, the Crystals, the Angels, the Ronettes and the Shirelles were being replaced by the likes of Martha & the Vandellas (before they became Martha Reeves & the Vandellas, when Martha was still one of Berry Gordy's secretaries, and MOTOWN was still an ideal), Gladys Knight & the Pips, Diana Ross & the Supremes, the Three Degrees and when the Pointer Sisters (real sisters, by the way) were just starting to sing gospel songs.

Also included is Blind Lemon Jackson, who died before I was even thought of, but who left behind a collection of 78s of a gig he did in Death Valley, Texas, in 1928, imported from America in the mid 70s when they had been reprocessed onto vinyl from the original shellac by a label that was apparently obscure even to such specialists as FREE REED.

They also...also...also...

Robert Cox used my philosophy of music as the motto for his UNLIKELY RECORDS label: "You don't know what you like until you hear it". And when you cut it down to fine details, isn't that what it really should be all about?



Martyn Taylor :

...and then you has jazz!

"Ladies and gentlemen..." enthused the unseen MC, "...the inimitable, the legendary Duke Ellington and his Orchestra!"

With that introduction a tallish, distinguished looking middle aged (going on elderly) negro in a shiny blue suit strolled nonchalantly onto the stage at Newcastle City Hall as though it were the most natural thing in the world that he should be received with tumultuous applause (which it was, oh my masters, which it surely was). He sat down at the first grand piano I'd ever seen in my whole thirteen years of life, paused for a moment and then unleashed his Orchestra into their theme tune 'Take The A Train'.

That night was my first exposure to live music in a concert environment, to performance, to jazz (to black men -- there weren't that many up in backwoods Northumberland twenty odd years ago). There have been times since when I've thought that my interest in SF stems from that night, or rather, from my subsequent realisation that the only way I would ever truly appreciate this close encounter with one of the few truly great artists of the 20th Century (if you don't believe me ask Stravinsky -- he was one of the few, too, and he rated the Duke highest of all) would be to find a time machine and take my now almost educated ears back to that concert.

Time machines exist only in SF.

Ah, you say, what about records? Yes indeed, and I have a number of recordings of various Ellington orchestras, but no recording can ever capture what is, for me, the real attraction of jazz. Jazz is a live music, and contains within it the potential for the moment when the performer imprints their own personality on the music and moulds it in ways unforeseen by the original composer -- inspired improvisation. Neither can a recording ever really convey the purely physical impact of a large group of musicians swinging like the hind leg of that proverbial donkey. They don't make speakers big enough... or rather, the neighbours wouldn't let you crank the system up high enough! Besides which, mere loudness of sound has nothing to do with the volume of an orchestral performance. Rather it is to do with the quality of the human beings creating that sound. Any fool can plug a synthesiser into a huge amplification system and make more noise than the Royal Philharmonic with the BBC Chorus and Chorale performing Mahler's 'Symphony of a Thousand', but only a fool would argue the two are comparable. There is something eerie about mass performance, about a group of musicians so rehearsed and in harmony with each other they perform as one (as someone who spends much of his time engaged in writing -- the most solitary artistic endeavour of all -- I find such combination awesome and at the same time intimidating).

One of the Ducal sayings which has passed into the language (and probably out of it by now) is that "It ain't got that thing if it don't swing!" His Orchestra swung. They may have been just a bunch of middle aged black guys in suits (to paraphrase John Lennon), and they may have been playing tunes some of them had played most nights dor up to forty years, but they swung: they imbued their performance with a vitality and love which was tangible in the concert hall. Maybe Lennon ought to have listened to the men he so easily dismissed, because his music and theirs had a lot in common. Swing or rock and roll, there isn't really very much difference if the music is played with what we call 'soul' these days.

What was that? Am I trying to tell you that Mr. Acker Bilk and his Paramount Jazz Band play sweet soul music? No, I'm not. But then, they don't play jazz -- any more than Bernard Herrman and the NDO (of happy memory) playing 'She Loves You' were a rock and roll band. Acker Bilk and his crew, and thousands of others like them, are not jazzmen, they are resurrection men playing a dead music which is not theirs to entertain punters trying to recapture their lost youth. Acker Bilk is not Benny Goodman any more than Shakin' Stevens is Elvis Presley. Acker Bilk, Matchbox, Max Jaffa -- there is no real difference. The name of their game is 'All our yesterdays', and what is wrong with that, if that is what the punters pay their money to be given and the performers give good, honest value for money?

But it isn't jazz, anymore than Herbie Hancock playing 'Rockit' is playing jazz (and Hancock really can play jazz when he sets his mind to it). Most of the ingredients of jazz are in that tune -- it has syncopation (an essential of jazz if you believe Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong -- who might well know about these things), a fairly strong tune, good playing -- but it has no life, no soul, it contains no part of the artist. There is nothing nostalgic about it, and if you like it then go and get it, but don't call it jazz.

Of course the proposition that jazz, like blues and soul music, is the preserve of the black American is not true. It is not played exclusively by middle aged negroes in shiny suits (in fact, now that the last of the great black band leaders -- Count Basie to you and me --has died it is very likely that any big band jazz played today is being played by schoolchildren in subsidised orchestras or fresh-faced American college boys in white suits paying their dues for Maynard Ferguson or in Woody Herman's Thundering Herd -- white boys playin' da blues). My own favourite jazz musician is white, although he is just about middle aged and hails from the Far West. Plymouth. Now Mike Westbrook acknowledges a deep debt to the Duke. His music is often redolent of the feel of Ellington. His most recent record is entitled 'On Duke's Birthday'. But he is English, very. He is so English many of my contemporaries -- brought up in a transatlantic culture -- find him very odd indeed. The cultural background of Westbrook has much more in common with mine than it has with that of Edward Kennedy Ellington -- whatever Ellington's genius. Which is why I find myself more instinctively in tune with much of contemporary British jazz than I do with the music of the greats -- almost all of whom were American. I can intellectually appreciate their music. Sometimes -- as on that night in Newcastle -- I can feel it, but on the whole it speaks to my head rather than my guts. The

genius of Ellington, Basie, Parker, Davis and the others is apparent but the likes of Westbrook, Tippet, Coe and Tracey speak a language I can more readily understand, more so even than younger American musicians like the Marsalis brothers whose musical background must have much more in common with mine than that of their forebears simply because of the contemporary commonality of recorded and broadcast music.

Which brings me back to that primary ingredient of jazz's attraction for me, the inspired improvisation. The improvisation is essentially an attempt to reinterpret music -- to filter the composer's intention through the experience of the player and by the process illuminate the music. Which is why so many jazz performances consist of interpretations of standard, familiar tunes. To an extent, this is cheating -- everybody knows 'Sweet Georgia Brown' and it eases the burden of the player to improvise around such a familiar melody. After all, if you in the audience have never heard a tune before and the greatest improviser of the all (let's say, for the sake of argument, Miles Davis) takes the tune and does his best with it, how do you know, how do you judge? I know much of Westbrook's music as well as some members of the band, and I know when the high spots are being hit -- but would you, who has never heard of Westbrook before I mentioned his name? Perhaps not. But while the reworking of familiar tunes may make life easier for the improviser it does not necessarily restrict him. Take, once again, 'Sweet Georgia Brown'. One night just after the war in a club in New Jersey a high strung -- and strung out -- young sax player called Charlie Parker played 39 consecutive choruses of that tune. Boring? Not a bit of it. During that short time he invented Bebop. Nobody recorded that performance -- which is just as well, as no doubt the cold light of the next day would have revealed his inspiration as having been rather less explosive than it seemed at the time -- but the news of it galvanised his fellow players to look at music differently, to play it differently.

Parker redefined the world.

Jazz can do that. It may not be unique in this, but it does it more readily than any other form of art I know simply because of its immediacy, its transience. The moment is, then dies, and exists -- like Bird taking flight -- only in the memory.

