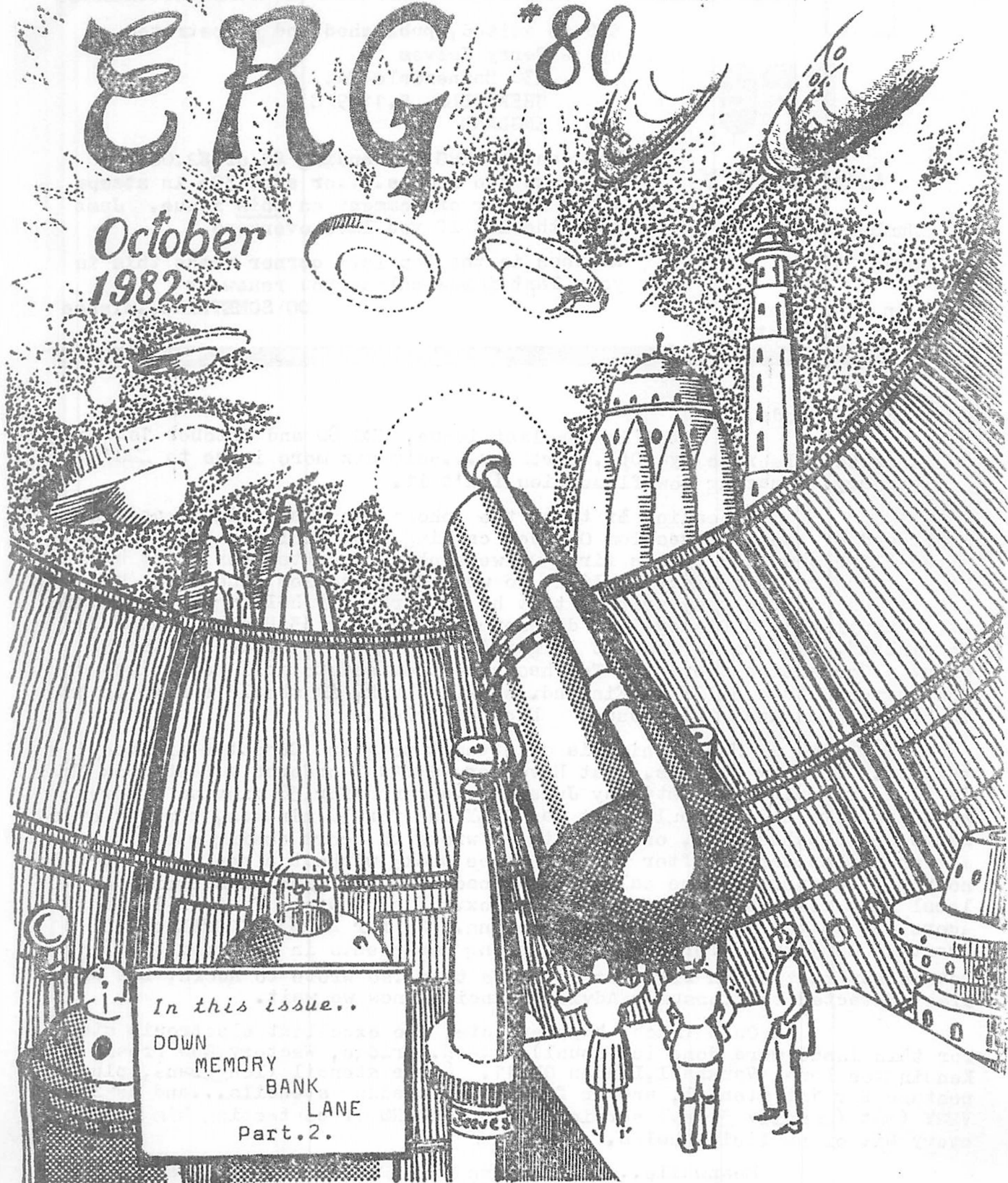


ERG #80

October
1982



Cover drawing based on the cover of **SCOOPS**



ERG

QUARTERLY

Number 80

OCTOBER 1982

Now in its 24th
year of publication

ERG is edited, published and perpetrated
by :- Terry Jeeves
230 Bannerdale Rd.,
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ENGLAND

You can get ERG by sending £1 or \$2.00 for
the next two issues....or send 30p in stamps
and a letter of comment on this issue. Just
send the LOC if you live overseas.

A cross in the top left corner means this is
your last issue unless you renew or
DO SOMETHING..please

Greetings ERGbods,

As noted in the last issue, ERG 80 and October 1st come
together to celebrate my 60th. birthday...only six more issue to ERG's 25th.
Anniversary. Amazing how flime ties isn't it.

Speaking of time, the 'phone rang last night, and on the
other end of the line was Tom Olander calling from Finland..and thanks to a
'free' line supplied by his firm, we were able to natter for about half an
hour..(Tom speaks perfect English, so we had no problem there). Among his
news items was the tasy snippet that he is currently helping on the making
of 'H appyland', a Disney-like development covering 33 Hectares near Turgo
in Finland. Thanks to Tom, it is gaining a strong SF influence..so how
about a Convention there ? Tom has also promised to mail me a piece on
the current state of SF in Finland..so with luck, it should arrive in time
to be squeezed into this issue. Nice one, Tom.

Not so nice is my attempt to gain 'Computer Literacy' via
the BBC. For new readers..Last Novemner (1981) I ordered a Beeblebox Mk.B.
It finally arrived on Saturday June 5th..and ran for 30 minutes before
revealing its hidden fault...it can ONLY run for 30 minutes, then it over-
heats and crashes. So, on June 6th, I wrote to Acorn asking where to send
it for replacement...after waiting three weeks without a reply..and getting
no reply to sundry phone calls...I unloaded the machine on Datron, the
local firm responsible for the Beeblebox. I also wrote further letters to
Acorn and to the BBC centre in Kettering. So far ZERO RESPONSE on all
fronts. Stay tuned for further gripping non-events in this series. 'July 12,
Datron say that Acorn will not reply to them..so wrote to Acorn, BBC and
also contacted the Consumer Advice Council...now we wait.

On a (much) happier note, the excellent electronic stencils
for this issue were done (as usual) by:- H. Bridge, Rectory Row Press, 363
Kennington Lane, Vauxhall, London SE.11. 82p a stencil (long run), plus 17p
postage for 1st stencil, and 5p for all succeeding stencils...and he runs a
VERY fast (usually 3 day) service. Mention ERG if contacting him will you,
every bit of publicity helps.

Meanwhile..on to duping Eric Bentcliffe's 52 page helping
of nostalgia...buy one at Novacon..or from Eric at 17 Riverside Cres. Ches.
CW4 7NR.

Bestest, Terry.

EDITORIAL

3

SCHOOL FOR SURVIVAL

=====



As a parent and former teacher I have often heard the plaintive cry, "What on Earth are they teaching in schools these days?" Perhaps the wail came from a worried mother bemoaning the fact that her daughter had announced her ability to make a Moebius strip..thus causing a panic in the breast of a mum afraid that her offspring may end up as an ecdysiast in a burlesque show.

Sometimes, the cri-du-coeur is sparked when a school leaver is rejected by one of those employers demanding triple A levels in advanced thaumaturgy before hiring someone to push a formidable array of buttons on a computer-controlled cash-register. Sooner or later comes the mournful.."Where will it all end?"..and, "Why don't they teach 'em something useful?"

