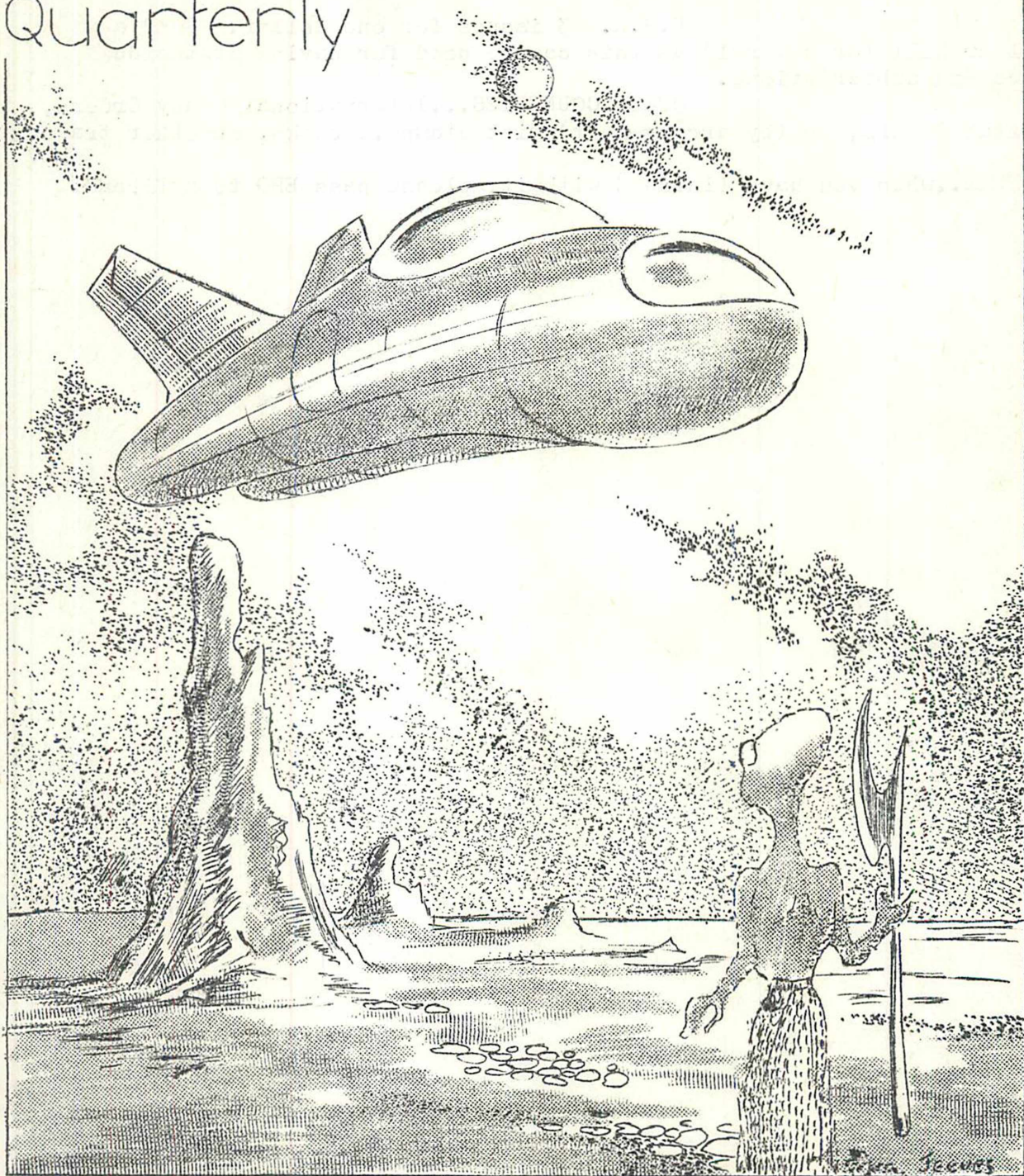


ERIC

No. 52

Quarterly



.....STATUS BOX
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APPEAL..when you have finished with it, please pass ERG to a friend.

EDITORIAL

3

Greetings ERGbods,

This particular issue has been delayed more than somewhat, owing to my hectic Summer holiday. For openers, we headed off to Belgium and had a week there wandering round the various cultural centres. I was able to renew my 1957 acquaintance with Pils and Stella (both beers, I hasten to add). Once we got back to civilisation (they drive on the wrong side over there AND give precedence to side roads) I had a few days rest before Newcastleing it to attend the Burns' wedding. Naturally we got lost while using Alan's map, but that wasn't his fault, as now as he to know that between him sending a map, and my getting up there, the council would have gone and opened a new underpass. 'twas a good wedding, and we came home via some delightful little Yorkshire villages such as Grassington, and Richmond.

Next trip took us to Bridlington, and again we toured the off-trail (apologies to OMPA) villages on the way home. A few more days rest, and we mustered the porters for a safari into the wilds of Wales. The straightest route lies via Leek in the centre of the map...so naturally, we went via Southport, way up in Lancashire. Val wanted to see the flower show. Nevertheless, we finally got to Moelfre before dusk, and let ourselves into the converted smithy which was the country cottage loaned to use by Val's brother. My first job was to turn on the water..I achieved this simple chore after an hour's searching for the stop tap (I still wonder what whim led them to hide it in a nettle patch). Came the weekend, and we drove up to Holmes Chapel to visit the Bentcliffes and to play croquet on the delicate brown, grass-studded weed-patch which Eric calls laughingly, 'the lawn'. He cheated abominably and won. I got my revenge at Scrabble, when Eric, Beryl and Lindsey re-visited us in Moelfre.

We had a lovely week there, visiting Lake Bala, Barmouth and Llangollen, and wandering up and down the side roads to such oddly named places as 'Pen-y-bont' and 'Pen-y-worth'. We also discovered a little stone edifice marked 'Gent-le-men' which proudly bore strange (welsh ?) hieroglyphics.

Finally, we made it home and the only excursion left to us, was a run over to Marple Bridge to visit further relatives. Discounting the Belgian trip, which was by train and ship, we notched up some 1800 miles in the Opel before finally settling

down to the gigantic mail-pile...and **ERG**. Naturally, I'm making every effort to get this duplicated, collated, stapled, bundled, stamped and mailed out before the latest (quarterly) postal increase.

Herewith a brief reminder for new readers...normally titled, **WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE**...the pages on stencil work form part of a continuing series on duplicating and fanzine technique. Save your copies, or you may prefer to wait and buy one of the limited edition of complete booklets which I shall issue at the end...which is why, with apologies to Graham Poole, I had to turn down his request to reprint it all in a one-shot fanzine....That is part of my master plan.