Which is not to say that every jazz performance gives you a new window on the world -- any more than every SF book gives you a new insight into the world. But jazz has much in common with SF -- both are maligned by a cultural establishment afraid of the form's basic vulgar vitality; both are essentially misunderstood by the mass media; both consist of vast amounts of derivative, uninspired playing by numbers; both have moments where the audience suddenly, unexpectedly finds themselves on top of the last ridge, gazing down at the clouds and seeing the world in a completely new light.

In our timid and conventional society jazz sometimes -- just sometimes -- risks looking beyond its nose end. Sometimes -- just sometimes -- I like listening to people who take risks.

And now, if you don't mind, I'm going off to listen to some jazz, a record. Oh well, when you can't get the real thing you have to make do with Pepsi.

Back To The Drawing Board



When John told me he had plans to run a semi-regular column on fan-art and fanartists, I was pleased to hear it. It was when he said he wanted me to write it that I began to get ideas of a contract killing.

I'm not sure that I am the best qualified to be a fanart critic, as I have had no real art training. I'm also not sure exactly what John wants in the column, as he has given me a free rein (foolish boy). But what I hope to do is look at

the work and style of current active fanartists, giving reasons why I do/don't like their efforts.

First, I should point out that I do not consider that the majority of fanartists are "artists"; they are cartoonists. Their styles are closely linked with newspaper cartoonists and comic illustrators. The term 'artist' is linked with the beautiful water-coloured landscapes of Turner and the statues and paintings of Michelangelo. An artist is someone who, with the use of colours, black and white or solid material, can capture the true likeness of a scene, object or person, and give it an aura of life and beauty that transcends the original subject.

The aim of the cartoonist is to simplify and exaggerate their subject, often with a humorous or satirical bent. The normal rules of drawing do not apply to cartoonists. Heads can be too big for the body, hands can have three fingers: cartoonists can let their imaginations run wild.

A big problem in reviewing fanzine illos is trying to date fanart. Though this may not be important to most people, it is helpful if you are trying to follow the development of a fanartist's style. Also, with the erratic publishing dates of fanzines, the reputation of a fanartist can be hurt if a below standard piece from three or four years ago turns up, and people think of it as a recent work. Some fanartists date their larger pieces, such as covers (Americans often go to the extreme of putting a copyright sign on the smallest illustration), but the date of most pieces are known only to the artists themselves. This can be most annoying when you are trying to trace the growth of a particular fanartist, but as we all do it I cannot really complain.

What I can complain about is the way fanartists are treated. They are not a race apart, so why should they be treated like second class citizens? They are constantly being asked for stuff only for it to collect dust on a shelf. Fan editors request illos only for some of them not to be used without a word of explanation or

Dave Collins



apology. Requests for fillos and/or covers to be used on future issues we can cope with, but when a particular piece is asked for, then not used or even changed, then the least a faned should expect is that we would like to know the reasons why. We are like anyone else: something we draw is a part of us, so why should we allow it to be mistreated by someone else? If a fanwriter's piece is changed to any great degree, he gets upset, and rightly so. If a fanwriter's piece isn't used in a certain time he asks for it back, and places it somewhere else. Fanartists can't do that, as a lot of their work is to illustrate a particular article, point or fanzine. All I'm asking is that fanartists are shown a little consideration from faneds. Don't give out deadlines you yourself can't meet. If you can't use a piece, or want changes, ask; we are not animals, we won't eat you (well, most of us, anyway).

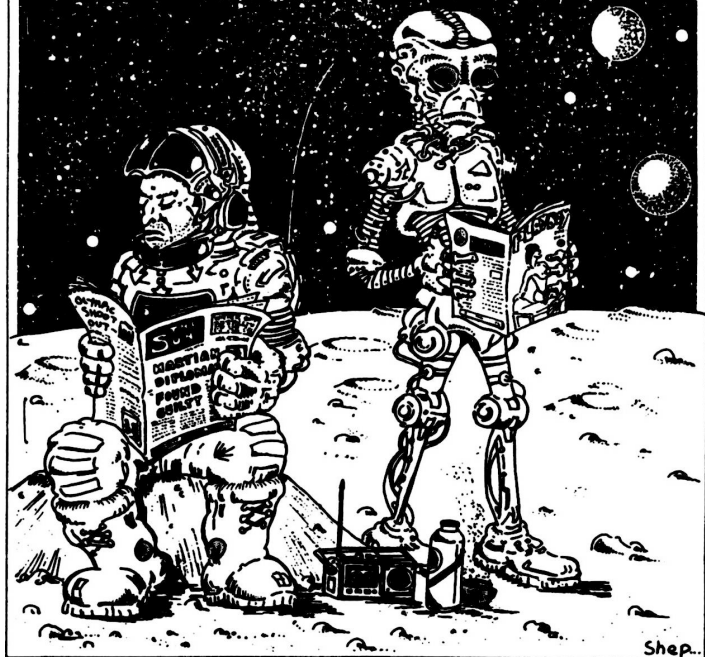
It would also be nice if the readers would acknowledge we existed occasionally, as at times I think I am living in a vacuum. We don't expect a detailed run down on the faults or good points of our efforts (nine times out of ten we can see them for ourselves -- always when it is too late). The old cop out "I'm not qualified enough" won't wash, as most fanartists are not qualified enough either. Most fans are not qualified writers but they will quite happily fill a LoC with the rights and wrongs of a written piece. If a piece of fanart catches your eye for any reason, say so, and why. You know what the human body looks like so if a person in a drawing looks deformed, say so. If a drawing makes you smile, or even laugh, tell us. If a drawing reflects something from your life, share it. A picture saves a thousand words, so look on a full page illo as a short article.

Some years ago I drew a picture looking down on a screaming man trapped in a bedsetter. Nobody asked me to draw it, it was just something I had inside me that I wanted to get onto paper. Eve Harvey saw it and asked if she could use it in *Wallbanger*, and I said yes. As far as I know, it didn't draw a single piece of feedback, and I ended up feeling as if a part of me had been stolen. Now I keep personal drawings to myself: why should I let you lot see them if you are going to ignore them?

Now let's do some ego-boosting/bashing on a few fanartists.

First out of the hat is Shep Kirkbride, if for no other reason than that he has been turning out one of the largest amounts of fanart this side of the Atlantic over the last few years. He has a very distinctive style, with a seemingly limitless supply of ideas, which

SIKANDER



1. Here we have a Klutch of Kirkbrides,
while on the other page, a genuine
Bell-man.



means he rarely does article illustrations. Instead, he comes out with hundreds of beautiful little fillos, and some wonderfully detailed covers. Some of his best work appeared in **New Blood 1**, the first issue of a clubzine from the Carlisle and District SF group. Shep provided all the artwork, from a wonderful wrap-around cover of a gang of very weird muggers about to leap on an unsuspecting girl (the drawing and not the content is wonderful, I hasten to add), through some of Shep's best small SF illos, to some ancient hieroglyphics, (I never knew he was so old). Shep delights in taking an every day scene and redrawing it as an SF piece. In **This Never Happens 8** he has a robot taking its robot dog for a walk and, although it is obvious that they are both robots, Shep manages to give the feeling that they are really flesh and blood. A better illustration by Shep in that same issue is of an apple tree. A sad figure with its head bowed is standing in front of a small tree from which a lone apple hangs, which brings a sympathetic smile from we onlookers, particularly as the ground beneath the figure and tree is lifting up to reveal some kind of monster.

Harping back to trying to date fanartists' work, Shep's is near impossible as he never dates a piece. His two recent covers for Irwin Hirsh's **Sikander** were in fact drawn a couple of years before they appeared. Shep tells me he has not been drawing as much of late. He was to take over as editor of **New Blood** from the second issue, but so far nothing has appeared and I now fear the group may have broken up, and that second gem is lost forever.

