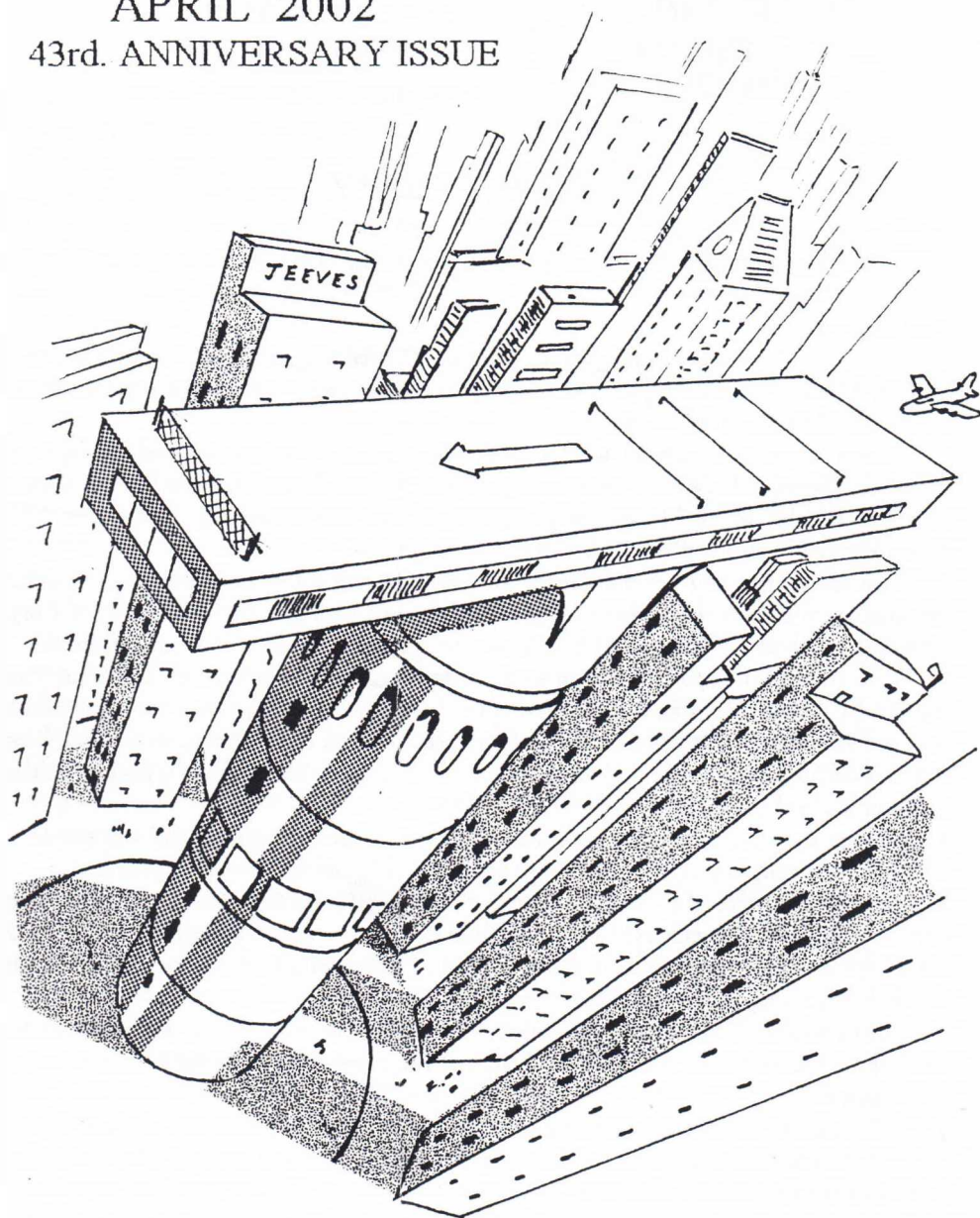


# ERG 157

QUARTERLY

APRIL 2002

43rd. ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



# ERG 157

QUARTERLY

APRIL 2002

From TERRY JEEVES

56 RED SCAR DRIVE

SCARBOROUGH

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## 43rd. Anniversary Issue

This issue comes to you in person. You can get the next issue for a LOC

Dear Ergbods,

Sincere apologies for delay in letter writing, sending e-mails, Christmas cards or LOCing fanzines or even sending up smoke signals.. The reasons for the hiatus are simple and manifold, here they are:-.

1 Things began fairly gently with a tooth filling which dropped out and was quickly replaced. The same happened to an emergency filling, which must last me for two months before it can be fixed. A minor complication was the cancelling of my free NHS chiropody treatment for which I now have to pay.

2 This snafu involved several doctor and hospital visits for unpleasant examinations culminating in a barium enema. The results proved negative, but I am now on a high fibre diet, much to my disgust as I hate brown bread, bran, Shredded Wheat and so on.

3. Then John Rupik and his charming new wife Edna came over to instal a new program and the PC broke down and would not enter Windows. Result, I was incommunicado until my very competent whiz-kid of a son-in-law came up over Christmas and did weird and wonderful things to fix it. Meanwhile, no mail in or out and no typing of letters, LOCs or access to ERG files

4. Another snag came when he car broke down with a useless gearbox and was towed to York for a warranty repair. That took a week to sort out and we were grounded.