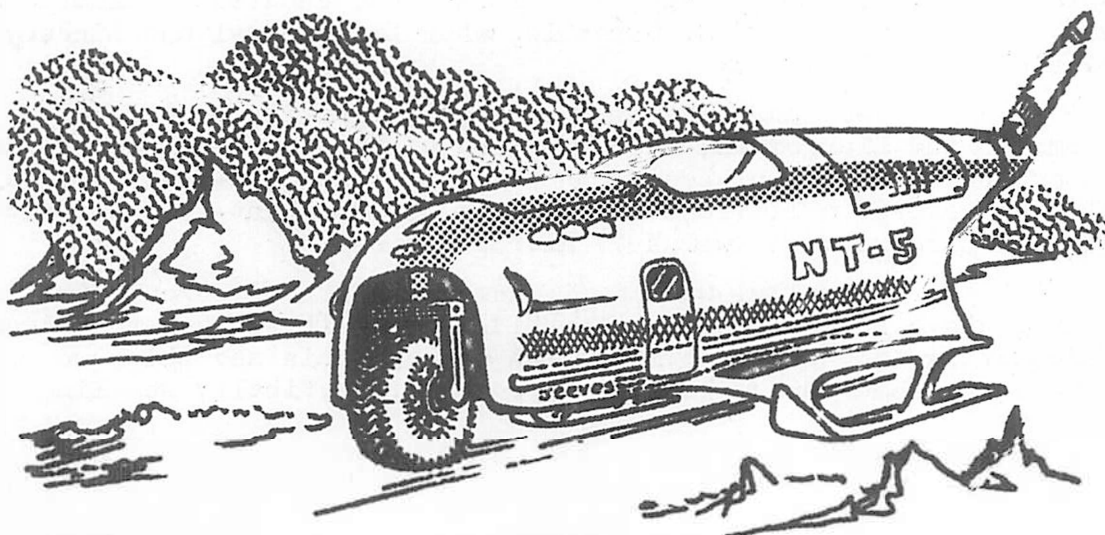
Of recent years, fanzines have taken to printing more and more junk such as this :-

Her breath
Upon the frozen window fell
and turned
into a thousand shimmering frost diamonds
Of priceless worth and value
to none but the beholder

It goes under the name of poetry, which, as most sensible people are well aware, is a pseudonym for hogwash...or, as Sturgeon would call it, 'crud'. By his definition of course, some 95% of everything is crud. Accepting this, then 95% of fan poetry lands smack in this category. He's wrong of course, utterly wrong...the figure should be over 99.9%.

Don't misunderstand me - I'm not saying a faned shouldn't be allowed to print the stuff. Like Disraeli, I disagree with such an editor's views, but support his right to hold them. However, having a right to publish crud, is only one side of the coin; flip the thing over and on the other side is my (and your) right to express my dislike of what he prints...and this of course includes your right to disagree with what I'm saying here (I shall ignore you, but you still have that right)

I dislike the stuff, since it requires little or no skill to produce, says virtually nothing (usually at great length) and evokes in me no sense of emotion, rhythm or indeed any other of the things which



good poetry is supposed to do. Seldom does fanish poetry show signs of onomatopoeia, rhyme, metre or genuine emotion (though it often whines at itself for its own miserable existence in such a hard world). This stuff could well be produced by the two-book-and-next-logical-word method detailed in Astounding/Analog some years ago. At least, the prose achieved by this system seemed to mean something.

Do you remember the story by Andersen (Hans, Not Poul) ? The one called, 'The Emperor's New Clothes'. Everyone claimed to see the non-existent garments to avoid being labelled uncouth, low-brow twits. I rather fancy that this is the reason why many fans are loth to heave the odd brickbat at the contemporary crop of 'poetry'. They are afraid they may be called ignorant for their inability to double-think the sow's rear into a silk purse.

Fortunately, there is a remedy. If YOU dislike this rubbish which creeps like dry-rot through the fanzine world, say so in your LOCs. It won't stop ever outbreak of the disease, but it may discourage much of the stuff...and THAT is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

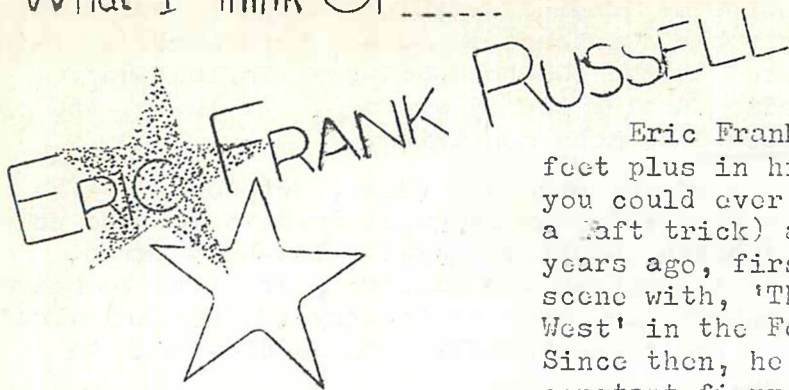
Enough of the soap-box, I really must get down to writing my next sermon in support of censorship..especially of the so-called entertainment media. Stay tuned.

Speaking of paradoxes...many of which have studded the pages of s-f...usually by way of bollixing up the innards of some power-mad giant computer...can anyone in the audience (either of you) enlighten me on this one. I have always been told in book and science class that all objects fall to earth (in a vacuum) at the same speed..be they feather or lead sinker. OK. I also read, that if they are dropped from infinity, they will clang to terra firma at escape velocity (cos that velocity would be needed to get em to infinity in the first place) Likewise, if they dropped to Jupiter, they would impact there at 38 miles per sec. which is Jupiter's escape velocity. Right then, let's replace our feather with Earth, and the lead weight by Jupiter. Set 'em an infinite distance apart, and let go. Jupiter will fall to Earth, and land there at 7 miles per second...while at the same time, Earth falls onto Jupiter at 38 ~~mi~~/sec. Seems there is a fly in the Hungarian goo-slosh somewhere. Do we have a bright reader who can explain to me this thing ? I offer no prizes, but I am genuinely curious. Well, how about it ??????

And at this stage, it seems a good idea to apologise to all those kind people who wrote in or sent fanzines during the last few weeks...thank you..and apologies to many of you if I didn't manage to reply. First off, many LOCs got displaced during my travels, which explains the brevity of this issue's lettercol. Secondly, I TRY to acknowledge all fanzines received, but doing this, answering letters and reading all the review books..not to mention ERG publishing and several other jobs, makes a full response impossible. Nevertheless, I really do enjoy all your letters and zines, so please keep them coming.

Meanwhile, a merry Xmas to all of you,
Terry.

What I Think Of.....