Another fanartist who doesn't do a great deal of stuff at the moment is Harry Bell. Harry's work has a quality most fanartists would give their right (or, in my case, left) arm to possess -- his work stops you in your tracks. His latest cover (latest in that it is his most recent piece to appear: it is also two years old), on Tony Berry's **Eyeballs In The Sky 4**, is a fanartist fan's dream. Over-large head, large torso, three fingers, skinny legs, big feet: if you simply tried to describe this character using words people wouldn't

take any notice of you, but get Harry to draw it using his clean curved lines and eye for adding just the right amount of shading, and the result is a cover that not only deserves a few words from each loccer to the zine, but also deserves to win any fan poll being run.



Talking of fan polls, a group of fans tried to start one after the collapse of the Ansible Poll. Sadly the response was too small to make it an annual event, but what was sadder for me was that the fanart section received the least response.

One result from the fanart section was that Sue Williams won best cover for her work on **Prevert 11**. At the time, I hadn't seen the cover, and it wasn't until I visited London that Pam Wells showed me a copy. My first thought



2.Clockwise from top left, we have Sue Williams (alias Chester Gould), Roz Calverley, ATom, D.West (a token appearance), and the mighty ATom again.



RULP



NUTZ



was of Dick Tracey. The cover is well drawn and Sue obviously has a lot of talent, but I still can't see how anyone can vote for a cover by Sue Williams when it is basically Chester Gould. I prefer to see fanartists develop and use their own styles.

One person who has been doing well in fan polls of late is Roz Calverley. I often get quite angry over Roz's artwork. She regularly comes up with some of the best of the more serious ideas for covers and illustrations, (I consider this to be the hardest part of doing any drawing), and then ruins it by failing to pay attention to detail when actually drawing the piece. Serious fanart is the hardest kind to draw, as you cannot hide faults in perspective, while minor details and shading become very important. Perspective is where Roz usually slips up. She has a good idea, creates a good lay-out, and at first glance the result deserves praise, but look closer and the flaws stand out that spoil the whole effect. One of the finest pieces I have seen from Roz is her **Sic Buiscuit Disintergraf 7**, which I was very impressed by at first sight. The drawing is original, it is well draughted, it has depth -- it also has a standing figure with an oddly bent leg. Roz could be our finest serious fanartist if she would only put a little more depth into her drawings, and took a little more care.

No fanartist review column would be complete without a look at some recent stuff from fan favourite D.West. He has only one fault, and this is my purely personal view: his figures rarely seem to have any real movement in them. On his cover for **Still Life 3** D has managed, with the use of a sheet of tone and some very heavy hatching and cross-hatching, to capture the feeling of a diseased beggar. I almost believe that there is a poor plague victim under those rotting robes. As with a lot of D's work, his black sense of humour makes him add those final touches that makes the piece even more macabre than it already is. D's style is different to most other fanartists. While he uses a sketchy, cartoonist approach, his figures' perspectives stick almost rigidly to the true human shape, and it works every time.

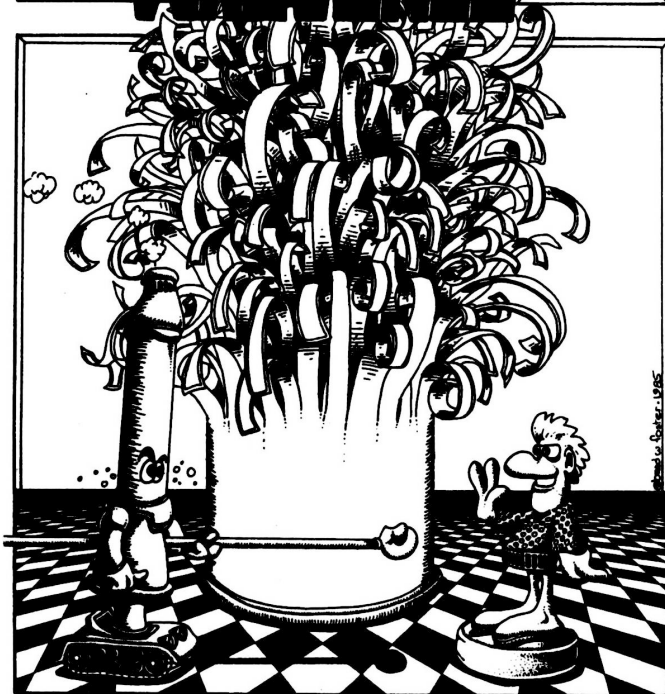
One fanartist who takes no notice of cartoonist or artistic approaches to drawing, even when it involves a human shape, is ATom. Three or four straight lines and a black dot equals a human head. ATom gets more expression in those few lines than a lot of fanartists manage to capture in four or five times as much detail. When I first saw ATom's **Pulp 1** cover I only knew Pam Well's by sight out of the four editors and there she was. The one luxury ATom has that the rest of us don't is that he can make mistakes and nobody will ever know.

For a change, ATom left his sharp-nosed characters behind and drew the best space squirrel I have seen for the cover of **Nutz 6**. The attention to detail and use of thick and thin lines makes it one of the best covers so far this year.

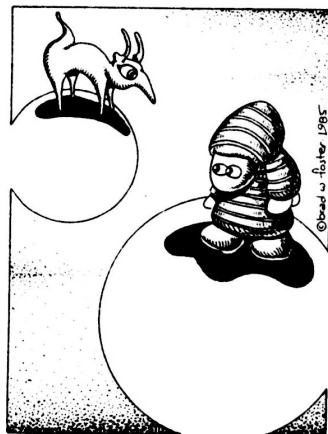
The handful of covers I have seen on Jean Weber's **WeberVomans Wrevenge** have not impressed me. On the whole they are amateurish and rough, but with issue 23, Brad Foster left his often pleasant but often samey spot illoes to spread his wings on a cover, and a weird and wonderful result it was too. Warper chess board, origami display and a tankman with a stovepipe head. There is no rhyme or reason to the cover but Brad makes it work.

The other American making a name for himself over here is Steve Fox, although his ideas for fillos rarely fit in with British fanzines.

WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE



3. A trio of Brad Posters (above).



"LOVE IS AS STRONG
AS DEATH,
BUT IT DOESN'T SMELL
ANYWHERE
NEAR AS AWFUL."
— SOLOMAN, JR.



4. Below, a Steven Fox, reputed to have a caption that says: "Damn it, I know there's a Collins around here somewhere, and I want him!"



The majority of his work has a lot of dark areas that are hard to cheaply print, while the rest of his stuff is rough, sketchy and unfinished. He is content to stick to drawing traditional SF themes over loaded with too much detail and block areas for the sizes he works in. The trouble is, because of all that covering up, I find it a hard job to discover exactly what style and talent Steve really has.

Jackie Smith doesn't appear in many fanzines that I know of, which is a shame because she could knock the spots off most fanartists. Anyone lucky enough to have received her and Dave Bridges' **Walk Through A Wood** must have been captivated by the way the drawings blend in with the words to the extent that they compliment each other so much that for four pages it becomes a comic strip.

In this first fanart(ist) critic column, I have concentrated mainly on looking at the work of fanartists I **enjoy**. In future columns I hope to stay right up to date by reviewing most recently published fanart. Naturally I can only review stuff I have seen, so if any faneds who don't normally send me their zines think they have something that deserves a mention, then send it along.

5. A fine pair of Jackie Smiths



CS12 ART CREDITS

Just got room to squeeze in the credits for this issue (minus those mentioned above). Cover is by Brad Foster, Shep supplied the art for pages 2,5,6,7,8,9 and 19, ATom did page 4, Dave Collins supplied pages 11,12,13,14 and 18, Martin Helsdon did page 26, and Sheryl Birkhead supplied all the critters in the Loccol. Thanks, folks!