5 Over the Festive season visitors arrived, Son, his wife and two lovely offspring. Then our daughter, her husband and two kiddies came for a few days. Lovely having them all, but it kept us busy and away from fanac. Then I developed a hacking cough followed by wax bunging up my one good ear. Otherwise, all is well.

Once all was back to normal I set about checking my e-mails. - 34 of 'em. One of 'em was a virus warning from Ron Clarke. I followed it and it deleted my refuse bin, how do I get it back Ron?

Because of all this, I apologise and will keep this short to get on top of it all.

Repeated thanks to all those who keep sending US postage stamps, all are welcome as I still have gaps in the collection

All the very best T.J.

## UN-PROPHETABLE IDEAS

Anyone can make prophecies by the bucketful, the tricky part is getting them right. In this section of DMBL, I intend to shore up the bulwarks of my memory (whilst mixing a mass of metaphors) and lean heavily on my back files of magazines. This brings up such delights as the February 1935 issue of *Amazing* in which Arthur C. Clarke says, "Several of

your writers have been using the term, 'The square of the velocity of light'. I would like to point out that such a term is meaningless". Shades of  $E=MC^2$  I can hear the CND wallahs gnashing their teeth.

Equally pitfall fraught, but showing a touching faith in the British Empire is writer Maurice K. Hanson's comment in the autumn 1938 issue of *TOMORROW*, "No one dare dispute that the first man to set foot on the moon will be other than British". Once we have all stood up and saluted, let's move on to see what John W. Campbell wrote in the July 1945 *ASTOUNDING*, "TV, the widget that has never been able to live up to its sales talk. I've a hunch it won't, ONLY in theatres, shops and Industry." A wee bit later, in *DECEMBER* 1945, in reply to a reader who said a man would walk on the Moon by 1960, John said, "You're over-conservative, I'd say we'd reach the Moon by 1950." Later, replying to another reader, he told us, "First sale of *Astounding* on the Moon by 1955 I'm betting." The mind boggles at some dead keen news agent shipping up a stall and stock, then sitting in a pressure suit to await the arrivals of Messrs. Armstrong and Aldrin

SF has long been touted (by those who don't understand it), as the literature which foretells the future. The previous examples were just 'off the cuff' remarks, but how about someone who puts his predictions on market sale? In 1950, I.O. Evans collaborated with Mitchell's cigarettes to bring us a set of cigarette cards telling us what was in store. Among these delights were giant tidal power stations which employed huge floats rising and falling on the tides. These cranked long levers, ratchets and gearing to power large generators. He also showed huge windmill power plants mounted on the top of 1500 foot high towers. Considering the objections to much smaller ones, imagine the against such monsters bestriding the landscape. Evans also provided for doldrums of low tides or windless days. On good days, spare power would be used to split water into hydrogen and oxygen. When wind and waves slackened off, these gases would then be burnt to power the national grid. To give him his due, he also predicted as another possibility, giant Van der Graaf generators splitting atoms for power



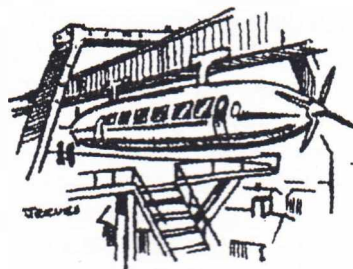


ROBOT WATCHMAN

Other cards predicted how business offices of the future would increase their efficiency by installing huge card-index systems with machines to sort, file and process the cards. ~~Inter-office items were to be conveyed via those pneumatic tubes one used to see in bigger stores~~ - which took five minutes to bring your change and effectively discouraged impulse buying as that meant a *further* five minutes wait. A further forecast saw such places being guarded by giant robots - which really isn't so far off the mark as I gather inoffensive ones are being tried in the USA. Imagine one chasing a burglar, then asking him to put a further 50c in the meter because the power has run out.

Transport was to involve overhead monorail trains of the kind tried out in Wuppertal and seen in the film 'Fahrenheit 451'. I pity those beneath when a coachload of football yobbos passed over them and got rid of bottles and other items.

Evans also foresaw that old stand-by, a Transatlantic Tunnel (Hurrah!) as well as high-speed, streamlined passenger steamers fog dispersing rays clearing the way ahead. For the convenience of airliners, which in those days couldn't fly across the ocean in one trip, he postulated floating refuelling platforms anchored in mid-Atlantic. The film F.P.I. stemmed from this idea. To further speed air travel, landing platforms were to be built on tops of city buildings, thus eliminating those tedious transits from airport to town - they would also 'protect the city from attack in wartime'.



Trains, coaches cars and even churches were to be streamlined, the former for speed, the latter for functional beauty. Among the new recreations of this streamlined public were to be gyro-motor cars (means of propulsion not explained) which could safely travel at hundreds of miles an hour. Most of these marvels were illustrated by copious use of stills from films such as 'Things To Come' and 'Just Imagine', but at least two by Wesso and Paul (a weather control tower and men in space suits) were lifted without credit from SF magazines.

Many misses, but a few near hits. Let's go back a bit further to the January 1924 issue of Gernsbacks 'SCIENCE AND INVENTION' where he listed some 'things to come'. We're a bit too late to win any of the \$12,000 in gold, offered as prizes. It wasn't so hot when you found it was broken down over the year, to \$1,000 a month and then into separate prizes of \$100, \$50 and lots of smaller sums. To get this you sent him photographs, stories and articles. Even if Hugo didn't cheat a bit with his own pseudonyms, such prizes cost him less than paying 2c word for material.