Eric Frank Russell standing six feet plus in his stockinged feet (if you could ever catch him doing such a raft trick) and born around seventy years ago, first burst upon the s-f scene with, 'The Saga Of Pelican West' in the Feb. 37 Astounding. Since then, he has been an almost constant figure in the magazines.

Others may have written better books, made bigger names for themselves, or risen faster on the kudos gained from a single story, but for my money, over the years, E.F.R. has written more consistently and entertainingly than anyone else. A small (very small) handful of stalwarts can match the timespan of his output, but none can equal his fluent style and smooth sophisticated wit. Scorning the 'pratfall' humour of the so-called humourists, Russell has mastered the far more difficult but more satisfying rapier thrust of the double reference, the subtle pun and distortions of straight-faced logic.

Russell was never an ivory-tower recluse of a writer. A 1937 issue of Gilling's 'Scientifiction' quotes him as having worked as, "soldier, telephone operator, quantity surveyor and government draughtsman" (not to mention being a commercial traveller, which probably accounts for his fluent line). On fans, the same issue quotes him as saying, "...these are the guys who write goofy letters". Nevertheless, the majority of fans have always loved him. Over the years, a steady flow of excellent tales has come from his typer, under his own name, and at least two pseudonyms (D.H. Munro and Webster Craig). Of these, 'Sinister Barrier' is undoubtedly his greatest, and, according to the late John W. Campbell, so good that it finally crystallised plans to produce the fantasy man 'Unknown' and took pride of place in the first issue.

Close on 'Pelican', came 'Seeker of Tomorrow' based on a story plot from V.H. Johnson, a part-time S-F dealer. This one hooked me, and since then, Russell has seldom failed to delight me. 'Dreadful Sanctuary', 'Hobbyist', 'Metamorphosite' and many more, the list is long. He even converted a war-time 'shaggy-dog' yarn about a 'shovelwood' into the (admittedly feeble) 'Allamagoosa'.

Never aiming for highly technical science or cut-and-thrust space opera, his target has always been the sheer consistency of a good story line, deftly handled humour and an interesting...even gripping, yarn. I count him as one of the best...and probably the most under-rated...s-f writer of his era. He needs no praise from me, but nevertheless, I count him as one of the shapers of the great pleasure s-f has given me over the years.

Terry Jeeves

Alan Burns,
19 The Crescent,
King's Rd.,
Wallsend on Tyne

Eric Frank Russell is an author who admits of no half measures, you either like him, or you can't tolerate him. Having met him at the Worldcon in London I suggest that a dislike of him would stem from a certain superciliousness in his writing, he's a clever man and knows it. I admit to being an aficionado of his from way back, when he wrote a sort of story in an English SF mag of the thirties concerning a spaceship landing in the Isle of Man with a robot that had the duty to report a Galactic round trip of twenty thousand years to its long-dead masters in Atlantis. It could have been Russell's first acceptance but he really made it once he hit the American market and tailored his style to suit - which is rather a pity, he is much nicer when writing in the vein of English.

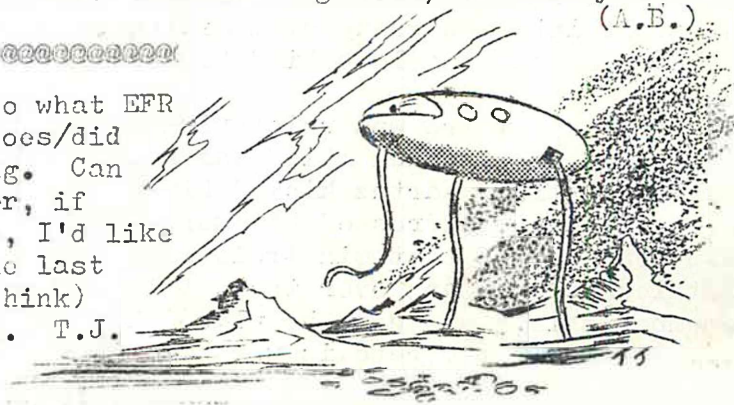
If Russell's writing has a fault it is once again this superciliousness, his aliens are so very stupid. In NEXT OF KIN for instance, a moron would have seen through the mishmash of Eustace and the Willies. This doesn't prevent it being a cracking good story though. Russell is at his best writing about Earthmen on their own, THE GREAT EXPLOSION is a case in point. The section on Gands being a minor classic, the ultimate society, yet so believable.

I'm not much for Russell when he dealt in material for the late lamented UNKNOWN, he is I believe, a professor of maths at Liverpool University and hence he has to have something mathematical to make the best of. His DIABOLOGIC is a case in point, here a spaceman gives as fine a popularisation of logical paradox as you could wish to find. NOW INHALE again falls down on its stupid aliens, although the description of the mathematician as 'one contemplating a problem on the far side of the Galaxy' is a humorous gem, and Russell is humorous. He gives the impression of writing with his tongue very firmly in his cheek, and is, on that account, extremely likable.

I would like to think he has more writing to come, but unless I've missed it little has been heard of him for some time. This though is happening to a lot of the Campbell era stalwarts. Ben Bova has taken Analog on a new course and maybe some of the old hands are waiting to see which way the cat will jump. I'd like to see a new Wade Harper yarn of his battle with the intelligent Venusian germs. His space scouts could roar off on more adventures, and what of the crew of mixed animals men and robots of whom only one story was written, or the redoubtable Jay Score, of MEN MARTIANS AND MACHINES. Get weaving Eric, we miss you.

(A.B.)

Some doubt seems to exist as to what EFR does/did for a living..if he does/did anything apart from s-f writing. Can anyone enlighten me? Moreover, if you have his address available, I'd like to send him a copy of ERG. The last LOC I saw from him was in (I think) Slant...but it's never too late. T.J.



Nartaz rides again

A deep abysmal clinging medium black eldritch gloom hung over the smoky tuna-dung camp fires of Nartaz and his robber band, or Tush as they were called on Gurble IV. For many zerks, he and his men had robbed the rich and with utter impartiality, the poor as well. But now, the aristocratic, simian-like features of the young Lord Branestroke were twisted in the agony of thought. (Readers will remember that Nartaz had been abandoned in a clapped out VW as a baby, then rescued and raised by a group of wandering chimpanzees) The problem was his trusty henchman and Scrabble partner, Booin. The aged villain had been captured by the townsmen of Sturtle when, in a drunken stupor, he had tried to pick pockets in the local nudist colony. With typical peasant frugality, the Sturtlese had set both trial and execution for the chief entertainment on fiesta day.

Nartaz brooded over the fire until his beard sizzled, and not to no avail was it not that he did so..or likewise. Within three days, his flashing brain had produced a plan. Immediately his men swung into action. As the peasants gathered for their simple merry fun, the band of Tush moved in on the deserted homesteads and began rounding up the cattle. By the time the jury had reached their impartial verdict of guilty, the robbers had assembled a sizeable herd and were nudging it along the trail into Sturtle.