If my own recent experiences are any guide, it will end with a lunge-covered mass of citizenry, broken-nailed, sans teeth, and slowly starving to death amidst plenty. Why? Well, because of the greater and greater demands which modern technology is making on the gentle art of survival.

In my younger days, it was possible to relax in the one-and-nines, watching Clark Gable do his stuff on a real (big) screen, whilst I munched quietly away on endless goodies. Prior to entering the dream -alace my wants had been attended to by the local shopkeeper. Fragments of this, chunks of that, and goodly dollops of the other, had all been weighed out in a totally unwrapped state and dumped higgledy-piggledy into one small white paper bag. Once in the cinema, only the faintest of rustles marked their passage from lap to lips.

Nowadays, I needs must have my finger nails and remaining teeth specially sharpened in order to break through that first line of defence, the ubiquitous plastic bag. Crackles, creaks, faint swear words and less faint howls of agony; even the gentle tinkle of broken teeth accompany the storming of that bastion. Moreover, the surrounding hisses of disapproval tend to give me an inferiority complex.

Once within the outer bailey of the bag, the battles is not yet won. Each individual morsel of high-priced and plastic-tasting mush is separately gift-wrapped in a further line of plastic armour which must be picked, scraped and chivvied away..or swallowed in resigned agony. After a brief, glorious moment of respite, I'm faced with tackling the next bit. By this time, I no longer worry about disturbing those in neighbouring seats. They too are engaged in similar skirmishes so that sounds of battle totally drown out those coming from the screen. Heck, the show costs enough..I often wonder why I add to the agony by lashing out on highly priced wrapping materials.

There is little doubt about it, the next generation will need combat training in the schools if they are to survive in an environment which hides its comestibles behind a Maginot line of protection.

Nor is the cinema the only battle front. Have you tried to open a packet of potato crisps lately? These synthetically flavoured bits of dessicated dust no longer come complete with their own little blue bag of salt. Everything (bar the taste) has been added in the factory. Everything that is, except for an easy way to get at the contents. Finger nails aren't up to the task. Adults reared on a childhood of telephone-directory tearing may summon mighty forces to rip apart the container..at the peril of showering fragmented crisps over everyone within the blast area. Lesser mortals such as myself must descend to the ignominy of worrying the corner of the bag between the front teeth, much as a terrier with a rat. I don't know how you go on, but even this way, I still manage to spray pieces all around...but the fall-out area is reduced a bit.

It is only a matter of time before the back-room boffins come up with the ultimate plastic. So tough, we frail, unarmed humans cannot hope to overcome its resistance. Even now, when walking through the local supermarket, I find shelves jammed with items impregnable behind shrunken plastic covers. In addition to making half an ounce of potted beef hulk like a cocooned buffalo, this sort of wrapping can withstand fingers, nails, teeth, stiletto heels and a direct hit by an atomic bomb. Just how can we expect our children to overcome such defences and avoid starvation? I fancy the current increase in beard growing is brought about by the inability to get at plastic-wrapped razor blades.

Modern plastic warfare makes other demands on society. My innocent morning coffee in a cafe now threatens body, clothing and sanity. As an experienced elevenser I have long since learned how to master the plastic-wrapped chocolate biscuit (Hammer it flat, chew off the corner and pour the crumbs down your throat), but a new threat has me worried. The milk (or cream when I'm in a 'hang-the-weight' mood) is now hidden safely within a small, highly squashable plastic shell. Try as I might, when the cap finally succumbs to my onslaught, it pops away to release a shower of sticky goo which flies in a randomly programmed manner over those within the blast zone. Now if this happens fractionally before a neighbour has sprayed a burst of powdered potato crisps, the result is utter chaos.

Plastic is not the only offender. In my Walter Mitty dreams, I lead a supermarket manager around by the nose. We pause here and there for him to show me how easy it is to "Press cap up gently to remove" when dealing with jam, pickles and a horde of other inedibles whose lids have been tightened by a maniac with a monkey wrench.

In between struggling with immovable lids and unscrewable stoppers, I torment my captice manager with those cardboard packs which (in theory) may be opened by gentle pressure on a perforated panel. No way! Whenever I try it, the container may crumple, but it keeps its contents inviolate with equal impartiality against destructive vandal or would-be consumer. Oh I triumph eventually..usually by giving an abandoned shriek, seizing a meat cleaver and breaking all Geneva Convention Rules, I tackle to offending packet on the kitchen floor.

Sardine tins have long been regarded by the trade as the ultimate in contents protection against a hungry public. I normally sling away the collapsible opener on the tin, and use a burglar's crow-bar.



However, modern protective techniques threaten to supplant the sardine tin. One-piece plastic bottle cap seals require the grip of a Hercules to free them. In the pipeline are stronger tin-plated steels which are guaranteed to defy even those unusual can-openers which have survived their built-in 'three can obsolescence' period.

Computer-coded labels make it virtually impossible for me to discover how much I must pay for something I can't get at. Only last week during the employee-loafing period now called 'staff-training', I witnessed assistants being shown how to locate the price tags directly over the instructions for cooking or operating the item. Moreover, such instructions are inevitably printed in miniscule type on the most unlikely part of the pre-stressed concrete of the container.

If Tomorrow's children are to break through the massive barrier surrounding their food and drink, we must begin to educate them NOW! It is high time that schools stopped plugging such rubbish as maths, English, reading and writing. They should expunge expressive dance from the curriculum. As for self-expression, I get enough from wrestling a packet of corn flakes for the best of three falls. More money needs to be spent on re-equipping schools with can-openers, thermic lances, knives, hatchets, flame throwers and all the other weaponry of survival. When they leave school, our children must be able to fight their way to food.