RIPPLES

[[Just a couple of LoCs on CS10 before turning to the weightier mutters of the Morris Special]]

David Palter

Skel's article on LoCs is written with his customary wit and is certainly a clear and comprehensive description of the most obvious and immediate aspects of LoCs. BUT, there is more to it than that. To write a LoC can, and in my experience occasionally does, have more interesting consequences than the gratification of one or more fannish egos, or the retention of one's name on the fanzine mailing list. In one amusing instance, I pointed out (in a letter published in GALAXY, May 1978) a scientific error in a story; the author responded some years later by writing another story (published in IA'sSFM) to correctly illustrate the principle which he had gotten wrong in his earlier story. This illustrates that a discussion of SF will, in some cases, have a detectable influence on the genre itself, (my example is, I am sure, not the only one). But there is still more. My locs have led to very close and meaningful friendships with several people...and these friendships have had quite significant consequences for all of us... So, writing a LoC is part of life, it is not something that occurs in an isolated segment of existence that is irrelevant to anything outside of itself. Many strange and fascinating events have found their beginning in an innocent LoC. Skel does not say anything to the contrary, of course; but neither does he mention anything beyond the scope of egoboo, so I think a reminder is useful, that there is more to it. A good LoC has been touched by the transcendent.((137 Howland Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 3B4, Canada))

Ken Lake

Skel is obviously a past master at making 1,000 words do the work of 100. Enjoyable in its way, but I'd never even considered that fen might need to be TOLD what locs are all about. Surely it boils down to this:

1. I (editor/compiler/onlie begetter) have created this zine.

2. I've paid to print and mail it to you.

3. I want to know it's been worth while.

4. Only feedback can tell me this.

5. If I'm honest, I don't mind whether your feedback is positive or negative in its criticism so long as it tells me something about myself and about you and about what you have read and what you think of it.

6. If you have nothing to say about it, is this because you are so totally in agreement that you are sure I'm right (if so, tell me)?

7. If you have nothing to say about it, is it because you so dislike all I stand for that you fear to argue in case we come to blows (if so, write anyway -- I don't have to believe what you say but I still feel I'm entitled to hear it)?

8. If you just can't be bothered to write, why the hell should I be bothered to send you another zine?

9. My sole real desire concerning your loc is that it should be suitable at least in part for quotation in my loccol, so that

(a) I can prove people do loc me.

(b) I can report your views to other fen, whether I like them or not.

(c) I have something to spark off future issues of my zine.

Surely, even that could be boiled down and it covers all that matters? ((115 Markhouse Lane, London, E17 8A7))

[[It probably could, Ken, but would it really be as amusing as Skel off on the trail of a more humorous way of expressing himself? I doubt it somehow. But on with the CS11 LoCs]]

Ted Hughes

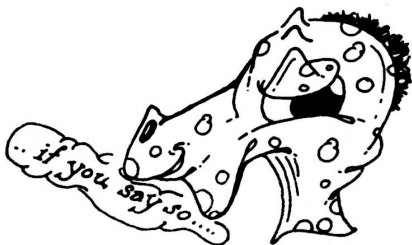
CS11 is to hand -- and what a test for loccers! Your correspondants will have, willy nilly, to talk about William Morris and his works, or dig among other loccers' letters for material. A truly fiendish trap.

Excellent issue, John. I found it thoroughly interesting. Mainly because the Pre-Raphaelites have (after Rembrandt) painted all my favourite pictures. We have an excellent collection of their work here in Manchester. 'The Shadow Of The Cross' and 'The Hireling Shepherd', and preliminary sketches for 'The Scapegoat' and 'The Light Of The World' by Holman Hunt, 'Autumn Leaves' and many others by Millais. Madox Brown's 'Manfred On The Jungfrau' and the famous 'Work' -- of which Birmingham Art Gallery has a smaller, but identical (but for the colour of a scarf) copy. How Brown could endure painting the same work twice is a mystery to me! Several paintings by minor members of the brotherhood, like Collins' 'The Pedlar' and 'Mort d'Arthur' by Arthur Hughes. Several of Rossetti's portraits, of course (and another in nearby Bolton Art Gallery). But Dante Gabriel doesn't turn me on like his brother painters. Basically he seems to have done little but the same two pouty-lipped girls all the time. Whereas poor old Holman Hunt hied himself to the promised land, bought a goat and tethered it out in the desert to paint one particular masterpiece. That smasher, incidentally, hangs in the Lady Lever Gallery, in Birkenhead, and another by Hunt called 'The Flight Of The Innocent', is in the nearby Walker in Liverpool. You can do 'em both, easily, in an afternoon. Worth seeing if you haven't already done so.

However, back to Ian Covell's splendid essay. I knew Morris had designed wallpaper, and been involved (maritally) with the Pre-Raphaelites. I didn't know he also wrote fantasy. He seems to

have been a determined author to dictate anything other than a will on his deathbed. I'm afraid my mind would have been on more immediate matters. Nevertheless, without being tempted to read any of the books mentioned, I am impressed by Ian's scholarship, and the amount of research he must have done on the subject. In fact, it came through, loud and clear, that he has read the books he tells us about!

Artwork, needless to say, entrancing, and I compliment you on it. Each of those leaves on the cover



and the interior illustrations is unique. He must have been able to do wallpaper with his eyes shut. The issue could easily become a collector's item. Incidentally, devoting a whole issue to one author on one subject has been done before -- on a slightly more heroic scale than yours. LIFE magazine (I think it was) gave over a whole issue to print John Hersey's 'Hiroshima' some years back. I never saw that particular issue of the magazine, but I bought a copy of the Penguin paperback which came out subsequently...((10 Kenmore Road, Whitefield, Manchester, M25 6ER))

Steve Sneyd

Beautiful repros of the Morris engravings -- but how to LoC? 'How I Failed To Get Past Page 1 Of 'THE WELL AT THE END OF THE WALLPAPER', 'Socialist Feudalism As Exemplified By The Jumblatt Leadership Of The Druse', Why TELEGRAPH Readers Are Greens At

Heart'. We shall see, unbreath-
holdingly. Anyway, impressive to
see you devoting an issue to so
utterly unfannish a seriousness.
((4 Nowell Place, Almondsbury,
Huddersfield, HD5 8PB))

[[That's run the gamut from the
sublime to ridiculous, so let's
centre it a little]]

Ron Gemmill

...To be honest with you John, I
thought that the Morris article
was too long; that said I'd like
to add that the piece actually
increased my literary know-
ledge...prior to this article --
and it shames me to say it -- I
had never heard of William
Morris.

In the early hours of this
morning, I finished reading **The
Waters Of The Wondrous Isles**. It
was damn difficult to get hold of;
there are only six or so of
Morris's fiction in the entire
lending libraries of Cheshire.
The Waters Of The Wondrous Isles
was the first of them to arrive,
the rest are still on order.

It is a beautiful book... in the
article, Ian Covell said that he
had never been able to finish the
book "without a strange sense of
absolute inner peace"...I believe
him -- it certainly is an overall
relaxing book -- but it does leave
certain questions unanswered;
there is room here for at least
another fifty thousand words -- I
finished the book with the
impression that Morris had
'rushed' the ending.

Take for example the 'Wondrous
Isles' themselves. Without
describing -- and hence spoiling
the reading -- the nature of these
islands, I can see no reason why
Morris leaves unexplained the
circumstances behind the major
changes in the islands' wondrous
elements that occurred in the time
between Birdalone's first and
second visit to their shores. In
fact, Morris never tells us of the
causes of the isles' wondrous
natures in the first place.

As I have said, up until CS11 I
had never heard of Morris -- and
it is strange that when I have
asked people if they had heard of
him, they would either say no, or
comment on a particular aspect of
his life. One person, for
instance, referred to him as an
early socialist, another as a fine
designer.