In the cobbled square, the local band was tuning up to play Booin's last request. A tear trickled down that villainous visage as the first shaky bars of 'Mammy' ricocheted among the buildings.

It was then that the mighty Nartaz beat on his breast and uttered the full throated hunting call he had learned at his foster-mother's tail..... "Hooo---eecey !" At the signal, the Tush slapped the flanks of the motley collection of cows, calves, oxen and bull weavles. Madly the fear-crazed beasts tore through the narrow streets and burst into the market square. People scattered in all directions before the hooves of the frantically plunging animals as they ploughed full tilt into the group of musicians. In the confusion, Nartaz swept Booin up on the saddle behind him and off they rode on the wide blue Honda.

There was roistering around the tuna-dung fires that night, but one drunken thief was heard to bewail the loss of the rich haul of cattle. Nartaz kicked him gently in the teeth, and in the sudden silence, addressed his men. "Fellow Tush," he began. "Today we have done a deed that minstrels will long tell about in song. But old toothless here moans over the cattle it has cost us....but all of you, remember this," and here he placed his hand on his henchman's shoulder. ...."A herd in the band is worth Booin the Tush"

-----FINITO-----

Terry Jeeves

RECENT READING



THE BEST OF FRANK HERBERT

Edited by Angus Wells
Sidgwick & Jackson 4.40

There are only two authors I would venture to defend against all comers. One is Arthur C. Clarke, the other, Frank Herbert. Herbert knows what good s-f is all about and writes it in taut, no-nonsense prose which holds you from the opening hook, to the closing twist. Here, you get an explanatory introduction by the author followed by a bunch of goodies (including three extracts).

Titles are, Looking For Something; Nightmare Blues, Dragon In The Sea, (ext.), Cease Fire, Egg and Ashes, Mary Celeste Move, Committee Of The Whole, Dune (Ext.), By The Book, The Primitives, The Heaven Makers (Ext.), The Being Machine, and Seed Stock. Every one a top notch bit of s-f which allows me only one complaint - why, oh why couldn't we have had all of Dragon In The Sea by missing out 'Dune'? The latter bores me. That apart, this is a scintillating collection, it may look stiff at the price but not if you compare its worth with the first hardcover you every blew your allowance on. Recommended without strings.

THE BEST OF CLIFFORD D. SIMAK Ed. Angus Wells Sidgwick & Jackson 3.95

Simak has never been a favourite of mine, his Bradbury-esque 'Good Old Days' of creaking chairs and porches acting like a surfeit of strawberries. Happily, this 250 page collection proved a pleasant surprise. Oh, the endless American Indian Summer is there, but also enough other material (including a Simak Introduction) to vary the diet. For the record, you get :- Madness From Mars, Sunspot Purge, The Sitters, A Death In The House, Final Gentleman, Shotgun Cure, Day Of Truce, Small Deer, The Thing In The Stone and The Autumn Land. Strangely enough, no 'City' story here. Instead, a nice bunch of cerebral rather than action-type stories. Simak spins a good yarn, and here, culled from between 1939 and 1971, are ten of 'em.

And with both the above, you get a Gerbish biographical section.

THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND NAMES by A.E. van Vogt Sidgwick & Jackson 3.25

When the planet Mittend suddenly appears in orbit around a 30 light-year-distant star, obnoxious rich play boy Steven Masters is on the expedition which lands there. Almost immediately, a mysterious 'Mother' switches his mind back to an Earth body. Further shifts move him to and from Mittend as his life is repeatedly threatened by the children of 'Mother' who herself seems to be a gestalt personality from a Grecian leap into space some 4,000 years ago.

Unlike so many recent re-worked oldies from

van Vogt, this is (to me at least) a brand-new novel. Better still, it has all the old fire and web-weaving, but none of the mind-bogling introspection normally indulged in by his characters. Steve Masters is obnoxious, repeatedly so, but somehow van Vogt sustains your interest in him throughout. I hope this one foretells a return of the old master who enchanted us with 'Black Destroyer', 'The Monster' and many others.

THE RINGS OF TANTALUS

Richard Avery

CORONET 40p

Second in the 'Expendables' series where the team of social misfits (three of the old ones, plus four new) are sent to investigate Tantalus and a mysterious group of rings on its surface. One of the seven is a saboteur, thus adding another dimension to the mystery. Add to this, their encounter with a derelict star-ship in orbit round the planet, and an attack on their base camp by simian-like robots. After some hectic action, bloodshed and mayhem, the saboteur is caught and Tantalus tamed. All good clean escapist fun. A friend assures me that Richard Avery is really Edmund Cooper, so maybe you'd like to compare styles and form your own conclusions.

NOVA 3

Edited by Harry Harrison

SPHERE 55p.

Another great collection in the Nova series. Thirteen assorted yarns from Sheekley, Aldiss, Reynolds, Spinrad, Farmer et al. Not only is there something for everyone, but much more unusual, no padding make-weights to boil the blood. I enjoyed this one but for some reason, it lacked the magic of its two predecessors. Good though.

NEW LIFE FOR OLD

Laurence James

SPHERE 50p.

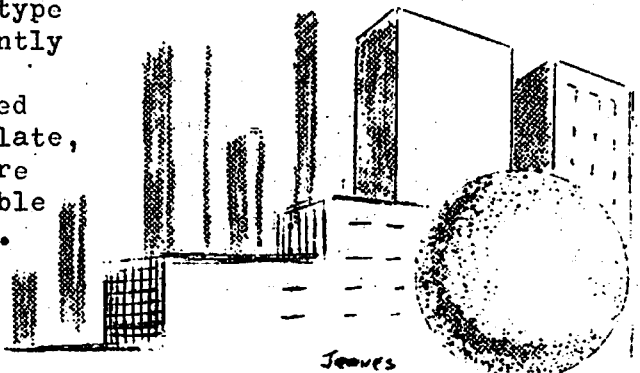
This is the kind of s-f mother used to warn you about...a fifth helping of Simon Rack and his uncouth henchman Bogart. Detailed to escort a secret-carrying scientist on his way to enter deep-freeze on the satellite 'Paradise', not only do they fail to prevent his murder, but spend the rest of the wordage in bedding suspects in an inept search for the stolen secret. Bogart is badly raped (!!!) by a runaway sex-machine before it winds to an end.

MULTIFACE

Mark Adlard

Sidgwick & Jackson 03.50

This is Adlard's third novel to be set in the 22nd. Century megapolis where every second or third item is made from the ubiquitous 'Stahlex'. This time, we see the effects on a handful of people as the new 'business', 'work' and other ideas are introduced to offset the boredom of city life. Individual lifelines gradually intertwine - and in so doing, throw more light on each other, and on the problems inherent in such a society. This isn't 'story' type s-f, but the author writes both fluently and convincingly on and around his characters, that interest is sustained throughout. For those who came in late, the two earlier 'Stahlex' volumes were INTERFACE and VOLTEFACE, both available under the Sidgwick & Jackson imprint.