Remember, our children deserve only the best..if they can get it open.

~~~~~ Terry Jeeves ~~~~~

POLL RESULTS...are disappointing. At the time of writing (July 12), only a scant half dozen have returned. Oh well, such is apathy. On a similar front, some dozen people will not be getting this issue of ERG as they didn't respond to the last issue in one way or another. Honest folks, there is NO pleasure to be gained in mailing ERG into a vacuum..if you don't respond by LOC/stamp/trade..or even cash money, then with sorrow, this will be your final issue.. The copy you might have got will be mailed to someone who lets me know it was appreciated.

STILL AVAILABLE.. 'THE BOSTON TRIP'..covering in some 26 pages, my safari to the Colonies in the USA...£1.00 a copy...

ERGtape No.1 and ERGtape 2. at £2.00 each (No.3 in preparation).

Tape 1 has.. two Nartaz yarns, verse, ERG extracts, music, sound effects, and tape plays 'Streak Moron's Journey Into Void', and 'Batula' etc.

Tape 2 has 'Last Stage Reflectrosman', ~~Cassette~~ Jeeves Comes Home', 'Kornan The Bold', 'Death In The Ophand Manor', 'Journey of The Vacuum Beetle' and other odds and ends.

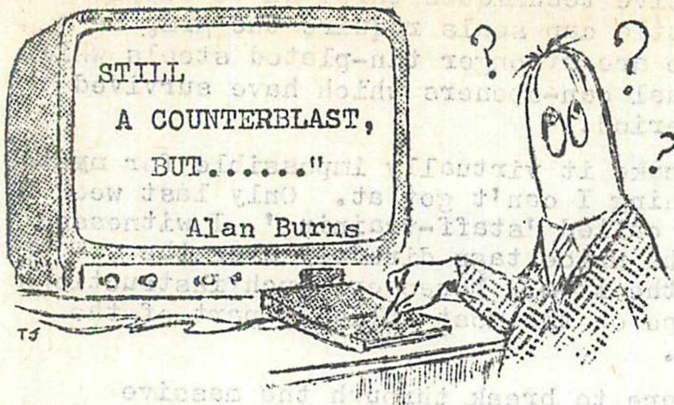
Both tapes on C60 cassettes, (mono) and include various extracts from past ERGs including the first issue etc.

THIS ISSUE is starting its run through the dupers in July so that my trip to the USA will not cause a publishing hiatus. The Memory Bank Lane cover has come out nicely...and when the series is finished, there will be a very limited number of complete sets of the material gathered into one cover..and one set will be offered along with the complete bundle of original artwork used throughout the series. That one will go to the highest bidder..and all proceeds will go to a very worthy cause...Getting me to the USA yet again, in 19...???

Happy reading,

Terry





Re-reading my article on computers, I saw that I had been guilty of a felony in stringing together a lot of hoary old cliches with intent to incite hatred. Further, I had spoken in ignorance, a sin only permissible in the case of socialists and some Trade Union leaders. So I looked at my bank

account. It looked back at me and said, "Well...maybe..." and before it could change its mind, I found myself with £190 worth of Sinclair ZX81 plus equipment and a course in computing.

Frustration is an occupational hazard of novices on computers. Human beings -- well some anyway, tend to think heuristically -- which is to say you see part of a curve and you say, 'General De Gaulle', because you knew cartoonists gave him a distorted nose. But to work a computer you have to do everything a la 'Chick's Own' where all the words are split into syllables. You have to split your questions into units and you have to rephrase almost everything. The number of times I felt like slinging the whole assembly out of the window passed count, but I pegged away at it and at last began -- at the expense of several headaches, to think like a computer. I produced a particular list of specific gravity conversions for temperature that I had long wanted...and I found that the computer would happily churn the list out, and print same--which was convenient.

This article was prompted by Mrs. Buffery's remark that computing is fun. FUN! she must be some kind of nut. Definitely it is not fun. If you want to develop xenophobia games of blasting aliens, then go to your nearest arcade and blast away at spaceships to your heart's content. But a computer is a severely practical tool.

So wherein do I have my qualified counterblast? I think it is in the way they are advertised. They are presented quite wrongly as amusement. But nowhere do they say, "Look, learning to program is extremely difficult, you won't learn it quickly, you'll have endless frustrations and disappointment but at the end of it, you will be able to save yourself a lot of mathematical drudgery if your job involves it. If it doesn't, don't waste your money."

"Within an hour you'll be talking to it like an old friend", burbles the ad. Within an hour I was talking to the computer in terms that would have earned me a punch on the nose from the most patient of my friends had I addressed him so. "Within a short time you will be writing your own programs"...I could be thicker than most, but I don't -- for I read ERG. So far, I have written one program. So, this writing is by nature a warning. Think before you buy, then read my previous article and think again. Happy programming!"

-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-

ERGitorial footnote. I get a great deal of pleasure from my computer..and very seldom use it for games. Indexing and sheer intellectual delight are my two main uses...but I have just started writing some teaching programs for English. Program writing starts VERY easily...but can get to as hard a level as you want to take it. As for ads....who believes them? T.J.



## The Big Bang

Around 7am. on  
June 30th 1908  
something happened  
in the frigid  
tundra of the  
Tunguska region of  
Siberia.

A glowing object flashed across the sky at something like 25 miles a second, followed by a colossal explosion later estimated as the equivalent of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  Kilotons of TNT. It produced ground tremors which were recorded on seismographs over 3,000 miles away. Even the air-borne shock wave was recorded by Cambridge seismographs. Some witnesses spoke of a huge fireball in the sky; at one point, many miles from the event, a herd of reindeer was destroyed, and burn damage experienced at 40 miles distant. Afterwards, various sky effects akin to those following the explosion of Krakatoa were seen around the world..with midnight skys glowing like the dawn.

Because of the isolated position of the explosion; the primitive post-Revolution conditions for transport and then the outbreak of the first world war, it was 1927 before an expedition succeeded in reaching the site. It set off in February, and reached its goal in mid-May..which gives some idea of the distance and difficulty involved. By this time, some of the locals had evolved a new pseudo religion of worshipping Ogdy, God of Fire.

The scene of the strike was surrounded by felled trees, all pointing outwards from the blast centre..very much akin to devastation at Hiroshima nearly 20 years later. Recent measurements point to an airburst at an altitude of about 5 miles.

These are the facts .. what lies behind them still gives rise to a variety of speculations as to what actually caused the explosion. More recent investigations which point to increased radioactivity in the area and to a 1% above normal deposition of Carbon 14 in tree rings for the following year has been taken to indicate that a nuclear device was involved. However, against this, the Israeli scientist Ari BenMenahem points out that a meteor strike of those proportions, caused by a 50,000 ton body, would have approached solar temperatures and released sufficient neutrons to create the excess Carbon 14 recorded.

Suggestions put forward to explain the disaster are many and of great variety.. Some sources suggest that Earth was struck by a comet, but opponents of this theory object that a comet of such magnitude would surely have been observed early in its approach phase. To counter this, the Russian scientist Ferenkov worked on the figures and estimated that the object had come in on a trajectory from the direction of the Sun, and had