William Morris seems to be
different things to different
people: to me now, he'll probably
always be the writer. ((79
Mansfield Close, Birchwood,
Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 6RN))



Shep Kirkbride

I quote, "As part of the 'new
tech' process of producing CS11, I
kept sending extracts from locs to
the main contributors as the
letters arrived".

As the woodcuts were the most
impressive part of CS11 for me,
I'm interested to see how you
manage to send Burne-Jones and
Hooper the feedback from CS11!

[[Elementary my dear Shep, after
all, the **medium** is the message
isn't it? JDO]]

Not being too familiar with
William Morris or his works, I
questioned at first if it was wise
to devote a full issue of CS to
one particular theme or subject...
But I thought after looking
through it, taking in your
excellent lay-out, that if any

fanzine could get away with it, then it would naturally be the 'Ship'.

As I hinted earlier, I am not the sort of ignorant peasant to appreciate such an ambitious offering, but I can see how much work Ian Covell has put into it, and he most certainly has to be complimented on his input and presentation.

This was only enhanced by your choice of typefaces and of course the use of those aforementioned woodcuts. When I think about it, nothing else would have done really. Ghod, wouldn't those guys have made superb fanartists? ((42 Green Lane, Bellevue, Carlisle, Cumbria))

Judy Buffery

...What a treat to have a whole issue on William Morris. I was practically brought up on the Pre-Raphaelites as Birmingham Art Gallery has one of the largest, if not the largest collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings and tapestry. I've always loved their work, although when I was at art college it was the kind of thing that was much sneered at by the trendies of the time. However, I am delighted it is now back in vogue, although I think it never went out with 'ordinary' people; and perhaps that is the secret of its appeal in that it touches something basic and primitive in all of us, reaching out to the emotions rather than aiming for the so-called intellect of the pompous art critic. Only last year the Art Gallery had a special Pre-Raphaelite exhibition, getting out all its treasures. I took one of my daughters to see it and we spent a happy hour or two, totally lost in another world.

I have to confess, though, that I have never read any of the writings of William Morris (I always think of him as the 'wallpaper man')... However, I would take issue with Ian Covell over Tolkien being influenced by Morris's work. After all, what we

would call fantasy was very much in vogue in the late nineteenth century. They probably called it Romance or Fantastic Tales then. Traditional fairy stories were being dug up, re-hashed and bowdlerised by just about everybody for 'family' consumption. Authors like Oscar Wilde and George MacDonald were writing new fairy stories and long poems like 'The Idylls Of The King', 'The Lady Of Shallot' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' told similar tales with a more adult orientation. Even ancient popular ballads were collected and published in book form, many of them linked to the King Arthur legends (a formidable selling point in the twelfth century) although not included in LA MORTE D'ARTHUR. When I was at school I came across much of this material in dusty old editions in the darkest corners of the school library, which dated from about 1870.

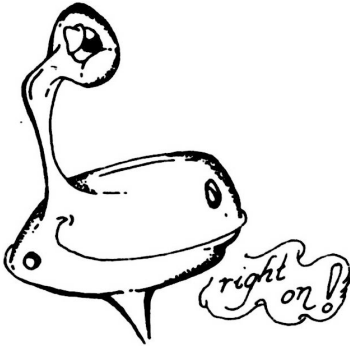
So I feel that Tolkien had much more, and more readily available Victorian fantasy to call on, had he so wished. He himself always claimed (and I see no reason to disbelieve him) that his major source of inspiration were the old Norse Sagas, particularly those of Iceland. I imagine these particular tales were too gloomy and bloodthirsty for most Victorians, although Rider Haggard might have used them as source material for his novel ERIC BRIGHTYES, which has hints of surprising eroticism for the period.

[[I tend to agree with you, Judy, especially if C.S.Lewis' letters are anything to go by]]

...The artwork you publish is always of an extremely high standard, but in this issue the originals were, of course, about a century earlier than your usual and I was struck by how well they stood up beside the work of the contemporary artists who usually illustrate CS. The pictures were a real treat. ((16 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham))

Andy Sawyer

I enjoyed Ian Covell's look at William Morris, a writer about whom I know far too little. A couple of minor quibbles: towards the end of p.12, Ian seems to be suggesting that a psychological interpretation of Morris's works is invalid because "our theories of psychology were not formulated in Morris's day". But surely this would REINFORCE a psychological interpretation: Morris would have been writing without any preconceived ideas concerning "psychology" and thus be in a better state to chart (consciously or unconsciously) his interior conflicts without any body of theory suggesting what he 'ought' to feel. (I say this out of devilment as I don't believe that "psychological" interpretations are necessarily very helpful in literature!)



Second and more fundamental: my own problem with William Morris is that I've actively disliked a lot of what I've read. I recently looked at *A Dream Of John Ball* for *Paperback Inferno* and found that the pamphlet only really came to life when the narrator was describing 19th-century capitalist England: one wondered why the hell those prosperous, contented villages were rebelling in the first place! I wouldn't like to be too dogmatic on this without reading more Morris, but I wonder how CONSCIOUSLY he viewed this fake medievalism, which at first sight undercuts all he's saying

because it calls into question his ability to picture the essence of a society. To me, Morris is the prime example of the dissatisfied writer who turns to fantasy because it expresses things he cannot say using the debased images of realism. It's interesting how much the 19th/early 20th (late 20th if you include Tolkien's disciples) century sees the phenomenon from a multitude of political stances. ((1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirrall, L64 4BT))

Terry Broome

Sometimes I'm very fortunate to have an art student sharing this house with me, as she also gets NEW SOCIETY.

The cover of NS for 23rd February 1984 is a detail of Rossetti's 'Proserpine', modelled by Jane Morris, and in Jan Marsh's 'Pre-Raphaelite Women' article inside (pages 279-282) there is another reproduction of a Jane portrait, and a photograph of her too...

The article says Jane Burden was the daughter of a stableman, and that at the time of her birth, her parents had been living in an undrained courtyard with a central cesspit. Upon marrying William Morris, she instantly became a lady and later tried to conceal her origins, refusing to allow an illustration of her birthplace to appear in the authorised life of her husband, even though the biographer pleaded that 'it does gross injustice to Morris himself to blur over the fact that he married beneath him, and did so with perfect simplicity, and as a thing which he had no reason to feel ashamed of at any time'. Marsh says Jane was ashamed and adamant. Her daughter, May, found out at quite late in her life that she, too, had been kept in ignorance, when she inquired as to her grandfather's occupation.

Jan Marsh quotes Henry James as saying of Jane's beauty: "It's hard to say whether she's a grand

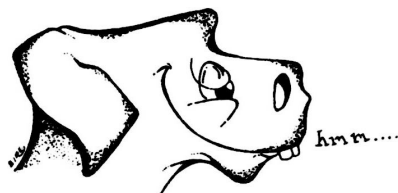
synthesis of all Pre-Raphaelite pictures ever made -- or are they a keen analysis of her -- whether she's an original or a copy. In either case, she is a wonder." Marsh argues that, far from being a wonder, Jane was "not a golden-haired beauty, but a tall, ungainly girl with thick, dark hair and a pallid skin", adding that photographs of her in the Albert and Victoria Museum show her "distinctly plain side", but that Rossetti was such a good artist and public speaker, everyone came to believe in her beauty, including William Morris who, according to Marsh, married her for this reason.