Seaves

NEW WRITINGS IN S-F 26

Edited by Ken Bulmer Sidgwick & Jackson £3.50

The appearance of another 'New Writings' has always been a pleasurable experience, but sadly, this edition fails to maintain the excellence of the previous 25. It isn't easy to finger the fault, but the fault probably lies in my personal taste running to 'main-line' tales from Heinlein, Clarke etc. This particular volume appears to devote its nine tales to 'speculative' rather than 'science', fiction. All the pretty words are here - from Priest, Aldiss and others, but precious little in the way of plot or story. However, if you like the modern trend in rambling word pictures which start nowhere and end up in the same place, this volume may be what you are looking for. To be fair, Brian Aldiss has three lovely parts of stories, each of which deserves to be extended into a full story.

FADE OUT

by Patrick Tilley.

Hodder & Stoughton £4.50

A new author to the s-f field sets the action in the immediate future with an authenticity which has an inherently chilling sense of reality. The Cold War nearly erupts when all radar screens black out for 20 minutes as an alien object (quickly dubbed 'Crusoe') first orbits, then lands on earth. A taut first-contact situation arises as all electrical devices pack up, and a strange, spider-like machine emerges. Tension mounts when an entrance is made into Crusoe - and the first man in, refuses to come out again! Five other objects are discovered around the earth and a race develops to A-bomb Crusoe before the power blackout covers the world. This is one of the most gripping bit of real-life s-f I have had the good fortune to encounter since Frank Herbert's superb 'Under Pressure'. Tilley has fully researched his ground, and if this one doesn't harvest a bushel of Awards, it will be because the fairy-tale lovers have outvoted the real s-f buffs. Very highly recommended!

TWO EYES

by Stuart Gordon

Sidgwick & Jackson £3.25

Sequel to 'One Eye', this powerful yarn has various opposing forces (not too clearly outlined) moving people as pawns in a deeply patterned clash of powers, overt and hidden. The scene is the far future on an earth whose orbit has been changed by some great holocaust. The Cyclone brotherhood is working on a great Project to combine major forces in opposition to the evil powers of The Mutant and the mirror-dwelling Hu'ons. Initially, the surfeit of strange, esoteric names makes for difficult reading, but the reader is soon gripped by Gordon's sheer word power and imagery as he depicts the hierarchy of the Feather Society, the Conceptuals, Uniques and others who form this strange tapestry. This is as far beyond plain Sword and Sorcery as you can hope to get. The touch is deft, mighty-thewed heroes non-existent, but the type of writing here is (if you accept it as s-f) the kind which will qualify the genre as 'literature'. I enjoyed it immensely..you may hate it. Either way, one thing is for sure, Gordon can write, and his work is far more cult-worthy than any silly little group of hobbits.

CONAN THE BUCKANEER

BY L.Sprague de Camp & Lin Carter.

SPHERE 40p

Conan pursues the villainous Zaronó who has stolen his treasure map (and also kidnapped a beautiful princess) Zaronó gets half the treasure but the girl escapes and along with Conan, she is taken prisoner by a tribe of Amazons. Plenty of magic and the usual surfeit of oaths, taverns, wine and a rather kinky nude whipping scene. However, Conan comes out on top after a bout with a carnivorous tree. Conan lovers will snap it up, but otherwise...ho hum.

STAR-BEGOTTEN

by H.G.Wells

SPHERE 40p

In this 1937 vintage story, writer Joseph Davis hears of cosmic ray mutation and hares off in pursuit of the Martians he is convinced are doing their best to mutate the human race into a more peaceful species. Wells uses this as yet another of his springboards to leap into further speculation on the foibles, failings and gloomy future of humanity. Otherwise, little else happens in the 127 pages, and aptly fits the old crack, "He sold his birthright for a pot of message".

DORSAI

by Gordon R. Dickson

SPHERE 50p

The Dorsai are the military race, and on completing his training, Donal Grane sets out to be the greatest of them all. His destiny twines with that of the beautiful Anea, Select of Kultis but conflicts with that of the evil William. Graeme advances rapidly by virtue of his intuitive ability which brings repeated (if oversimplified) military successes. Eventually, this ability matures into supernormal powers when he unifies a fragmented humanity. Third in the Dorsai trilogy, and apart from some Vogt-ian leaps of logic, a well-developed and attention-gripping yarn. Also available are :- 'TACTICS OF MISTAKE' and 'SOLDIER ASK NOT' 60p each.

PLANET OF THE BLIND

by Laurence James

SPHERE 40p

Fourth in the 'Simon Rack' series, it opens with a hectic sex (perversion type) sequence in which the final girl in a group of six is captured by the sadistic Magus. Rack and his henchman Bogert pursue hither and yon through time as one by one, Magus does nasty things to the girls (well where would YOU hide a bomb in a naked girl ?) I didn't spot the title's origin...unless Magus or Rack are meant to be kings. No careful plotting here in what was almost a space-age version of 'No Orchids For Miss Blandish'. Nevertheless, a well-paced, smoothly written though somewhat shallow piece of hero fiction.

THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT SAVES THE WORLD.

Harry Harrison

SPHERE 45p.

Best quality wallpaper covers the cracks in this Slippery Jim di Griz adventure. Our hero wreaks havoc up and down the time lines in pursuit of the arch villain He. The lightweight and overused (see the above Conan and Rack) plot is more than counterbalanced in this case by the high speed and flowing action which Harry turns out so well. Some nice touches of humour here, maybe not up to the first 'Rat' tale, but still a lively romp.

Sadly...All the above lack cover credits, so... DORSAI is good, but a bit crowded. 'Planet' (looks like a Jones) and is well executed, the others tend to be garish. Why can't publishers tell us who did the things ??? I'd rather know the artist than the fact that the type is Monotype Baskerville.

THE WRONG END OF TIME

by John Brunner

Sidgwick & Jackson £3.25

America has become a paranoid society hiding behind a fantastic barrier of nuclear defences. When the Russians contract C-T life near Pluto and decode a threat to trigger the U.S. nuclear holocaust, they infiltrate an agent into the States to try to avert the disaster (Yes, good Russians !). Sheklov (whose entry was only made possible, unbeknown to him, by a young clairvoyant) takes up his prepared cover, but security begin to move in and as the web tightens, Sheklov contacts the clairvoyant and the alien problem is solved (and shelved).

Brunner never writes a weak story, and this is well up to his best. The violence, decadence and sheer population pressures are well evoked in a high-tension tale. To me, the only weakness being the too simple (and obvious) ending. Highly readable and hard to put down.