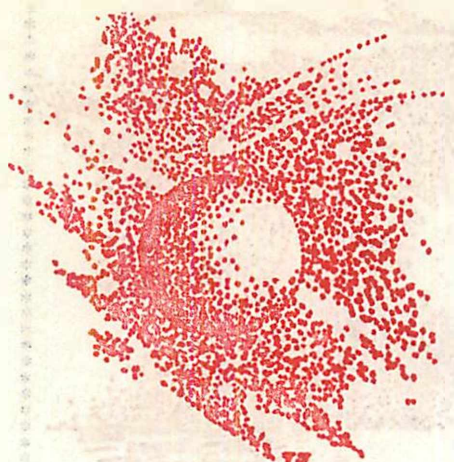
Terry Jeeves



thus been rendered almost impossible to detect.

Against the meteor/comet suggestion is the fact that unlike the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile diameter Meteor Crater in Arizona, the Tunguskan object did not produce a crater at all. Leonid Kulik who led the early expeditions, recorded that the area was studded with numerous, small, water-filled holes, but that there was no sign of an impact crater.

Another suggestion was that Earth had been on the receiving end of a giant laser beam fired from another planet. From some sources has come the idea that a wandering 'Black Hole' grazed the Earth in a shallow pass before vanishing into space.



The writer Jacques Gergier, an exponent of the 'we-have-been-visited-by-aliens-from-the-stars' school came up with the bizarre idea that political exiles in Siberia were given enough freedom and materials to enable them to build a simpler and super efficient atomic bomb long before the Allies did so in World War 2. It must also have been a great deal lighter, as his theory calls for the device being hoisted aloft by a kite...presumably with a very long string, as the explosion took place a very long way from any population centre.

It was left to the Russian chess player and SF writer, Dr. Alexander Kazentsov to come up (first as a story idea) with the suggestion that the object was a nuclear-powered alien spacecraft which crashed and exploded. His theory caught the imagination of many. Frank Edwards plugs the idea in his 'Stranger Than Science'...but tends to be rather careless with his facts..having Kazentsov going on the 1927 expedition to add verisimilitude to his story. As far as I can trace, Kazentsov did not go on any of the trips (such as the abortive one of 1921..or those of 1927, 1928, 1929, 1959, 1960 and 1961) Indeed, Kazentsov was only 21 at the time of the 1927 trip..and did not graduate from Tomsk Technical Institute until 1930. However, in support of the alien spacecraft theory is the flight plan plotted from the statements of witnesses..and showing that the object appears to have made two sharp course changes during its descent...but considering the near 20 year lapse between event and reports, plus the low and peasant-type population of the area, and such 'evidence' leaves much to be desired.

Controversy still rages. Two British scientists, Drs. Brown and Hughes now claim the object was a loosely bound collection of rocks, dust and ice which totally disintegrated on contact (which could account for the numerous small, water filled holes).

Whatever it was, we may never know...but personally, I'd love to have the spaceship idea substantiated...wouldn't you?

T.J.





# LETTERS



IF YOU'D LIKE THE NEXT ERG....  
...WRITE IN ABOUT THIS ONE!

((With ERGitorial interjections inside pretty little triple parentheses)))

ALAN BURNS  
19 The Crescent  
WallSEND On Tyne

"You are perfectly correct about the menace of the computerised society. If you recall, there was a TV play a little while ago centred round such a society with the army sent in to roust out squatters and a girl who got mixed up in a demo getting three weeks incommunicado in the nick. I am all in favour of the full might of the law being turned on these nasties who enjoy the benefits of our society so they can wreck it. ((That seems to contradict a computer-based society to enforce laws..but I agree with you on clobber the element of disruptive nits threatening our society....and how about makers of petrol bombs getting acquitted on a defence of 'made for self defence' ?? I wonder if bank robbers might use a similar plea..or possibly football hooligans carting a few bombs to the match))) On to the rest of the magazine.

I don't cotton on with what's with you and NASA that is now being withdrawn. ((They're cutting back...NASA News only to prestigious Stateside journals)))

DOUG YOUNG  
14 Church St., 79 arrived on Saturday, pretty good 'un too! I liked Whitstable  
KENT Memory Bank Lane. The Boy's Magazine in the 30's was my favourite, they had a long series of Space Invaders, and the famous detective, Falcon Swift..and of course, his assistant Sparrow who got into more trouble than Dick Barton ever did, but always came out on top ((Now you'll have people asking who 'Dick Barton' was))) Then came the Amazine. When I landed in Canada with the S.A. scheme and 50p in my pocket, I saw it on the station bookstall..the size of Yellow Pages. I parted with 25c and was hooked on SF and have been ever since.

RICHARD MEEHAN  
14 Redfern Rd.  
Walton, Stone,  
STAFFS

I was very impressed with the NASA News column. When I have sent letters to NASA asking for any information I was told politely to buggar off. How you got hold of the Venus stuff is beyond me..are you related to Pres. Reagan? ((No, but Harry Andruschak is a good man))) It is also nice to read a fanzine in which someone is interested in computers. So you're getting a BBC Proton are you ((Yes, and it has gone back for cure of a delivery fault)) Will you be flogging the ZX81 at an incredibly low price? ((Nope..it is still a damn good standby machine. Check the sales pages of 'Sinclair User' or 'Your Computer' for cut-price ZX81...better still, get a Spectrum))) All in all, I found your zine very interesting, Terry..which is why there is 31p in stamps enclosed for the next issue.

((Sadly, NASA News is cutting back on mailings..so no more extracts..T)))



Judith Buffery  
16 Southam Rd.  
Hall Green  
Birmingham

I thought your ERGitorial was smashing and I'm pleased you won a prize with it. Down Memory Bank Lane was interesting, I'd even heard of some of the titles. I'm surprised you didn't mention MAGNET though, my father used to enthuse over it. ((Well, I'm trying to stick to SF, the MAGNET featured Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and of course, Billy Bunter...the most durable of the lot... but no SF))) Incidentally, the SMASHER and IRON TEACHER reminded me very much of the children's classic, THE IRON MAN. I wonder if that's where Ted Hughes got the idea from ?? I thought your favourite music was rather predictable - nice, but ordinary. I have wide tastes in music (some people might say no taste at all) but I can't stand ageing crooners like Frank Sinatra...((Who can?))

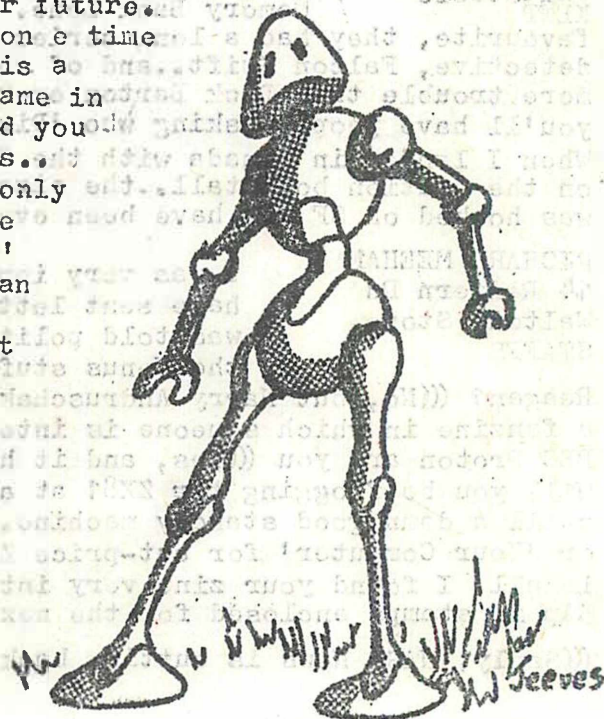
MATT MACKULIN  
28 Croft Close  
Rawtenstall  
Rossendale  
LANCS

The cover was quite good. NASA News was as always, interesting. Down Memory Bank Lane, very interesting, and as I once said to you, I once had hold of an edition of THE WIZARD which had the characters you mentioned featured in it. Fanzine Reviews, as usual, quite good and I am thinking of sending for that 'Whole Fanzine Catalogue' as I am interested in fanzines from all over the world. Book Reviews were as always, comprehensive giving a flavour of the book and not impressing your own views too much. Not like an 'Inferno' review... "I could see the minute I opened this book it was not going to be very good...etc..etc" ((Dead right... 'Recent Reading' is to tell would-be readers what is around...not to put 'em off it. You can't buy a book until you know it exists...after that I leave it up to the reader to work out whether or not to buy...hatchet jobs help nobody so like good old Bat Durston, you won't see 'em in ERG unless they are REALLY merited)))

JOHN BOTHAM  
32 Whitmill Lane  