The cover illustration depicts a buxom young woman tootling merrily along on an electric bicycle which was supposed to pick up its power inductively, from a cable buried in the road. This was 'soon to be tried in France'. Gernsbacks way out ideas were usually to be tried in some far off place in darkest Europe where few if any of his readers were likely to visit to heck on his stories.

Inside the magazine we come across our first prediction, an illustration depicting a glass-enclosed, self-contained city with under surface bus terminal. Not unlike modern shopping malls. Then there was the old chestnut, tidal power, this timer to be tried in Germany'. Hugo had noted how aircraft were getting faster and their wings smaller, so what more logical than to predict that aircraft of the future would fly at 500mph and have no wings - no mention of what would keep them up. Suck speeds would require longer landing places, so why not fit retractable pontoons to allow them to land on any large body of water? Meanwhile, (over in Germany), an aircraft was to be steam powered and contra-rotating pusher airscrews. Then there was the list of winners in a grand toy-designing competition. Believe it or not, but one winner got \$5.00 for a model roundabout powered by cockroaches hidden in the base!



'LATEST PATENTS' included a winged car. Not only would this reduce weight on the tyres, but allow it to hop over an oncoming car to avoid an accident. No mention of what happens if two such cars meet. - there's always the danger of being arrested for low flying. Another idea was a shoe salesman's footstool with built in air-conditioner to waft away noxious pongs from customer's feet. Collapsible 'shoe floats allowed the wearer to emulate Jesus and walk on water. Very handy if you missed the last ferry to Hoboken.

Gernsback also ran a column giving advice to aspiring inventors. One such was interchangeable heads for tie pins. Another idea was for two foot long 'lazy tongs' to shoot indicators sideways from cars to signal a turn. There was also a cuplike gadget with cog wheels and a ratchet handle. This enabled you to crumble crackers into your soup or coffee. Carry it around with you and be ready to cracker crumble at the drop of a soup dish. Rather akin to carrying a set of bellows to blow out the match after lighting a cigarette. Hugo not only gave these the thumbs down, but did likewise for the idea of sandwiching two sheets of glass together with a narrow gap as this would make for good insulation. Nowadays I get plagued by phone calls or doorbell ringing by hordes of double-glazing salesmen

6

For the February issue, Howard V. Brown illustrated 'The Submarine Land Dreadnought' a giant vessel shown crunching buildings and firing 16" shells in all directions as it crept ashore. Designed "to assault land fortresses and fortifications", in addition it could launch aircraft from the landing field on its top.

Inside the magazine a writer tackled that old theme, "Can We Reach The Planets?" He gave us four ways. No.1 A Space Gun would fire people into the void. The writer agreed this could damage one's health, so plan No 2 was to put travellers on hydraulic recoil springs which would 'spread the force over an hour'. No.3 suggested attaching the space car to a giant Ferris wheel, spinning it to high velocity before releasing the car. This idea was later used by Neil R. Jones in one of his Zorome stories. No.4 used the force of light from giant searchlights to propel his ship into space .. 'provided some means of overcoming gravitation can be found'. Dead easy really. The chap also added, "Electrification of a lead ball reduces its weight" H'm, I never knew that.

Then there was Hugo's proposal for giant 'Loud talkers' to be mounted on the summits of skyscrapers. The 'Municipal Announcer', was to broadcast news of civic importance along with details of robbery, murder or car theft etc. This fascinating information could be heard by the poor blighters below for 'up to five miles'! Presumably the workers in these buildings would be recruited from the ranks of the stone deaf.

A regular feature was 'Dr. Hackensaw's Secrets'. In January, he took a visitor to his underwater city, which then flooded. By February he was safely back on dry land trying out a rejuvenation serum on an 80 year old woman - she began to regress back to childhood, infancy. The process only stopped at the last minute. I wonder if that sparked 'The Emperor's Heart' in ASF where a ruler regresses to babyhood before resuming normal growth - as a baby girl.

The mag also included diagrams of perpetual motion machines. Each guaranteed by its inventor to produce megawatts of power once the bugs were ironed out. Today's 'Spy In The Cab' Tachygraph recording the movements of a lorry, was predicted as a device to be fastened in a car to catch out any joy-riding by your chauffeur. Salvaging sunken ships was dead easy for Hugo. He proposed giant floating refrigerators to be moved over the wreck, sunk into place around it, power turned on and the sunken vessel encased in a block of ice. Since we all know ice floats in water, up would come the wreck..

No doubt the future would be a wonderful place with all these gadgets around. I wonder where they got to, some parallel world maybe?



It was a fine idea of Aunt Maud's. On the laws of averages or Murphy or whatever, she had to have a good one eventually.

The family had gathered for Christmas lunch. Much time was involved running round to various neighbours for elastoplast for George's finger. The blood! Not many of us fancied the turkey after that.

And there were the usual rows among the kids, with little Jennie happily firing her laser gun at Jimmy's Subbuteo men.

"Next year," Aunt Maud announced, "I'm going to book Christmas lunch at the pub." For some reason, Samantha who just happens to be Jennie's, and Jimmy's mother, took umbrage at this and said she wasn't going to have her Christmas Day lunch at any old pub and her husband, George, agreed. Which was a surprise.