THE WITCH AND THE PRIEST

by Hilda Lewis

Sphere 70p

The 29th in the Dennis Wheatley, 'Library of The Occult' It tells the story of a woman accused of witchcraft and who dies of heart-failure. She mates with the Devil and bears two daughters. Her ghost appears to the priest with the sad story, and he works to free her from Limbo. Well written in the heavy period style, this is one of those things you love or hate - not my cup of tea, but it may well be yours.

EARTHWRECK

by Thomas N. Scortia

Coronet 45p

When nuclear war devastates Earth, the only surviving humans are the crews of the American and Russian satellites, with the latter having a near monopoly of the women. A combined operation to rehabilitate Earth is proposed; this is to start in an isolated (moon colony) dome. Complications arise and an even more way-out plan adopted. Inter-party tensions rise and hostilities surface. Taut, hard-core s-f, being only just far enough in the future to merit the label and still retain the chilling edge of, 'It could happen tomorrow'.

THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN

by John Boyd

Pan 60p

Adams and O'Hara, two hell-raising Space Scouts embark on a two-year mission, but Adams is back early, and alone! The subsequent interrogation flashes back to their stay on the planet Harlech (Heaven), a planet populated by innocent, uninhibited and highly advanced humanoids (which makes for much off-stage sex). The Scouts immediately become University lecturers and introduce clothing, false modesty, drama, violence and murder together with a large slice of religion. This all leads to an unplanned (and rather feeble) finale in a yarn which flirts with sex hints, but fails to live up to its promise..or to Boyd's earlier, 'Pollinators of Eden'

OTHER TITLES from SPHERE

No review copies received

UP THE LINE by Robert Silverberg. The story of Time Courier Judson Elliott (if you seduce an ancestor....paradox)
DEATH BY ENCHANTMENT by Julian Franklin. Factual examination of witchcraft, ancient and modern.

OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN

by C.D. Simak

Sidgwick & Jackson £3.25

Time tunnels open all over the world and from 300 years in the future, some two billion people start to pour through as they flee from bestial space-invaders. Then some of the invaders follow through and begin to breed. Things look even blacker when it is discovered that the aliens have assimilated the ability to travel in time. Fortunately, this proves a blessing in disguise. Sorry, but this is pretty poor Simak, it never rings true, plods along, and the intelligent aliens never appear other than animals. As for the refugees...well they wouldn't have rung true, even in the thirties.

THE SECRET GALACTICS

by A.E. vanVogt

Sidgwick & Jackson £3.25

With van Vogt, you can never be sure if the 'new' story isn't an oldie lurking behind fresh wallpaper. This one seems to be really new. Earth has been infiltrated by Deeans (bad) Luinds (good) and Steelees (who must fit in somewhere). All these invaders are fully human, as they all possess the power to alter genes in the embryo, and thus grow up as any species they choose. Where they all come from isn't clear, but the Deeans have a space ship arriving, and plan to take over Earth. The Luinds are mildly interested, and wandering around here and there is the main character Carl, who is dead. Relax, his brain has been put in a six-wheeled box with hydraulic motors. Having discovered sex, vV lobs it in with all the delicacy of a steam shovel as his cardboard and balsa wood characters wander through a labyrinthine non-plot. It grieves me to say, it but whoever selects S & J's s-f has done their good name a dis-service with these two books.

EXTRO

by Alfred Bester

Eyre Methuen £2.95

Originally appearing in Analog as 'The Indian Giver' this scintillating helping of s-f concerns a small group of immortals, each of whom got that way by having undergone an excruciatingly painful near-death. Guig, (Grand Guignol) the narrator plans to recruit the big-name scientist Sequoya by exposing him to a ghastly accident, but is forestalled by a real calamity. Sequoya then gets involved with taking over Extro, the super computer. Suddenly, the immortals are fighting for their lives, and Bester has come up with another superbly constructed yarn. His characters are delicious, the futuristic idiom, nicely handled and the only weak point is the cover by Peter Tybus. This was good as an Analog piece, now, in one parcel, it is even better.



-o-o-o-o-a-

SELECTIONS from your LETTERS

with
ERGitorial interjections
marked thus
//.....//



Alan Hunter

4 Cranleigh Gdns.
Southbourne
Bournemouth

"The WHAT I THINK of series is coming along fine and I find it most interesting and informative. I have no time for serious reading these days, but I do like to try to keep up with developments, and series such as this help a lot. The same applies to the RECENT READING dept. Yes, I do think the addition of colour to the inside pages makes a great improvement. The multi-colour cover was a welcome change, but the overall effect was somewhat pale. May I stick my neck out by suggesting that you could overprint in black from a hand-cut stencil. Printing in register is, I know, a problem but you could choose a design with a dark background such as a space scene, where any overflow is not too apparent...., now you can tell me the technical reasons why it can't be done. (((It CAN be done, and WAS done on ERG.3, 5,9, 17,29 and several others...agreed, the all Banda cover was pale - the organist was anaemic)))

Graham Poole,
23 Russet Rd
Cheltenham.
Glos.

"You know, I'm beginning to reckon that for what you attempt to do, you do very well. All fanzines can't be light in-group humour, nor convoluted perambulating sercon essays on how many times Isaac Asimov has blown his nose. There has to be something in the middle that gets the message over quickly and simply. For someone new to s-f or who has not other access to s-f news, ERG is invaluable for its book comments and the recent articles you've been running on s-f authors. But having said all this, I feel that good though it is, it doesn't go far enough; everything is too brief and ephemeral although the reason is obvious - cost (((..and time, I only have one life to give to all my interests. As to doing what I attempt to do, that puzzles me, as all I attempt to do is put out the kind of fanzine I like...but thanks anyway))) I found the Rob Jackson article interesting, however he failed to mention that paper plates could be used (((For photo-lith, NOT picnics))) These have to be typed using a carbon ribbon, but the plates cost only four or five pence each and there is no need for a photograph to be taken and a metal plate (which alone costs three quid) made. This means of course you have to do a lot of draughting first on ordinary paper, but I do that first anyway. The biggest bugbear, and I'd be

grateful for hints round it, is the problem of having illustrations printed using this process (((If you can draw yourself, I believe it is possible to get a special pencil for drawing on the masters. I think it is called a lithographic pencil..you might check))) If you're continuing the fanzine production column Terry, I'd be grateful if you could publish the above in answer to Rob's article. (Series continues...and above duly published. Many thanks for writing in with a response)))

Alan Burns
19 The Crescent,
King's Rd.
Wallsend on Tyne

"Many thanks for ERG, with my usual complaint that I don't like colour in fanzines. I know you're a natural born martyr of a faned, but don't you think it is enough trouble assembling the zine without doing the same to the dupe.