Walton  
Stone  
STAFFS ST15 0EG

'The Moronic Menace' seemed quite paranoid to me. Although there is no doubt that the kind of things you talk about are possible, even at the present time, but I can't really see such things happening in the near future. ((Depends on what you mean by 'near'...at one time Income Tax was inconceivable...and now it is a crippling burden))) To start laying the blame in advance on computers is ludicrous. ((Afraid you missed the point...I didn't blame computers...that is why I called 'em 'Moronic'...they only do what they are told...but as I said, one man has all ready suggested the 'implants' for criminals...and the UK Labour spokesman DID say if elected, they wouldn't give people a vote on the EEC as 'they couldn't be relied on to vote the 'right' way. SUCH MENACES are quite capable of intriducing a computer check...if we don't holler at the first sign...i.e. 'for criminals')))

I'm afraid I'm not going to be complimentary over 'MEMORY BANK LANE'. It just left me cold. ((Not to worry, tastes differ...and re your comment on only saying 'good' things in reviews...see above letter to Matt Mackulin. And thanks for a very interesting letter)))





KEVIN RATTAN

23 Waingate Close  
Rawtenstall  
Rossendale  
LANCS

US in the near future))) Down Memory Bank Lane..being a mere infant, these comics seem to me to be of a far distant past...and this is the best thing in the issue. The material was interesting and told with an eye for humour that made the difference between a merely informative and an entertaining and informative article. The pictures also helped to bring out the atmosphere of the comics. 'FANALOG'..this ought to be longer (((Oh for an elastic-paged ERG..or lower postal rates))) RECENT READING..What can I say that I haven't already? Good solid stuff..but special note must go to the illo on page 22, absolutely wonderful. ((( Thanks a lot Kevin..glad you like DMBL as there are about a dozen episodes to it)))

Chuck CONNOR  
Sildan House  
Chediston Rd  
Wissett  
Suffolk IP19

Ergitorial held one or two interesting things from my point of view..and I'm no great believer in Home Computers. But the wealth of computer-based data already available to the unscrupulous is already incredible. Ever tried getting off the Reader's Digest computer files? (((Yes, I even wrote up the experience and submitted it to their 'Life's Like That'..it was not accepted!! so I ran it in ERG..many moons ago))) You can of course order something using the return address of one of the other parts of the company. (( I used to do this with those Record Club come-ons))) Congrats on the double anniversary by the way..does this make you the oldest active fan in the UK..or is Ethel Lindsay older..and did Scottishe start up before ERG? (((I don't know about 'oldest', but I'm probably the longest operating (and non-pro-linked)actifan. I had the pleasure of welcoming Ethel into fandom..and to her first (Manchester) Con. Scot started before ERG..but hasn't been keeping to a quarterly schedule for quite a while..and of course, has now folded. Do I get a long-service medal??)))

MAL ASHWORTH

16 Rockville Drive, Embsey, Nth. Yorks. "Many thanks for sending me ERG; the fact of its unbroken publication over such vast aeons of time impresses me enormously, a bit like that massive section of Giant Sequoia in the Natural History Museum (((are you taking the Mickey??)))with markings against the various rings saying things like, 'Julius Caesar invaded Britain' (Has he gone yet by the way? (((Could be, I haven't seen or heard of him lately))) One thing that grabbed me most of all was the 'What Makes Good SF Debate'. I remember once remarking to Mike Rosenblum how badly one SF novel was written, and his comeback: "Yes, but after all it's the ideas we read it for isn't it?" (((Hard luck with today's stuff then))) I can say one thing with confidence..you will never get general agreement on any method of rating SF in terms of goodness or lousiness.

((Which is just what I said..you can't take 'majority rule'..heck, that rates Constipation Street' as the best thing since Baird invented the goggle box.))





# DOWN MEMORY-BANK LANE

## Part 2 "Scoops"

Being a revised and  
re-illustrated version  
of a series which  
first appeared in  
Lynn Hickman's 'zine

'THE PULP ERA'



The first regular science fiction in my life came on the scene in February of 1934 when Pearsons launched the juvenile weekly under the editorship of Haydn Dimmock and titled SCOOPS. Priced at a sensible 2d a copy (less than today's diminutive 1p), the contents ranged from some abysmal material to tales capable of standing alongside the American pulps of that era..which of course doesn't say that much for Dimmock's editorship.

A total lack of advance publicity caused me to miss out on the first two issues. My younger cousin was more fortunate, he managed to get both...and hung on to them like glue, steadfastly refusing to part with them under escalating offers of trade..cash..and finally, sheer physical violence. I considered this to be a dog-in-the-manger attitude, as up till then he had evinced absolutely no interest in my growing SF collection. I reckon it was a bit of one-upmanship on his part...and he never did discover who let down both tyres on his bike.

Because of this, my file of SCOOPS began with No.3 when our long-suffering newsagent was coerced into supplying weekly dollops of this weird, gaudy publication. Many years were to pass before I realised the significant fact that each time I went to collect my copy of SCOOPS (and later, Tales Of Wonder), the precious goodies were always withdrawn from under the counter and passed to me face down. SF was a ghetto literature in those days.

After nearly fifty years, memories of the actual contents have become rather thin, but I do recall that it featured such writers as John Russell Fearn, J.M.Walsh and Maurice G. Hugi...the latter having a yarn about a lost African tribe. People were always losing tribes and cities in those days. The members of this particular carelessness had the peculiarity that their bones glowed with an eerie blue light which caused them to look like walking skeletons. Why they glowed in this manner escapes me, but I feel sure there was some perfectly logical, sensible and utterly scientific explanation..such as regular meals of large helpings of U-235, or as it would have been called then, 'Radontium' or maybe, 'Radonite'



Professor A.M.Low also got into the writing act..how he became a professor, where he did his professing never became clear, but he seemed to get into all the science popularising magazines of the time..in the case of SCOOPS, it was with the inevitable 'tour of the solar system' I often wonder how the hack writers down the ages must have longed for a few dozen more planets scudding round the Sun to enable them to stretch out their encyclopedia-raiding with further article.

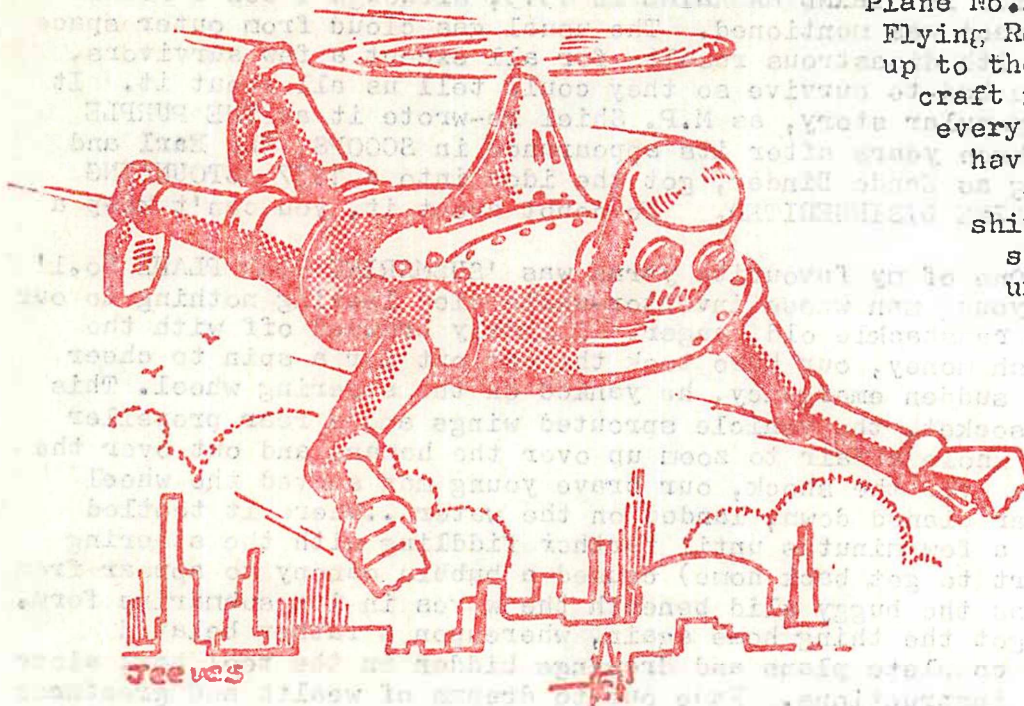
Then there was Conan Doyle's 'THE POISON BELT' which made its first appearance in STRAND MAGAZINE in 1913, although I don't recall that this little fact was mentioned. The usual gas cloud from outer space covers the Earth with disastrous results for all except a few survivors. Obviously, someone had to survive so they could tell us all about it. It must have been a popular story, as M.P. Shiel re-wrote it as THE PURPLE CLOUD, and only three years after its appearance in SCOOPS, The Earl and Otto team, writing as Eando Binder, got the idea into a 1937 ASTOUNDING under the title, LIFE DISINHERITED. No doubt about it, you can't keep a good plot down.