The following year's meal, at *The Rose & Crown*, was a decided success. No surprise there, really. Their pub grub, all basic rib-sticking roasts and heaps of veggies, was the toast of the shire throughout the year. Any year. Heavens! I'll bet even you've heard of the place.

Came Christmas Day. Mavis and Arthur, the long standing proprietors really did us proud, with all the traditional dishes and trimmings, excelling in both quality and quantity.

That was the Christmas before last. Before Guy and Bernice took over the place.

Ah, these city types! They'd been in computing and had decided to retire to the country and play at running a real village pub. The first thing they'd done was to change the name to *The Chip and Byte*. Real subtlety there.

And then the entire place was refurbished, all modernised, all improved. No more poky little corners, no more filthy-looking oak-smoked beams, no more dust-gathering brasses. All nice spick and span easy-to-wipe-down plastic and chrome and a big open space in the middle. For disco dancing on Saturday nights.

And they sacked Fiona and Margie, the two cooks and imported a genuine French chef whose daily specials ran to baguettes like *poisson de Genf au scallops*. His *pièce de résistance* was duck stuffed with sauerkraut, garlic and knockwurst. Never actually saw anyone order any of these. The locals stuck to roast beef. I should have had an inkling from his name being Hans-Wolfgang.

For Christmas Day lunch the place was a little crowded. From time to time the Norwegian pine in the centre of the room... a nice touch... decided to shed needles whenever anyone tried to push past the hundred or so drinkers intent on taking up dining space, the tables that usually bordered the room having been trundled into some sort of pattern. Aunt Maud wasn't over enthusiastic about being scrunched up and constantly dug in the ribs by the elbows of the guy at the next table. His being the size of the Bath front row might have had something to do with it.

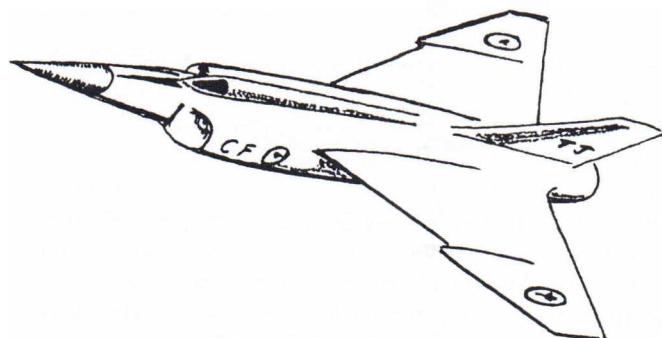
The decorations didn't help. The rising heat from the gathered assembly acted on the fastenings in some way, so that lengthy yellow, black and red strands would drift plateward at any given moment making immaculately accurate landings into one's *potage au fennel*. Still, it was pleasant to have the turkey piped in by twenty-four kilted pipers playing the *Bayerischer Defiliermarsch*.

Well, the turkey, the Brussels and the chips were all up to scratch. And I loved the Christmas pudding with its traditional blutwurst and chocolate sauce.

Aunt Maud says that next year we'll try *The Shoulder of Mutton* across the square. Some people are never satisfied.

--pf

## THE AVRO ARROW



Another sad story of what might have been concerns the Avro (Canada) C-105 'Arrow'. In 1947, Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier in the rocket-powered X-1. That was a special design air-dropped from a B-29. Six years later saw the North American 'Super Sabre' F-100 as the first jet fighter to achieve the speed of sound in level flight. Only a few years after that, in 1957 Avro Canada rolled out its C-105 which bid fair to outfly any other jet fighter existing or on the drawing board.

The C-105 was a large, delta winged aircraft powered by two Canadian designed engines, each of 20,000lbs thrust. It was a long range, all-weather fighter, 77 feet long with a 50ft wingspan and weighing as much as a loaded Lancaster bomber! The maiden flight was in 1958 and lasted for 35 minutes. All went well until after a heavily braked landing when the aircraft was sitting on the tarmac whilst everyone cheered. The over heated brake drums gradually transferred their heat to the 200psi tyres and one by one they exploded showering rubber shrapnel in all directions.

In April 1958, the Arrow reached Mach 1.5 and still had power in reserve but it had reached the end of its planned test route. Mach 2.0 was next on the agenda and orders for 100 machines were drawn up. Five had been built and a sixth was under construction when disaster struck. Without warning, the Canadian Prime Minister ordered all work to be stopped and the existing aircraft to be destroyed. Reporters were excluded from the vandalism but one enterprising newshound hired a light plane and flew low over the scene of mayhem where men armed with power saws were hacking the Arrows to pieces.

The act of vandalism closed the production lines and threw thousands out of work, both at Avro and at many of the sub-contractors geared up to supply equipment. The final irony came when the Canadian Airforce had to buy replacement machines of a poorer performance and greater cost from elsewhere.



## SCHRODINGER'S CAT and stuff

I enjoy reading books on astrophysics and quantum theory and wish I could understand them. The little bit I manage to glean from my reading serves to make me full of wonder at how this whole shebang operates. Every so often I run into specific bits which coggle me more than somewhat. I have in mind, the 'Two Slit experiment' to show that light is both a wave and a particle according to how you test it. Then there's the fantastic experiment by Alain Aspect and others which has two widely separated particles reacting instantaneously to an action of one of them. Faster than light! Seems FTL can be achieved. The thought experiment which keeps cropping up in every book on quantum theory is the one involving Schrodinger's cat. For readers who haven't met this before - there may be one or two of you, I'll summarise it here.