No wonder the belt is wearing through. (((Anyone have access to a silk-screen carrying belt for a Gestetner 230T ???)) Photo offset by Rob Jackson horrified me. I used to think I was badly done by if my own Northlight cost more than a fiver for production, but \$45 ye gods, someone has money to burn alright. (((Remember, paper is over a quid a ream, and postage is going up AGAIN))) Anyway, good as it may be, it seems like an awful lot of trouble, and a typewriter with adjustable spacing, Hm, must investigate. (((Ask about an IBM Selectric, that also has variable typfaces...but even a second-hand one could run you over \$200))) Anyway, a good zine but for the colour (((Fancy having a colour prejudice about poor old ERG)))

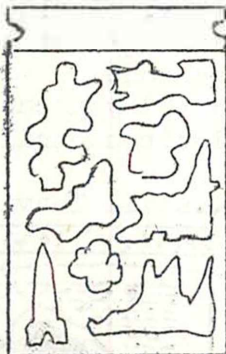
Keith Freeman,
128 Fairford Rd.,
Tilehurst,
Reading RG3 6QP

"I see from the Ergitorial that I've got to mention the colour work, well, if you insist...I like it - but whether my appreciation is sufficient to warrant the trouble is only something you can decide. Don't you think your views on book covers (that there can be BAD ones) conflicts with your views on book contents (that even if you don't like 'em, the author has spent time and trouble on the story so you don't like to pan it) ?? (((Yes, it does...but can I help it if I'm inconsistent ? ..however, see the reviews this time for two BAD books))). Strange as it may seem, I've no quibbles with Alan Burns' cogently thought out article. Any 'fact' in a story that makes me cringe spoils the story for me immediately. I'll accept ONE false premise if the story requires it...but in some stories where 'little' facts keep jabring me...ugh ! How do you manage to get so much reading done,.. let alone reading and 'commenting' (((I have a split personality))) Rob Jackson is very clear on photo-offset production. As a personal opinion I think there's room for photo-offset pages in an otherwise duplicated fanzine... photos, certain fine art work etc., but I'm not really convinced that where straightforward typed copy is concerned there's anything to beat duplicating (((Have a lollipop, you are a good man)))...that's taking the economic facts as well as 'appearance', feel of paper etc. "

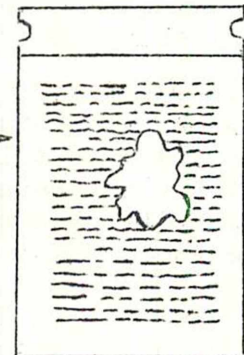
PATCHING IN

As the name implies, this is the addition of an insert (usually an illustration on a piece of electronic stencil) into the typescript of an ordinary stencil. The whole point of such an exercise is economy, and a digression at this point seems in order. One or two people are under the impression that I (and a few others) see a virtue in hand-cut stencils, as distinct from electronic reproductions. Moreover, it is often suggested that there is not so great a difference in cost. Removing the suet pudding from the eyes and ears of such cloud-dwellers is useless, but for the rest of you, here it is on the line. A hand-cut stencil (especially if done by such a master as Jim Cawthorn) IS a work of art in itself, it may even approach the quality of a good electrostencil (Cawthorn's work can often surpass the quality of the average artist who is fortunate to be used by a richer fanced) ...BUT...I am the first to admit that other things being equal, it is easier for the artist to use pen and ink than a stylus, it is easier to have that drawing electrostencilled and the resulting reproduction is the best you can get on an ordinary duper. However...and there is a very big 'however'...it costs. Currently, around £1.20 for a vinyl based electro. The recent four-page plus a cover spread devoted to Cawthorn in Triode would cost around £6 on electro....and about 50p when hand-cut on ordinary stencils. Does that clarify why (especially with rising paper and postal costs) I cling to the older..cheaper..method ?

Nevertheless, the above two views represent the extremes. It IS possible to use electros, and economise. First off, paper-based electros are available. I haven't used these, so can't speak as to their quality, but I believe the cost may be as low as 40p each. Still four to five times as much as a plain stencil, but more practical....and then we can cut that cost even further if we accept some time and effort, by 'patching in' Instead of paying (say) £1.20 for an electro page of type and illo, as in the illustration



it is a much better proposition to assemble half a dozen illos on to one foolscap-sized sheet of drawing paper and have one electro made, which by pathing, can be used to supply artwork for six pages of print. Whatever the size of your fanzine, you can make this 'paste-up' to the foolscap or

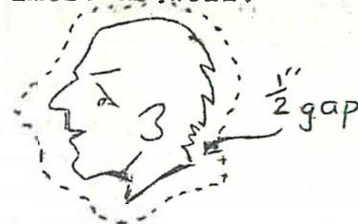


full stencil size, as in use, you will be cutting out the separate illos. In essence, you are making one electrostencil do the work of half-a-dozen. It is this method which the pudding heads probably have in mind when setting up their straw men. Taken stepwise, the technique is as follows :-

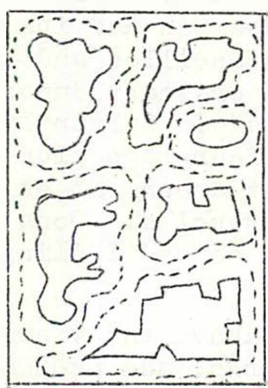
1. Prepare the illustrations for a 'paste-up' collage. For best reproduction they should have been drawn on white paper in black Indian ink, although felt pen will reproduce almost as well. Cut the excess paper of each illustration to within about $\frac{1}{2}$ " all round. Until you master the technique, you may find it



easier to cut each illustration out in a rectangle, as this makes it easier to patch it in. However, this will reduce the number of illos you can squeeze onto one electro. Either way, the $\frac{1}{2}$ " minimum space around still applies.



2. Lay the cut-outs on to a master sheet of foolscap sized (13"x8") sheet of white drawing paper and shuffle them around until you

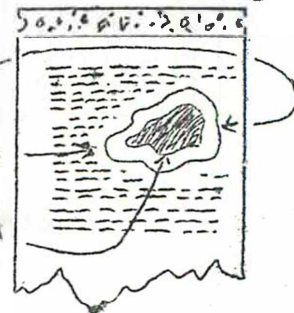


have them laid out with the maximum number on the sheet (you can have em upside down or on their sides if you wish). This is not meant to be an artistic layout, so ignore balance and aesthetic effect. On the other hand, do try to keep illos of similar colour weight on one sheet. This means if Phred uses heavy blacks, and Jophan, fancies thin spidery illos, Make a master of Phred's illos and another for Jophan, rather than mix them higgledy-piggledy. The reason for this is simply that the electro machine is set to respond best to one particular tonal density, and may either overexpose one or

underprint the other, if the contrast is too great. When satisfied with the layout (and don't let any cut edges overlap), stick down each illo. Paste, or almost any adhesive will do, but I prefer artist's 'Cow Gum' as it is clean, easily removed from unwanted surfaces when dry (just rub it) and illos may be removed again when finished if so desired.