One of my favourite yarns was 'SUBMARINE ROAD PLANE No.1' This concerned a young man whose inventor-uncle died leaving nothing to our hero but a rather ramshackle old banger. Slightly browned off with the lack of actual cash money, our hero took the car out for a spin to cheer himself up. In a sudden emergency, he yanked on the steering wheel. This slid back in its socket, the vehicle sprouted wings and a rear propeller thus enabling the whole affair to zoom up over the hazard and out over the nearby sea. Once over the shock, our brave young man shoved the wheel forward and the car planed down, landed on the water ..where it tootled along happily for a few minutes until further fiddling with the steering wheel (in an effort to get back home) caused a bubble canopy to appear from its hiding place as the buggy slid beneath the waves in its submarine form. Our hero finally got the thing home again, whereupon a rather belated search, uncovered complete plans and drawings hidden in the tool box, along with the handling instructions. Fade out to dreams of wealth and greatness when the device could be placed on the market. They don't write 'em like that any more.

Naturally, SCOOPS had a yarn about a Martian Menace..but with a twist worthy of better things. "It all began with a faint, annoying hum on the BBC Home Service....." Gradually, this annoying hum grew louder, spread to other channels, finally, to anything powered by electricity. Table lamps, electric-irons, telephones, pocket torches, car ignition systems all added to the cacophony..even when the gadgetry was 'OFF'. People began to crack beneath the strain...the suicide rate mounted, riots, crimes and accidents spread like wildfire. Then, at the very last moment, ...a blessed silence. The Martians had landed (on Salisbury Plain, of course) and switched off their interference-producing space drive. They were welcomed rather coldly..after all, they had caused a lot of bother, and they were foreigners. Nevertheless, they were given a brief tour of London, (centre of civilisation) and lunch at the Guildhall. The Martians enjoyed everything, thought our policemen wonderful, apologised for the trouble they had caused, and hoped we wouldn't mind another dose when they set off home. Climbing into their humming-top-shaped spacecraft, they powered up the drive and lifted off...leaving unbearable interference blasting from everything electrical. Chaos threatened..but good old H.M.Government had not been caught unprepared. Batteries of field guns had been moved secretly into place on Salisbury Plain. Barely had the Martian craft left ground, than the devilishly accurate British Gunners opened fire and blew the gizzards out of the lot. Peace and prosperity returned..we had saved the world!!!



Naughty as this action was, it did leave Britain free to foster further science fiction...such as the incredible FLYING ROBOT. This rivet-studded monstrosity got airborne with the aid of a (very) small air-screw mounted in the small of its back. So equipped, the flying robot was able to swoop hither and yon on its assorted activities. These were of course, so highly secret that I've forgotten what they were.



One common thing about all this gadgetry...from Road Plane No.1 via the Flying Robot and right up to the massive space craft in the artwork, everything seemed to have been built in Cannell Laird's shipyard.. from 1" steel plate and umpty-thousand rivets.

Presumably, theory was that robots, spaceships and in fact, everything mechanical must be made by mechanics. And as everyone knows, mechanics work in ship-yards or steelworks using hefty metal plates and large rivets. So, to make futuristic gadgets even more futuristic..throw in more rivets and heavier plating - preferably with girder work, angle iron, and all joints showing.

Oh there were exceptions to all this ironmongery..such as the aircraft. In those halcyon days, real aircraft were underpowered and made from such high tech materials as wood, string, canvas and sealing wax, with a large dash of luck thrown in. Getting them airborne was tough..Keeping them that way, even tougher. As a result neither authors nor artists could conceive any future aircraft that did not follow this practice. So we had boiler-plated robots rubbing rivets with flying boxkites piloted by heroes wearing plus-fours or jodhpurs.

Sadly SCOOPS saw but a scant 20 issues before sinking back into oblivion. However, I did have 18 of those precious copies tucked safely into my collection when I volunteered for the RAF...alongside sets of 'Modern Wonder', 'Boy's Cinema' etc. Five and a half years later I returned from a long tour in India, all ready to drool over my old loves...only to find with a shortage of firelighters, those 'rubbishy old magazines' in my bedroom had been used to keep the home fires burning. It marked the end of an era.







Q36H boasts 42, A4 mimeod pages of articles, fiction, humour, cartoon strips, Con adventures and comment and a hefty lettercol. Marc Ortlieb will mail you a copy for art, trade, LOC, or even a naughty in the bushes...contact him at P.O. Box 46, Marden, S.A.5070, AUSTRALIA



PARIAH.1., another A4, slimmer zine comes from Gerald Smith, 8 Frawley St., Frankston, VIC.3199, AUSTRALIA...con news, a spoof NASA project, the problems of computer tuition, and a bit of autobiography..get it for the usual.

CON & SHELL GAMES 3 is a folded foolscap, 36pp, mimeo affair from Brian Earl Brown, 20101 W.Chicago No.201, Detroit, MI 48228 (and why didn't we meet up when I was in Detroit in '80??) on behalf of the Chicon IV Inc. A load of articles, opinions, comment and suggestions on conventions..and if you think that's dull...then think again, as what the contributors have done with the theme makes a damned good read. How do you get a copy? Talk nice to Brian..or no doubt, the usual.

...which leads us to the prize item.....

WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE... 52pp A4 mimeo (by me) on heavy paper stock. This is a nostalgic look back at the fandom of the fifties using extracts and material from the fanzines of that era...Ted Tubb, Bob Shaw, Ving Clarke, Hal Ashworth, Harry Turner, myself and umpteen others all have pieces in the issue...want a copy? Buy one from Eric at Novacon...Eric Beatcliffe, 17 Riverside Cresc. Holmes Chapel, Ches CW4 7NR might even sell you a postal copy if you get in quick enough. Be warned, this is a collector's item and it will be first come, first served. And another warning..fandom of the fifties was a fun thing..so don't expect the knife-in-the-back, don't-say-a nice word-if-you-can-thing-of-a-harsh-one style of thing which marks so much of today's UK product.

MICROWAVE.2 22pp, Qto,mimeo..heck, I love quarto size zines..they feel like fanzines instead of floppy bedsheets. Good art, comment (I fully agree that faneds should publish what THEY want...if it bores or offends, then the reader can go elsewhere). There's a piece by me, a Teghootish joke-yarn, a neat little piece by the editor's better half, there's even a (good) item by Ving Clarke, and a nifty lettercol. This one's for fun..I like it! The editor is Terry Hill, 41 Western Rd., Maidstone, Kent ME16 8NE and you can get it for 20p in stamps.