The idea hinges on the theory that nothing happens until it has been observed. Before that, it is just a probability wave. To speculate on this Schrodinger postulated a sealed box holding a cat, a vial of poison and a random device in the form of a radioactive particle with a fifty-fifty chance of triggering a hammer which will break the poison capsule and kill the cat. We can't know what happens to the cat until we open the box, so according to quantum theory it is neither dead nor alive until we open the box and collapse the wave function, thus presenting the cat with the outcome.

My first niggle with this, is that radioactive trigger, how long do we wait and what substance has a half-life which is infinite? Any shorter period and you no longer have an evens chance, it will trigger sometime.

Niggle number two concerns that wave function. Imagine the scientist opens the box, collapses the wave function and knows the result. Anyone outside the room will not know this has happened, so for them the wave function hasn't collapsed and the cat is still in Limbo. This could go on indefinitely as the information is passed along a chain of external observers. Imagine a series of several thousand people getting the message in turn. That wave function must be flapping like crazy.

If all this sounds weird, I suggest you look up the Casimir effect. Take two metal plates, stand them on edge very close together, and to quote THE MATTER MYTH by Davies and Gribbin .....

*"The parallel reflecting plates disturb the structure of the quantum vacuum in the space between them by forcing the virtual photons to adopt only a limited set of wavelengths. The result is to produce a force of attraction between the plates."*

No doubt about it, Quantum theory is just incredible, it ought to provide umpteen ideas for authors to mine for their stories - or is it too incredible? For further reading, I recommend you to try "In Search Of Schrodinger's Cat, by John Gribbin.

It makes you think

Ron Bennett visits

## FIFTEEN TO ONE

I went down to London on Tuesday. I left Wysí eighteen days' worth of food, which would last her until about 11pm (she could starve the rest of the time... the diet would do her good... have you ever seen a cat that looks like a rugby ball with a leg in each corner?) and set off at the ungodly hour of 8.15. Bus into town, 9.05 to York. Into York at 9.50 to catch the King's X connection at 10.03. Bloody train from H'gate 20 minutes late because of some signal repairs. Into York at 10.02. Run... ha! Stagger... The 10.03 London train? That's it, over there... Stagger. stagger... Get to it as it's pulling out. I ask the guard the time of the next London train... and he walks away... stagger after him and ask again. He seems rather put out and tells me brusquely 10.33 and off he goes again. I again haul him back to ask the platform.

Well. I have some twenty-five minutes to grab a coffee and when I get to platform three at 10.25. people are boarding a train. Yes, this is the 10.27 King's Cross train. I'm told. The next time I'm in York. I must make a point of treading on that little prat (good gracious. Windows doesn't recognise prat. Customise. customise!).

I got to London before one and a tube journey with only one change got me to Waterloo. Southern rail to Wandsworth Town, a three minute walk to the Holiday Inn round the corner. Ten minute while the room was serviced (nasty of me to insist on a non-smoking room)... The room was standard fare, with the minimum organised for one's comfort. Adequate. With either the widest single bed I've ever seen or the narrowest double. As there were two side-by-side pillows. I suspect the latter. I dumped my things, had a wash and a cup of coffee and whipped back up to Waterloo to go to the new Tate Modern, a ten minute walk from the station.

Ha! A half hour later I was there! Mind you, it was a lovely walk along the river embankment. Mild day with a pale blue sky. Very pleasant. Now I knew that the gallery is somewhat large, being housed in a converted power station. If you can think of some series of size... large, huge, massive. ginormous... and continue the series another five or six units, you'd be getting close. The between floor escalators make those Holborn underground seem puny. I spent an hour wandering around just one level and gave up from exhaustion. But wow! Some mind blowing stuff, including some early Picasso before he began sticking fish inside people's heads.

There is actually a tube station closer than Waterloo. it's Blackfriars and it's over the other side of Blackfriars Bridge. close to where I once worked. Another schlep...

I went to Russell Square and the hotel where I have stayed on a few occasions and had dinner and then took myself to the Apollo Theatre to see Penelope Keith and Una Stubbs in Noel Coward's *Star Quality*, which was okay but which didn't ring any great bells with me. Went through a pantomime on the way back to the hotel missing my stop at

Wandsworth and going on to the next station at Putney East. No sweat., simply walk across to the opposite platform and get the next train back. Which didn't stop at Wandsworth but continued on to Clapham Junction. I could see this procedure recurring ad infinitum but I got it right the next time.

I was up at seven, had breakfast and sat around until 8.15 for the bus to the studios. Met a few other contestants. All of whom had been on the show before (it's very obvious that the show isn't attracting as many contestants as it once did) and who had done well. Some had been on other shows and were old hands at the game. One woman had even done well on *The Golden Shot*!

We arrived at the studio at 8.45 and were shown into the Green room, which wasn't the same one which had been used the previous time I'd been on. Bloody cold. We had our identities checked, signed release forms about the company having the right to use our image in future promotions (no fears there... they'd lose money if they used my image!) were given our expense cheques (as the hotel doesn't have a restaurant they added £15 to the second class train fare, so that I got a cheque for £86. Dinner had cost me twenty quid (central London) and the train fare was £66.60... well no. it wasn't. With a senior rail card I got a one-third discount so that the fare ended up costing me £43.95. No. the maths didn't sound right to me. either but what do I know? This didn't altogether gel with my previous time with the programme when I got a special deal on the train for something like a £25 return, had dinner at the (different) hotel and was given expenses of £140 in cash.), drew lots for where we were to stand in the studio and were shunted into a make-up room to have our faces daubed with Max Factor #817. Or maybe it was Paton and Baldwin's. What do I know? One of the make-up people. Diane., comes from Harrogate.