3. Take the master sheet to your electrostencil dealer, (Don't fold it, or the crease may print as a line across the illos). It is a good idea to tell him that he needn't waste time 'dodging' out the faint line around each drawing by the cut edge of each one. (a) He'll probably charge extra for the service, and (b) you can use these faint lines as guides on cutting up the electrostencil

4. Cut out each illo from the electro, as you need it...still leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ " margin around the drawing. Lay the cut-out in place on an ordinary typing stencil and lightly pencil around its outline using a 2B or softer pencil. Set the illo aside and type up the Ms, keeping $\frac{1}{4}$ " outside the pencil line. (It is best to type before patching to reduce strain on the patch). Next, cut out the illo area keeping $\frac{1}{4}$ " inside the pencil line. A razor blade or Stanley knife is good for this, and you are now left with a $\frac{1}{2}$ " margin for error.



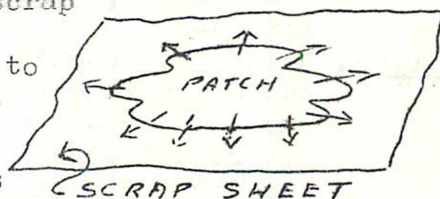
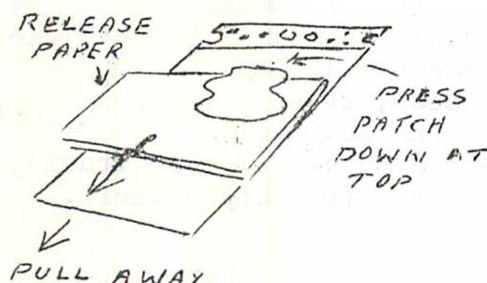
5. Scrape lightly (with penknife or stylus) the edges of hole and the cut-out illo. This removes some wax, and allows for better adhesion. Keep the scraping inside the pencil mark on the typed stencil, and within $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the edge on the electro.. Now, run a thin film of an impact adhesive such as 'Evostik' around the two areas to be patched together. (It helps to lay a sheet of scrap paper under the stencil hole to prevent the stencil being accidentally stuck to its backing sheet.) After 10 minutes, carefully lay a sheet of tracing paper on the stencil, lay the electro on top of this and slide to correct position, then holding electro in place, carefully pull out the tracing paper and press the two impacted adhesived surfaces firmly together. As a final step, its is a good plan to corfu the seam to both strengthn and seal it.

All this sounds tedious and complicated. It IS a bit tedious, but is actually a quite simple job if care is taken. Like everything else, practice makes the job come easy.

POINTS TO NOTE

(i) Vinyl electrostencils can disssolve or crinkle under the action of Evostik, so use it sparingly. A good plan is to lay the patch face down on a sheet of scrap paper and lightly 'brush' the Evostike radially outwards. Then move the electro to another scrap sheet for 10 minutes drying.

(ii) An excellent non-adhesive paper for working on for all messy adhesive jobs, is the backing paper from such materials as 'Contact' and 'Fablon'. NOTHING seems to stick to it, and it is particularly useful folded into a double



sheet with the non-stick back to the outside. When positioning illos, let the electro patch overlap by a fraction and mode the sheets until illo is in position. Press down, and then move out the release paper a bit at a time, pressing down the illo as you go

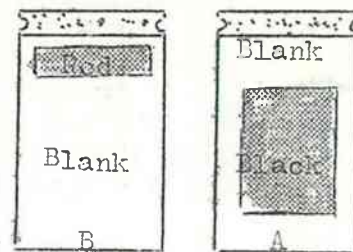
(iii) By this method, it is possible to use electros almost as cheaply as hand-cut art....but as can be seen, the work ontailed can be as tedious and messy as doin a hand-cut job, and since hand-cutting IS creative, I generally find it more pleasing to do. For those who cannot cut their own stencils however, then 'patching in' is the answer where funds are limited.

(iv) For multicolour work, you patch the stencil as above, but omit the typing step. Then run the colour illo on a blank sheet and when all colour illos are done, change colours and run through using a normally typed stencil with an area left for the coloured illo. (v) Remember to remove backing paper from electro before applying adhesive.

TOPPING & TAILING

Stencils cost money, and 'Topping and Tailing' is simply an economy measure designed to let one stencil do the work of two or even three, when doing colour work.

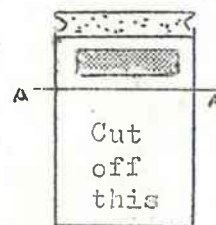
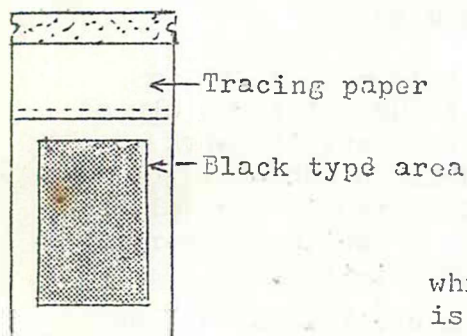
Normally, when running a two colour page with (say) a red heading to black typescript, two stencils are needed. Stencil A is typed up leaving blank the area to be filled with colour. Stencil B is then prepared with the material which is to be run in red. All black pages are run off, and after suitable colour changing, all the red stencils. In the case of the page mentioned above, this requires two stencils...and if a third colour is needed at the bottom of the page, then a third stencil is needed. Economy-minded people can do the three colours using ONE stencil if they save a few old 'heads' from used stencils.



Step 1 Cut RED HEADING at top of a stencil and using a sharp knife, cut off lower part of stencil at line A-A

Step 2. Using the patching and Evistik method, replace cut off part with a piece of tracing or grease-proof paper - (or even a sheet of carbon backing paper, allowing a $\frac{1}{4}$ " overlap for adhesive. Corful the joint for strength and leakage prevention.

Step 3. Take an old stencil 'head', attach to it, a spot of tracing paper large enough to cover the RED area on stencil 1., then to the bottom of this, stick the spare bit of stencil cut from stencil number 1. This stencil is then typed in the normal way and the two sections can now do the work of two full stencils. Likewise, if a bottom-of-the-page third colour is needed, this section can be cut off stencil 2 and by use of more tracing paper, you can get a three colour page from one stencil.



This method is not limited to horizontal cuts. Verticals or diagonals are also possible. The method is exactly the same, only the matching up of edges and type to illo can be more tricky.

Again, if you wish to use an electro which goes right across the page, this method is easier than cutting out a complete hole and patching an illo into it.