Jane resumed an affair with Rossetti after the death of his wife, Lizzie Siddall...and the failure of her own marriage with Morris, living with him at Kelmscott and sitting for him on numerous occasions (when the paintings 'Proserpine' and 'La Pia de Tolomei' were created)... The last years of Rossetti's life found him with poor eyesight, resulting in portrayals of Jane Morris being quite unlike her actual appearance, possessing, as they did, a "superb, lurid vulgarity" (Marsh, page 282). ((23 Claremont Street, Lincoln, Lincs))

Iain Byers

I have to admit that I was surprised to see an article about William Morris, and the only article at that; surprised too to read that Ian did not know who Morris was. It's strange how I take it for granted that what is known by me must be just as familiar to others. But then, even though I had heard of him at art college lectures, and was something of a fan of the PRB and the Symbolists, I had to admit that I knew little about his writing. Being partly familiar with the subject of the piece and yet finding something that I didn't know helped to make it interesting, for me, but I couldn't help wondering how much interest it would be to others.

Granted the fantasy elements touch certain chords in the CS readership, but as Morris's writings are not readily available today (not, anyway, so far as I am aware), I doubt many people would be prompted to do the research that Ian has obviously done. Maybe if they are very interested in fantasy.



It seems to me that the purpose of an article, when the subject of said article is likely to be unfamiliar, as in this one, is to prompt an interest to find out more, and yet the lack of availability of Morris's works surely works against that. Even though unfamiliar with his writings, I suspect, if they follow the ideas and ideals of the art, that the modern fantasy fan would find little resonance in them. While I sympathise with the ideas of the Pre-Raphaelites to a certain extent, I feel that they tended towards a rosy, pastoral idealism, rather than a true symbolism, and that their symbolism was contrived, and not, like the later Surrealist and Expressionist movements, a more honest, intuitive expression of the collective unconscious. It was romanticism in the most cloyingly sentimental sense, more often than not, and I suspect that the fictions of Morris are somewhat the same. While the ideas of Morris, Rossetti, Burne-Jones and the rest led to a grace and a dedication to style in their art, and which makes that art attractive, I think that attraction is essentially impersonal and superficial, and that too much of it begins to overwhelm with its

'perfection'. I don't know, but I have a feeling that the literature is probably very similar.

I have to admit that I have a strong dislike of 'fantasy', the 'influences' which Ian mentions seem to me to be responsible for a kind of self-feeding sameness, and the distance from 'reality' that Morris extolls as a virtue renders most of it lifeless. The kind of fantasy which I infer Morris to be an example of seems to build on good as an abstract in the same way that Gothic novels build upon evil, and I don't believe that either quality exists in any true sense. Perhaps it is all too Christian for me. At the same time, I do have an interest in Gothic literature, and the history of literature generally, so I would probably read Morris's books if they were available in paperback. Maybe Penguin will publish him, or do, say, three Romantic novels in the same way that they recently issued three Gothic novels in one volume. Ian could write to them and suggest it; with the current interest in fantasy it might be a practical publishing proposition.

The accompanying illustrations were a joy. Maybe we can have some Aubrey Beardsley next.



...About Jan 54's response. Firstly, how ironic it is that the humanist Samaritans should give people numbers. Secondly, despite the non-gender-specific nature of the article, I got the definite feeling that the writer was male,

which is why I assumed male pronouns in my loc. Personally, I think all the stuff about the 'masculine assumption' is a bit ridiculous, s/he and all that. If there were such a thing as a neuter human being and such neutrality was the norm, then it might be different. Unfortunately, people are sexed and some sort of decision has to be made. Other languages sex everything and such problems either do not arise or are completely unavoidable. I mean, it's just not practical to go around saying his/her and he/she all the time; still, surely you can tell us the sex of Jan 54 without compromising his/her anonymity. How about it? [[Not a chance, unless Jan 54 wants to reveal all! JDO]] ((9 Shaftesbury Park, Dundee, Tayside, DD2 1LB))

Chester Cuthbert

As I have read only one novel and several short stories by William Morris, the 11th issue of **The Crystal Ship** will prove itself a valuable guide to my further reading. Ian Covell deserves thanks from all of us for his extensive overview of the author, and you for having presented it so attractively.

Although the technological future Morris deplored is now with us and can only be extended as science progresses, his artistic views and reliance on craftsmanship should be implemented in great part because of the greater leisure provided us by that very deplorable technology. I am grateful for the conveniences and leisure I have in retirement, and wish that people generally would accept these benefits instead of trying to maintain the old work ethic. After all, the sole purpose of the machine, or technology, is to do our work for us; to let whole factories remain idle so that people can work is to defeat the whole idea of the machine. Naturally, a guaranteed annual income is necessary on a universal basis so that we can enjoy the benefits provided by technology;

but it is obvious that the imminent breakdown of the money system and universal bankruptcy is because of surplus real wealth, not because of scarcity of anything. The recession from which we are trying to emerge meant that our industrial plant could be utilized to less than 70% of its capacity in Canada; overproduction meant excess inventories which had to be financed at high interest rates; one of our most expensive surpluses is human labour, which must be financed by unemployment insurance or by welfare; but all surpluses have to be financed, and whether this is done by individuals, companies, provinces, or countries, these surpluses under our profit system mean bankruptcies of one or another or all of these financiers. And such bankruptcies lead to recessions or depressions, to national deficits and to world deprivation, simply because the capitalistic system has to be based on scarcity: a profit is only possible if there is scarcity, since an abundance means price reductions. We must learn to produce for use, not for profit, and our technology is able and willing to do the job if our economic system will permit it to do so. It is absolutely senseless to allow it to produce abundance under an economic system which will be bankrupted by abundance. By changing the system, we can all have real wealth beyond the dreams of the capitalistic or profit system. ((1104 Mulvey Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3M 1J5, Canada))



Bernard Leak

I feel, at starting, incompetent to comment; I have read no Morris beyond *The Well At The World's End*, and a glance or two at *The Wood Beyond The World*; and I feel like taking issue with Ian Covell time and time again. Naturally, much of the comment has little enough to do with the original works, since I haven't read them; but through and through the essay runs a vein of simple stupidity which irritates me enormously, a habit of relaxing into merely silly cliches, and while I would like to regard these as lapses, I don't see any great height from which they have fallen...

To start with, there are ominous signs in the reference to Lin Carter, who is commended for his "fine studies of the fantasy field". Good God! This is the man whose scholarship functions at such a level that he can speak of "that mighty repository of human knowledge, the nineteenth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*" with every sign of a straight face! Who has jauntily patronised virtually every important writer he has heard of! Whose own works betray such a stilted idiocy, such a total inability to recognise the distinction between ornamental gross-out and imagination, such a bludgeoning love of creaking plots and vacuous loftiness, as to have damned him deeper than the pit! His crimes against literature steep him to the lips! "Fine studies of the fantasy field"! I can't stand it. "Fine studies of..." aaargh!....

[[Whatever Carter's faults as an author are, surely his editorship of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series, which re-published many forgotten classics of the fantasy field in the Seventies, redeems him from the uttermost reaches of Hell? Without that series, I'd have never become more deeply interested in fantasy, simply because it would have begun and ended with Tolkien and Peake. JDO]]

...Reflections on Morris's heirs in the tradition seem to be called for; but I mistrust utterly what Ian says about it. Tolkien's expansive worldscapes are organised, as Morris's are not; they have a geography, albeit a rather confused one, and distances. Morris by contrast wanders through his landscapes rather lackadaisically, although shifting through some places several times.