At 9.30 we were led into the studio and through the mass of tangled cables knee deep on the floor to our places. Our microphones were tested for sound. the opening captions that give our name and where we live were all checked and photos were taken of each of us. Then Laura. William G's wife., lovely woman...read out the opening sequence of names and we were photographed individually. I had to swap places for this photo as the background flat where I was standing wasn't suitable for some reason (another guy down the line had the same problem), then the opening sequence was recorded.

A floor manager gave us instructions about when and which way to leave the set when we were eliminated and finally someone sent to tell William G that we were ready for him.

In he breezed. shook hands with each of us and had a little chat about we came from, where we had been auditioned, how we'd done the previous time we'd been on the show (The first guy said that he'd got his two first round questions wrong and had been eliminated straight away...in the show itself, when he got a question right. Bill remarked. "I bet you feel relieved at that.") and so forth. One guy hadn't been on before and we all cheered.

And so. at about 10.15. the show actually began...

I've been kicking myself continually ever since. How to eliminate oneself in one easy lesson. Be asked an easy question, decide that the obvious answer has to be wrong and stand there like a dummy!

When it's down to three, Bill doesn't do his bit about 'there you are, stay with us and

after the break..." but records that some time later (Or perhaps even before). Those who have been eliminated were led off to a hospitality suite for coffee and biscuits and to watch the final round on the monitor.

We were whipped away smartly and taken either to the tube at Putney East (site of my great triumph the previous evening) or back to the hotel, which I did. Cleaned off the make-up and checked out a few minutes after twelve. Back up to Waterloo and on to King's X for the 1pm train back to Leeds.

Because of a fire somewhere North of the station the place, like Philadelphia, was closed. No trains out before three and no guarantees about that. Absolute mayhem, with millions of people milling around looking even more lost than I do. There's a train service to Doncaster from St Pancras. I was told, and you can make a connection there to York. Trog to St Pancras. The train to Doncaster? 13.29 (why these strange times?)... you change at Sheffield.

As you might guess, I wasn't the only person at St Pancras with this in mind. One slightly jammed packed train.

Stops at Leicester. Derby. Chesterfield and the train terminates at Sheffield at 3.45. There's a train to York at 2.57 and a train to Leeds at 4.03. Doncaster seemed to have disappeared down a black hole.

At Derby there was a fifteen minute wait as someone had "activated safety equipment on the line." These railway people speak a language of their own, which, I admit, is almost like English. "The next station stop will be," "we shall shortly be arriving in at..." and "myself and my staff will be..." The trains these days are non-smoking throughout apart from one carriage and also have carriage D designated as a "mobile phone free" carriage. Shortly before Sheffield a couple of teenagers began using a phone and were asked to stop by a member of the train staff. One loud torrent of foul mouthed abuse. Pair of teenagers arrested when we reached Sheffield just before four.

Millions of people on the platform wanting Leeds. Train delayed approx twenty minutes. Arrived Leeds 5.25. Raced through to catch the 5.29 to Harrogate. Home 6.30.

All great fun.

And yes, I would do it all again.

One thing that did impress me... well, these days, being dependent on local public transport. I do meet some bloody weirdoes, people who make me look vaguely normal. Must tell you about some of them sometime (for starters, how about the woman who had received a box of biscuits from her daughter tomorrow?). Everyone I met in London... millions of people, mostly young, because I can't see the time table announcements being shown on screens at the different stations and have to ask for help) were not only brilliantly helpful, but spoke so bloody intelligently and well. No. "See yer la'er." as depicted in so many soaps. It dawned on me that these were the types of people who were killed on September eleventh.

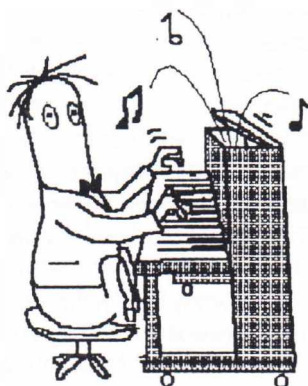
Enough... it's (finally) time for lunch.

February eighth. Either for sympathetic sounds or a good laugh.

Ron



## FANZINES



**CHALLENGER.15**, Guy H. Lillian III, PO BOX 53092, New Orleans, LA 70153, USA

a HEFTY 108 pages, a superb colour cover, good art, umpteen photo pages, very good fanzine reviews, sundry comments on the twin towers horror, legal cases, articles by Benford, Indick, Edd Cartier, Mike Resnick, my piece on the Soggies, lots of LOCs and other goodies. Something for everyone, get it for \$6.00 or the usual. Editor Guy fairly radiates bonhomie in what must be one of, if not *the* best fanzines around.