ERG QUARTERLY ...No, not narcissism, just a word or two about the poll in the last issue...ERGitorials got first place with RECENT READING and the NASA BACOVERS fighting it out for places two and three..thanks folks for writing in. TECHNOLOGY WEEK published the ERGitorial 'Moronic Menace'..but so far have shown no sign of sending the promised £50. On the other hand, SUNDAY JOURNAL ran my 'Vengeance' from ERG 25 and paid spot cash. If you buy a copy of ERGtape 3 (currently in preparation) you'll find 'Vengeance' on it.

I STILL WANT...PRE-1935 ASF and will trade large dollops of modern material for it. Now do any of you know some kind bod who will allow me photo access to those pre-1935 ASF covers ??? I'm compiling a photo index of same and need HELP...HELP...HELP. Please pass the word along to anyone you can think of.

Bestest, Terry.





### OMNI'S CONTINUUM

Ed. Dick Teresi  
Sidgwick & Jackson  
£5.95

If, like me, you dropped Omni because you hated wading through (advertising) fiction extracts, UFOlogy, inept short stories and items 'continued at the back' to get to the excellent kernel of fact articles, then you'll be delighted to know the good stuff is now available in one large-sized, 250 page paperback. I guesstimate over 250 articles plus more than 100 photos all neatly compartmented into 10 sections:- Health, Animals, Space, Mind, Energy, Technology, Phenomena, Inventions, Environment and Paranormal..plus an index. What can lasers do for baldness? Advertising on the Moon? Spontaneous human combustion? It's all here and much more. Quibbles?...well Australians may take a dim view of the careless statement that "Earth is nearer the Sun in Winter and farther away in Summer. Otherwise, this is another of those dip-and-enjoy volumes, with each piece a possible idea sparkler for would be SF writers.

### FLY ME, I'M FREDDIE!

R. Eglin & B. Ritchie  
Futura £1.75

Ask anyone to name the greatest showman since P.T. Barnum, and chances are they'll name Freddie Laker. Learning his trade at Short's and in the RAF, Laker took his £40 gratuity and by aviation work and Government surplus dealing, pyramided it via the Berlin Air Lift, BUA and Laker Airlines into a multi-million pound empire. He fought a five year battle to start Skytrain..and the financial disaster which followed, stemmed in part from the stalling of the US Government, the double dealing of their airlines..and the intransigence of our own governments. Compulsive, warts-and-all reading for those who love flight, flying and the story behind the airline of the people.

### THE WRATH OF KHAN

Vonda McIntyre  
FUTURA £1.25

The story of Paramount Pictures', 'Star Trek 2'. Spock captains the Enterprise, crewed by a load of trainees including the beautiful, half-Romulan Saavik, with Kirk, now an Admiral, along for the ride. A distorted message calls them to Regulus and slap into a vengeance plot cooked up by the sinister Khan Singh who seeks revenge on Kirk after having escaped from fourteen years isolation. After considerable sadism, the final battle is reached and the Enterprise can only be saved by Spock sacrificing his life. Exciting reading after a wobbly start (one young trainee being referred to as 'a sweet child') and for once, a tale which avoids the restrictions and ritual of the ST formula. It will also bring howls of anguish from the Trekkies, and I got a bit tired of hearing of Kirk fiddling with his spectacles...won't they have contact lenses available for those unable to benefit from the super science?



THE SPACE EATER

David Langford  
Arrow £1.75

Forceman Jacklin, a veteran warrior, and Rossa Corman, FTL communicator are sent on a mission to stop someone making galaxy-destroying matter-transmission tests. One catch is that their trip involves killing them both, then pushing the remains through a 1.9cm. hole. After that, their mission gets nasty..as Jacklin & Corman become pawns in a power struggle. A nice touch is the use of the odd fanzine title in the operation codenames. Racily and competently written with a touch of 'Starship Troopers cum Forever War'. It may be low-brow, old-time space opera, but I enjoyed every word of it. Nice one, Dave.

THE GOLDEN TORC

Julian May  
Pan £1.75

Second book in 'The Saga Of The Exiles' wherein humans who make the one-way time trip back to the Pliocene find a society dominated by the alien Tanu, who use mind-bending 'torcs' to enslave human males and employ females as brood mares. The

Pliocene setting seems more like mediaeval England, but otherwise the multi-level plot of human rebellion and Tanu ambition keeps numerous cliff-hangers neatly juggled as each individual or faction works to an end. The first in the series, 'Many Coloured Land' was great..and this title proves its equal. Definitely not 'sword and sorcery', but a superb blend of SF, mental powers and credibly motivated and believable characters.

THE BOOK OF DREAMS

Jack Vance  
Coronet £1.25

Fifth and final title in the 'Demon Princes' series in which Kirth Gersen hunts down the criminals who killed his parents. This time, he follows the trail of Howard Alan Treesong. Again and again, success is within Gersen's reach only for his quarry to escape. Finally, vengeance seems assured..until others with similar desires join in. Exciting as its predecessors (but with more in the way of padding), once Again, Vance shows a deft and fascinating touch with the strange societies and customs of his fictional worlds.

26 BASIC PROGRAMS FOR YOUR MICRO

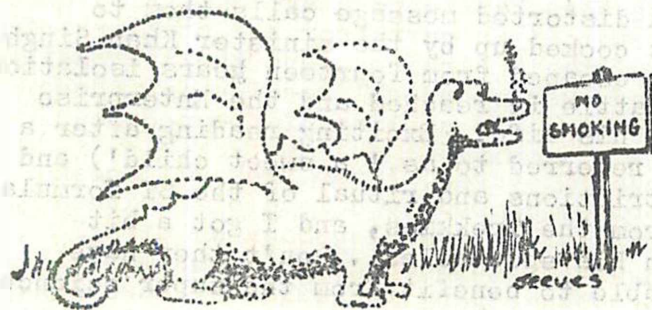
Derrick Daines.  
Newnes Microcomputer Books £4.95

The collection starts with notes to help you convert the contents to run on your own machine. Programs begin with a simple number game followed by a wide

range of programs on a mainly games theme with some educational material. (No 'practical' programs for indexing, budget etc). The normally off-putting print mass is enlivened by numerous, cheerful (but poorly drawn) cartoons. With my BBC micro faulty from delivery, I was loth to key in long listings on the Sinclair..but all material seems straightforward BASIC with nothing to daunt the beginner. Programs are mainly of the interrogatory question/response type, with minimal use of graphics. There is also a tendency to make them longer than need be. The 'SPELLING' program for instance is much longer, yet less flexible than one I wrote a few days ago and would have been more concise if loops and

DIM arrays had been used in place of endless 'INPUT'...

However, the length does make it easier for beginners, and I particularly liked the inclusion of a 'print-out' after each program to give you an idea what to expect. For Dungeons & Dragons fan, the Haunted House has possibilities for modification.





ENGINE SUMMER

John Crowley  
Methuen \$1.50

Young 'Rush That Speaks' lives in Little Belaire; a bucolic commune of 'Truth Speakers' surviving the Holocaust in the Los Angeles area. Life is peaceful, truth and legend being inextricably..and amusingly mixed. As Rush grows, he seeks 'Sainthood' as given to the community's founders..and also, his lost first love 'Once A Day'. A gentle look at a post-A culture and people which does NOT descend into the standard rape, barbarism and brutality. Cerebral, entertaining... and amusing.

THE QUILLIAN SECTOR

E.C.Tubb  
Arrow \$1.25

19th in the Dumarest saga as Earl continues his hunt for Earth, and in turn hunted by the Cyclans.

This time, they enlist the deadly hunter Leo Bochner. As usual, Dumarest faces various fights