Morris's adventurers never journey; they amble, or hasten, but they don't really occupy the land they move across, they are spectators in it [[a somewhat sweeping statement for someone only fully acquainted with one Morris book, surely? JDO]]. Much the same applies, so far as I can recall, to McKillip. Moorcock hasn't written anything remotely serious with any great worldscapes that I can think of, and his



unserious travelling is better thought of as "pulp fantasy standard" than "a draught of William Morris". None of his landscapes, far or near, gives the impression of being "expansive"; which at least Morris manages, when he feels like, though he prefers a domestic smallness of scene. Most of his landscapes are small pools of attention strung next to each other. I do not think that he has been an important influence on Tolkien's style, though I can well believe in other forms of influence; on Eddison's style I deny any influence whatever. I am deviating here, but I am long since convinced that Eddison's style is his own, and any similarities with Morris are

far too superficial to be worth observing. One cannot get Eddison's style by nicking things from Morris; all contenders to the contrary, Eddison's prose is seven and a half times better than Morris's, and is modelled on wholly different originals. Morris attempts a slushy version of Malory's noble style, and duly slushes it; Eddison is taken up with the writers of a much later period, notably the seventeenth century (though I suspect a lot of Shakespeare here and there) and he is the master of his prose where Morris is but the servant of his... ((115 Histon Road, Cambridge, CB4 3JD))

Harry Andruschak

Thanks for sending CS11. I don't think I've seen such a well-printed zine with such an informative article as that of Ian Covell.

My introduction to William Morris was in 1970, when Lin Carter published *The Well At The World's End* as part of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series. Whatever Lin Carter's defects as a writer, he was an outstanding Fantasy editor. I don't think anything of the over-all quality of that series was ever before published, or has been since, for Fantasy.

((P.O.Box606,La Canada:Flintridge, California, 91011, USA))

Roger Waddington

...The least I can say about the William Morris feature is that it's an achievement, and the most is something I'll have to leave to my Thesaurus; 'superb', 'nonpareil', 'masterpiece' it tells me, and I can only agree. But trying to reply to this in the same vein; well that's another matter! My own experience of Morris was trying to wade through *News From Nowhere*, but for all my earnest intent, soon giving up; with Ian's article before me, it makes me realise what a lot I missed by not persevering, by not looking elsewhere in the Morris canon. But then, William Morris always meant Socialism and

Kelmscott and design and weaving, and I didn't bother to look any further, to the man behind the label; until now, and this, and seeing just what I've missed. Mind you, I'm not too sure of a Morris revival, either in literature or politics; the world's moved on too far since his day, we no longer believe in innocence, and flowery language seems to have been replaced by machine-gun prose; in short, he might be too rich a diet for today's tastes. Though (begging your pardon) what's this doing in a fanzine? Surely with writing of this level, it could find a greater reward in one of the literary magazines (well, not so much monetary with the rates they pay) and a far greater exposure. ((4 Commercial Street, Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire, YO17 9ES))

Martin Helsdon

I admit to being daunted by the massive article. I've briefly skimmed it, but never having encountered Morris's fiction and only [having] a passing knowledge of the Pre-Raphaelites I can't make any comment. It sounds as though I should make an effort to find out some of his work. One thing though, is the Glittering Plain in Mary Gentle's **Golden Witchbreed** a nod to William Morris?

The scale of the Morris 'monster' probably explains why I've gone to the letter column so quickly, reading it from end to end. I suppose that I'm on the fringe of fandom, certainly on a very long orbit. It's very strange looking inward at the convoluted inter-relationships with only a portion of the story. CRYSTAL SHIP is my only window on the 'fannish' universe and there seems to be all sorts of rifts and tides.

I almost commented on the NF and Tolkien last time, but never got around to it. It seems very disturbing, if not dangerous, to start using..., no, trying to recognise isms in literature. Surely any story captures the

attitudes of the author's times to some degree. Just because ideas are distasteful or unfashionable doesn't mean that a work of literature is invalidated. Fantasy and Science Fiction are even more sensitive because they are more directly the creation of an individual mind. I suppose that it's easy to break LOTR down: the hobbits are indolent gentry, dwarfs are paranoid gold-hoarders, elves remote academics, and so on.. Naturally the baddies come of the south and east, but isn't the writer putting old fears to his own uses? If LOTR had been written in Russian instead of English, the evil hordes would have come from the west (and the east?). I seem to remember that there was no prejudice against the southrons. Sam felt pity for a dead warrior, whose clothes and armour suggested a rich culture. Tolkien was being very clever in making use of goblins as the major bad guys. Of course, orcs are short and yellow-skinned -- yikes, doesn't that sound as if...? Digging about in a book, especially if its colourful in characters, events and places, can only turn up what you're looking for. Fantasy is also wide open to this sort of dissection because it's about adventure: it's difficult to have a quest with a stable background. Drama, intrigue, the noble quest -- all need a sick society, or at least one in a state of transition. Aragorn and his jackboots? Hmm, well, he was a freedom fighter -- or a guerrilla!

No doubt the NF have picked on Tolkien because his work is now respectable, certainly it's had some impact on our world. John Norman's GOR books would seem more in the NF line, but maybe even they can't read them!

The most effective cure for depression I know is that inscribed in Solomon's ring: "And this too shall pass". That might be a misquote. Of course, this phrase can be catastrophic if you are in a good mood! The best way

of curing misery seems to be sharing it, so long as a problem shared doesn't become a problem doubled. At work, it seems that offloading onto someone else is the best method so long as you can unwind -- Friday lunchtime down the pub helps. At least you get a sense of community. The main difficulty is when someone comes along with a problem and expects a solution. Technical problems go away or can be bypassed: personal problems stay put... ((32 Burns Crescent, Chelmsford, Essex))

Sydney J. Bounds

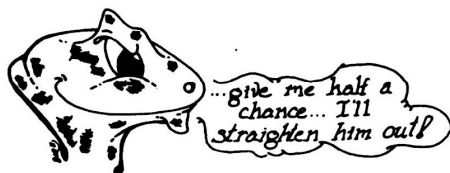
Your new technology is rather startling; replies to letters in the same issue. Be careful; if contributors reply in the previous issue, there won't be much point in locating you at all. (Even Skel didn't think of that one.) Still, full marks for originality.

Iain Byers mentions [censorship of] "golliwogs on jamjars, and Enid Blyton". I'm always saddened when one group of people tries to censor other people's work. And they're at it again, on the BBC this week; another programme on "pornography". I have yet to see the popular newspapers (such as the 'News Of The World') accused of the same. Why can't these would-be censors see that censorship is, in itself, a bad thing? ((27 Borough Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 6DB))

Robert Coulson

Hmm; Mary Gentle's letter makes me think maybe I should go into some charitable organisation; being hard to begin with, it wouldn't hurt me and would relieve a more sensitive person for a better task. Not that I'm actually going to, you understand...

I must say I'm amused by all this comment about Tolkien's racism and class consciousness. Apart from the fact that both are built into the class of story he was writing, I've never encountered an Englishman who wasn't racist and class-conscious, compared to the



average American fan. Either British fans dislike blacks and the lower classes, or they condescend to them, as several of your letter writers do, and consciously try to "elevate" them and their aspirations. Not being able to admit that a group has a bad side is just as racist as not being able to admit that it has a good side. Everyone has a bad side; you have to admit it and go on from there. One car thief I knew was an intelligent, interesting correspondent; that doesn't mean society was wrong in putting him in jail. Too many fans generalise too much. ((26677W-500N Hartford City, IN 47348, USA))

Rob Gregg

Mary Gentle raised an interesting point about re-writing LORD OF THE RINGS from the viewpoint of the orcs. I've since gone on to consider other possibilities, and the one I really like is LOTR from the position of Saruman the White. This is a powerful character who played an important part from both sides, as he went from good to evil -- and yet he featured little in the novels and we learnt little about him.

Iain Byers' point that Tolkien only appeals to gay, left wing vegans who support CND, and smoke cannabis is plainly ridiculous. Tolkien was obviously a conservative establishment figure, who would hardly exemplify the radical socialist ideal. No, the reason he is so widely read is that he wrote a damn good fantasy novel, which will live with those who have read it for the rest of our lives. I'm not one to re-read

books, but LOTR has been devoured thrice over the past few years.

Sue Thomason's suspicion that Strider (aka Aragorn, son of Arathorn) may have been a closet fascist has set me thinking. Surely when known as Strider, Aragorn was a ranger, and did ride a horse in the pursuance of his duties, so it's be quite natural for him to wear long riding boots.