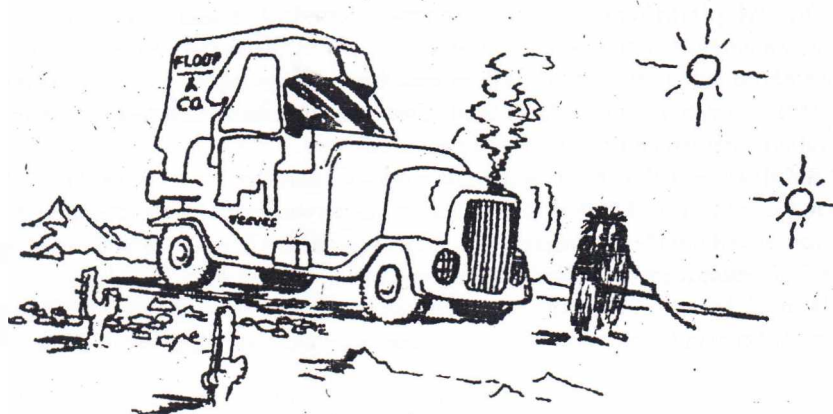
**SCIENCE FICTION FIVE YEARLY**, Nov, 2001 Lee Hoffman, 3290 Sunrise Trail, Port Charlotte, FL 33952-6066, USA 40 mimeo pages and some striking artwork. a transcript of Dave Langford's Con speech, fiction, articles, verse, Lovecraft sendup and

a good LOCcol. Nice and friendly, get it for the usual though a long wait between issues.

**VISIONS OF PARADISE.89** Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Ct., Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023, USA an excellent cover illo personal diary, are villains PC?, Hugo discussion, 'Wondrous Stories', very good fanzine reviews and a lovely 'Lighter Side'. VOP runs to 38 pages and comes with a separate, 15 page, LOCzine.

**THE KNARLEY KNEWS.91**, Henry Welch, 1525 16th Ave., rafton, WI 52024-2017, USA 22 pages with a striking, all-American draon in colour. Personal natter on buses, Conventions, a wedding etc. Then a book review, Todd Bushlow musings, two in-depth fmz reviews, Sue Welch on lions in Serengeti National Park, a hefty LOCcol and a raft of capsule fmz reviews. Nicely varied, get it for £1.50 or 'the usual'

**I WAS ELVIS PRESLEY'S BASTARD LOVE-CHILD & other stories of Rock 'n' Roll Excess** by Andrew Darlington, £13.99/\$19.95 from HEADPRESS/CRITICAL VISION, 40 Rossall Ave., Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1JD





**Tony Glynn**, 21 Wright St., Southport, Merseyside PR9 0TL Only a couple of days before reading your observations on horrible habits of speech, I was watching a programme about young offenders and wincing at how one young kid being interviewed ended every sentence with, "You know what I mean". He was certainly socially deprived and I've always seen that particular cliché as a badge of real educational poverty. The American equivalent is "You know what I'm saying?"

**Robert Lichtman**, PO Box 30 Glen Ellen, CA 95442 USA Joseph Major's comments on electric cars in California, where air conditioning is often needed for driving comfort, aren't really accurate. I've driven several totally electric and hybrid (gas/electric) vehicles from the Toyota dealer where I take my Corolla for service. run the air conditioning in all of them, and experienced no ill effects. I agree with Alan Burns' that "the current petrol electric are not really effective." Two problems I note: First and foremost, there are straight petrol cars that get as good mileage as the hybrids, and second, that the huge batteries in them are expensive to replace (I asked and was quoted \$7,000 for the one in the Toyota hybrid, which is good for 7-8 years or 100,000 miles, whichever comes first) and create an environmental problem in their disposal. As Lloyd Penney points out indirectly, once the battery situation is solved, all-electric cars could become de rigueur in areas where distances aren't great but are unlikely to catch on where wide-open spaces must be traversed. In James Verran's piece, I must admit that I also am not "too charmed by the prospect of recycled toilet paper." Of course he's joking, and I've seen the stuff -- it's unfortunately too reminiscent of the stereotypical British Toilet paper of days past. When I was over there in '89 on my TAFF trip, I was surprised that most TP I encountered was very much like American varieties. Another fannish legend dashed.)

**FRED SMITH**, 10 Braidholm Cresc., Giffnock, Glasgow 46 6HQ Liked your write up on Fairey. Have you ever considered 'doing' the Gee Bee sport and racing planes of the thirties? *[I was sure I'd done these until I just looked back and found I hadn't. An omission to be rectified.]* If you've ever read, 'The World's Worst Aircraft' you'll know about that series culminating in the 'flying pickle barrel'.. *[read and enjoyed]* There have been several replicas built in recent years, one being featured in the movie, The Rocketeer which I'm sure you would enjoy.

**DAVE ROWE**, 8288 West Shelby State Rd.44, Franklin, IN 46131-9211, USA Mad Scientists and 'The Affair of The Brains', have you ever seen a 1940 Boris Karloff clunker called the Devil Commands? Not that the film has a devil in it but it does have Mad Scientist Karloff putting several corpses in rubber suits linked together round a table as if they were having a seance (to contact the living perhaps?). Carolyn asked Forry Ackerman (of all people) if he had seen it. "Oh Yes", says he "I have one of the suits."

**Lloyd Penney**, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2, CANADA Those wonderful old SF B-movies hold more nostalgia value for me than anything else. The story lines must have been considered corny and ridiculous, even in their own time, and no one went broke on the special effects. Gorilla suits and space helmets stand out in my mind especially as examples of what not to do, even if the cash flow is low. We were fortunate that for every stinker, there were true classics like *Forbidden Planet* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. As far as plot devices go, I always did like time travel, robots and rockets to the uncharted areas beyond the Rim. If those scientists were so dedicated, and so mad, how come they were still able to take time to get married and have beautiful daughters? Guess we're not supposed to notice that. *[Or where the wife was]*

**Eric Lindsay**, PO Box 650, Airlie Beach, QLD 4802, AUSTRALIA Regarding diverting asteroids, the shuttle is useless, as it is an earth orbiter, and you wouldn't send out humans, you would use standard one shot rockets as used for all interplanetary missions, and thus no rocket designs are needed. Nuclear weapons use a plutonium core of around 4 kg, and a complete bomb is in the right sort of weight range for standard rockets. All you want is for the blast to boil off volatiles from the asteroid surface, and thus divert it. No deceleration is needed, so you just send a bunch of rockets one after the other and try to have them explode at an appropriate position. *[I still reckon the big problems are the time/reaction factor, who decides and who pays?]*

**Ted Hughes**, 10 Kenmore Rd., Whitefield, Manchester M45 8ER Where do you get this Penelope Fandergaste stuff from? I don't usually read her offerings, but to go on for a full page about J.K. Rowling and the Harry Potter books - kid's stuff - is the limit. Liked your piece about Mad scientists and their inventions. When you started the list of stories I was right there with you. 'Spawn Of Eternal Thought' by Eando Binder -- Wonderful stuff! I can even recall the man reaching for the switches in that great bank of dials and whatsits. *[Those were the days my friend.]* Wesso was a great artist even if all his heroes wore jodhpurs. *[Wasn't that Frank R. Paul?]*

**Pamela Boal**, 4 Westfield Way, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW DMBL made me feel nostalgic for those long gone days when I, if not enthusiastic for, was at least tolerant of the predictable plot lines. I was never keen on the dumb heroine or sympathetic towards her self-engendered predicaments but tolerated her for the sake of nuggets of new ideas in the story. Alas, it seems technology goes faster than imagination so authors are reduced to mediaeval settings and magic. I can still enjoy the world disaster story when the characters are forced to rediscover old technologies.

**Ron Bennett**, 36 Harlow Park Crescent, Harrogate HG2 0aw The guy who used to run the stall next to mine in the Leeds Merrion Centre Market (laughingly called 'The Superstore') used to say, "You know what I mean", about every third sentence. Eventually I started saying, "Yes I know what you mean because I'm a teacher and I teach English", or "I think I know what you mean, You're saying-----, but I may be wrong. There's some hidden meaning isn't there?" He took it all in good vein. Mainly I think because the days were sometimes long.

**Gene Stewart**, 1710 Dianne Ave., Bellevue, NE 68005. USA *[Gene always comes up with the best LOC in the pile, herewith a brief sample:-]* MAD SCIENTISTS AND INVENTIONS - It's interesting how many dog-eared plot devices you cite that cropped up in the recent TWILIGHT ZONE marathon on the Sci-Fi Channel. 24 hours or so of old TZ episodes, and they held up better than one might imagine, but by gum they sure liked the clichés. The explanation is usually that Serling, having come from legitimate state plays and the more literary end of things, found all the trite moves any neophyte would when discovering imaginative literature's freedoms and liberties. Could well be. In any case, he used most intelligently, and always wrote from an adult view, so the episodes for the most part still have something to say to us now. In some cases, more.

**Roger Waddington**, 4 Commercial St., Norton, Malton YO17 9ES When it comes to choose between ummers and flappers, give me the ummers every time. At least they're looking long and hard for the right word, the right thought; and there's the chance they might let slip out what they're really thinking, whereas the flappers have got what they really want to say all worked out and the flailing of their arms is really to distract you from what they're saying - which is rarely to your benefit. *[Sort of smoke screen?]*

**James Verran**, 12 Ellis St., Port Noarlunga, S.Australia 5167 Further to "More Idle Thoughts": perhaps it is because black holes are spinning that they are depicted as flat two-dimensional? whirlpools. Incidentally, I caught the tail end of a science report one morning which intrigued me. The (science?) reporter described an experiment where it was alleged that light was actually slowed to the point where it stopped and could be held for a period of time then released. Never heard a follow-up or repeat of the item, though *[I was sent a clipping about this, must be a year ago but I forget the details]*

**Henry Welch**, 1525 16th Ave, Grafton, WI 53024-2017. USA. Your commentary on mad scientists was informative, but I'm wondering if matter transmitting a lit match to a methane atmosphere would do any good. Without the right methane-oxygen mix there is no combustion. If you are careful you can put out a flame using gasoline or even hydrogen. In fact, the old way of putting out an oil well fire involved installing high-temperature explosives around the burning well, detonating them, and then rushing in with water to cool things down. The explosion did two things. First it consumed much of the immediate oxygen supply and second it tended to blow out the flames. The modern method is a bit faster involving the mounting of a jet engine or two on a tank and blowing the fire out. (This latest method is complements of oil well fires set by Iraq as it left Kuwait after the Gulf War.) *[I wonder how they worked that one out]*

**Robert Lichtman**, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA While joining Penelope Fandergaste in her commendation of the Harry Potter books because they've caused children to \*read\*, Like her I haven't read them, either. I did see the movie, however, and because of my ignorance of the books I wasn't at all disturbed by whatever was done to simplify/change the plot for cinematic purposes. Other than some interesting special effects, though, the film didn't particularly grab me and I rather doubt I'll bother to see its sequels. *[I'm fed up with the hype, but very pleased if it makes kids read.]*