[[Sadly, that will be the last LoC to come from Rob Gregg's pen, as he died late last year, after a prolonged illness. His letters were always thoughtful, always encouraging. He'll be missed around here.]]

Mark Greener

Jan 54's article certainly inspired a lot of comment. Mary Gentle asks "...what use ...is a bandage to people who need major surgery". A bandage stops the bleeding and often saves lives. The analogy is exact. With the death of the church and the sanctity of confession, be it formal or an 'informal chat', people need to talk. Who do the lonely turn to? Furthermore, people react in different ways to exposure to other people's troubles. Some become hard, others feel guilty. Mary tends to the former, I tend to the latter. I suspect it has little to do with your subjective problems but rather how the mind reacts, ie the defence mechanisms that it instigates. What is really sad is that the Samaritans should have to exist at all. After all isn't it a horrific state of affairs when we exist in a society which leaves the majority of us in various stages of depression, and a not insignificant number residing in mental hospitals or committing suicide. Something must be fundamentally wrong. ((38 Dunmow Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts.))

Mic Rogers

Wasn't it fascinating -- all the reactions to "Jan 54" -- and all

the assumptions? Dorothy Davies has also answered an unspoken query of mine: that the Samaritans themselves crack under the load. This is what I've always feared and don't really see how it can be avoided by caring people. I know it is said that, like nurses, you can become hardened and not let yourself become emotionally involved; but I wonder, I wonder... Surely a 'hardened' Samaritan is a less successful Samaritan, simply because that empathy is lacking?

I'm glad you let "Jan 54" have a 'write of reply', and that the writing about her experiences helped her. This is often the case I believe. I suppose the very variety of LoCs has helped her too -- however many assumed she was male! (Just shows you can't tell by the writing, doesn't it?)

I found Skel's 'write of reply' very interesting, too. I HATE bad language -- written or spoken -- but realise that some people, apparently, just aren't aware that they're using swear words when they do; that this is a part of their make-up and they're not likely to change at this stage of the proceedings. There are so many more entertaining expletives that one can make up that serve just as well but do not give offence to others. One that I coined in my teens that is very effective (especially as listeners work out just what I HAVE said) is 'bullswool and balderdash'! But equally satisfying, I find, is simply 'fiddle' -- sometimes said as 'fidderererl'. Another that I use occasionally is 'hell's bells and buckets of blood'. So why stick to unimaginative, boring, over-used, OLD swear words? (("Pohutukwas", 22 Campfield Road, St.Albans, Herts.))

[[The problem with swearing is that it is cumulative: if you get into the habit of using swear words, they tend to proliferate until every other word is offensive to the sensitive listener.]]

Dorothy Davies

"Pamela Boal is right, of course. You dare not write to tell someone how to write their article after it has been published! I hear echoes in the comments she quotes of many criticisms received in the past. The place to criticise a style, the English, the presentation even, is in a Postal Workshop, before the thing has found publication. Thus I can tell a member of my postal workshop that the sentence 'they were fighting men in the chairs' is ambiguous, omit or clarify, but one dare not write such a thing to an editor, for you are calling into question that editor's judgement in editing and publishing the piece in the first place. ((3 Cadels Road, Faringdon, Oxfordshire))

Steve Higgins

...I see I come in for some stick in the letter column. I'm a bit puzzled by your comments. If, as you say, your quarrel is not with Malcolm Edwards, why did you take it up with him and not with me, or one of my fellow "avid little fans"? And how did I "twist" Malcolm's words? True, in my article in *Stomach Pump* I quoted Malcolm's statement from *Tappen*, but I criticised it for being incomplete. Also true that I took it as a starting point, because it was as good a statement of my own views as I could come up with myself. But I'm far too egotistical to allow anyone else credit for my ideas, whatever spurious 'authority' Malcolm's name might add to them.



I tried to avoid the implication that "the only true form of fanwriting is that which is personal in tone". I did put forward the idea that fannish fanzines are the purest form of fanzine, because they aren't produced for the sake of science fiction, comics, wargaming, music or whatever enthusiasm you might want to share, but simply for the sake of producing a fanzine. They aren't subservient to anything. I stressed that this was a largely academic distinction, since they can't in reality be separated from the sercon fanzines with which they share an audience, but a useful one for critical purposes. More importantly, I stressed that this wasn't a statement of superiority, just one of the difference in character between the two types of fanzine.

Moving to your more general comments, the fact that someone criticises a fanzine, either in a review or a loc, doesn't mean that they must hate the fanzine outright. It's more likely that they simply don't think the fanzine is perfect. Dropping them from the mailing list is the last thing they'd want. When I offer my opinion on someone else's fanzine or article, it's usually because I think I have something to offer: an idea which might not have occurred to anyone else yet, or the benefit of a more detached perspective. This is usually because I like the fanzine in question, and think it's worth the effort. The fanzines I don't want to see again I don't bother to review. They just get a curt note saying I'd prefer not to trade. I'd hate to be dropped from *Crystal Ship's* mailing list just because I've had some unkind words for it in the past, or may have again. There's usually something interesting in every issue as far as I'm concerned, and I'd miss it.

I approve of the new direction you are taking. After this length of time I'm afraid I've forgotten most of the comments I was going

to make, and the rest seem stale. However, I'd like to reply to Eric Mayer's loc. For the most part I'm in full agreement. I said much the same things myself in that article in **Stomach Pump 4**. Where I disagree is that Eric's left out half the story. The use of the 'fannish context' is a double-edged weapon. In the hands of a serious, ambitious writer it can be a useful tool with which to produce quite unique effects. To a lazy writer it can be a shortcut to cheap and easy acclaim. (I don't want to go into detail here about this since I've been through it before. If anybody wants to read my article they know where to find it.) In this it's like most things in life. The fact that there are people who will hop in their car to drive fifty yards to the local shops doesn't mean the motor car is a bad thing. The fact that some directors will use impressive special effects to cover for the fact that their film was written by an illiterate and acted by sleepwalkers doesn't mean that the cinema is inferior to the stage.

I don't believe Eric is stupid enough to think that because a writer has become proficient in a particular type of writing he is incapable of switching into another, or even becoming proficient in that as well, as he says at the end of the loc; nor that the number of people who might fully understand any piece of writing is any test of its quality. ((200 Basingstoke Road, Reading, Berks., RG2 0HH))

[[I think you answer your own query in your loc, Steve: Malcolm originated a line of thought, other fans subsequently elaborated upon it, you extended it further, then I criticised your extension, but attributed the line of reasoning to Malcolm, which was remiss of me. Put in the way you are expressing it in your letter, I have no particular objections to your definition of 'fannish

fanzines': by your definition, some issues of CS qualify as 'fannish' (CS10, certainly), while others are 'sercon' (CS11). I simply prefer to think of CS as a fanzine, produced by fans, for fans, without any particular category in mind. My problem was (and still is, I think) that I still see a distinction being made by many fans between fanzines, with 'fannish' zines being considered more 'kosher' than any others. I see no need for this distinction at all. If CS is criticised on the basis of the quality of the material it contains, I don't mind (I may disagree, naturally): it's when some numbskull says it's not 'kosher' that I see red. JDO]]



Wahfs: Wahfs? Er, yes, there should be lots of wahfs here, but unfortunately I've lost track of precisely who locced. Put it down to idiocy, laziness, lousy filing, overwork, mental defects, under-attention, whatever you will. Hand on heart, I promise to try and do better next time. There is a big pile of material in the corner of the office at work that I simply haven't done anything with in recent months: that's probably where your letter is residing, I suspect. I may get around to some kind of an answer in the near future, but don't hold you breath waiting (otherwise you too could end up paying a visit to your local infirmary!). Otherwise, it's simply a heartfelt "sorreee".