deadly situations and adventures before emerging a whisker ahead of the opposition..but still no closer to finding Terra. Our hero has developed his character

since the first in the series, but this pot has been to the old well a few too many times to have many surprised.

It still makes highly readable time-passing stuff, but not the Hugo-winning, deeply plotted material that dreams are made of.

A DICTIONARY OF SYMBOLS

Tom Chetwynd  
Paladin \$2.95

A hefty 450 pages, jammed with references and interpretations drawn from psychology, religion, literature, etc. You will find an inner significance to Lear's Jumbles, playing cards, even Jack and his Beanstalk come under the microscope. The meanings supplied are highly metaphysical, subjectively capable of as many nuances as the symbols themselves...so you may choose your own significance for each. If you happen to be into myths, legends or what lies behind that dream you had last night, then this is an essential item for your collection. or if you have writing aspirations you will find umpteen plot ideas among the wealth of material presented here.

THE MAKESHIFT GOD

Russell Griffin  
Panther \$1.50

Language tutor/anthropologist Caine, is called in to advise on transmissions received from an unmanned probe which has just reached the planet Albar,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  light years away. Finding he is listening to the legendary 'Wandering Jew', Caine joins a manned mission to investigate. Once on Albar, he becomes enmeshed in the religious struggles of the various races before himself becoming a 'god' and the problem of the Jew is solved. A rather cerebral type adventure, slow-paced in parts, but one which keeps you wondering as to the origins of Jew and natives.

CONDITIONALLY HUMAN

Walter M. Miller Jr.  
Corgi \$1.50

A scintillating, six-story anthology of prozine culled material. The title story tells of bio-engineered pets as child substitutes and an extermination hunt for those that can breed. 'Blood Bank' has Commander Eli Roki ostracised for destroying a mercy ship..and setting out to prove he did the right thing. 'Dark Benediction' sees world chaos caused by an alien message which causes a plague...but one with advantages. 'Dumb Waiter' introduces an automated city which has a still-functioning police system..but no human to control it. 'Anybody Else Like Me' poses the dilemma of a woman becoming telepathic and finding a male telepath wanting her to bear his children. Finally, 'The Big Hunger' is a fable of Man's evolution as seen by his spaceships. This last rather bored me...but the rest were right on target as top level SF which gives the collection a rating of over 83% excellence..and that takes some beating in an era of pallid yarns..significantly, all are from 1952.



QUEST FOR THE WELL OF SOULS

Jack L. Chalker  
Penguin SF \$1.75

Third (and final ??) in the Well World series of a myriad races living in hexagonal 'worlds' and Anton Trelig seeking control. His opponent, Mavra Chang has been deformed by the creatures of one hex, but still holds the computer key sought by many..some want her alive, others demand her death so she has a hectic existence. The viewpoint leaps around somewhat, making the yarn difficult to 'get into', but once you do, then it holds you all the way. To do it justice, you should really read all the parts in fairly rapid order so you can keep everything in perspective. Could be an Award winner.

STAR TREK: LOG 2

Alan Dean Foster  
Severn House \$6.95

Three Star Trek yarns in one cover. First a shape-changing alien is rescued from a derelict and decoys the Enterprise into a forbidden 'Neutral Zone'. Then when investigating missing star ships, the men of the crew are lured by alien Lorelei seeking to drain their life force. Finally, Kirk and his men ordered to survey a new planet run into a renegade scientist and intelligent plants. These were all adapted from scripts for the animated series...and it shows. Foster can do and has done much better, but this time he fails to bring credibility to his stereotypes. However, this may prove suitable material for juveniles if we assume they are not so critical. I'd rate these as pot-boilers of the style popular at the beginning of the 'Golden Age'.. long on action, but short on cerebration.

MOREAU'S OTHER ISLAND

Brian Aldiss  
Triad Granada \$1.25

At the end of the 20th. Century, Calvert Roberts, sole survivor of a double disaster, finds himself on Dr. Moreau's notorious island, now operated by Mortimer Dart, self-styled 'Master' and prosthetically aided thalidomide deformed. Operating on genes rather than on bodies, Dart has unexpected backers. Roberts (who seems a bit stupid) has various adventures as he attempts to get a message to the mainland, but unlike Wells' base yarn, this one never really gets anywhere and tends to fizzle out at the end.

FIRES OF AZEROTH

C.J. Cherryh  
Methuen \$1.50

Final part of the Morgaine trilogy. Pursued by the Shiuan, Morgaine and Vanye seek one of the space/time Gates abd to slay Chya Roh, leader of a motely vandal army. For a time they find refuge with the forest folk and qhal in Azeroth but death and terror follow...with the enemy striking when least expected. Unlike the average thud & bluner, the menace is more brooding although the power of the first half is not sustained as the involved action moves to its climax. I got the feeling that Cherryh had to fit in a lot of extra wordage to complete the set.

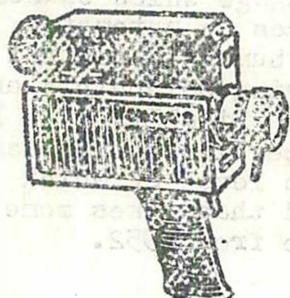
TWO TO CONQUER

Arrow \$1.75

Marion Zimmer Bradley

Bard di Asturien is exiled for trying to rape the king's daughter and crippling a foster son. Years later, he returns to put his half-brother on the throne and to circumvent an oath, Bard and his father conjure up Paul Harrell, Bard's doppelganger to aid in their grandiose plans..but Paul has other ideas.

An intriguing tale of warriors and magic, with a credible central character you can both sympathise with and also hate. This is the first 'Darkover' novel I've read, and although I normally do not care for sword and sorcery, I was favourably impressed with the depth and detail of this one.





# LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING

Douglas Adams

Pan £1.50

Part 3 of the poly-ology which began with 'The Hitch-hiker's Guide' and went on via 'The Restaurant At The End Of The Galaxy' his copy came complete with a sealed can

of radio parts to put the reader in the mood for a further meeting with Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect and other strange characters such as the alien busily working his way round the universe insulting everyone in alphabetical order. There's also the nice idea of learning to fly by just throwing yourself at the floor...and

missing. This is the mixture as before, but totally different...so if you're a fan, what more do you need to know other than the knowledge of the book's existence and its title...go out and buy!

## STAR SEED

David Andreissen  
Starblaze \$4.95

Less than a decade after initial experiments to fit mankind for undersea life, a new strain of bacteria kills off all surface life...leaving only two experimental 'Kids': Ian and Deela, plus a handful of normal humans, existing in an underwater lab. Even aided by trained dolphins, existence is marginal - then a new breed of intelligent sharks moves in. Then sabotage makes their base uninhabitable, so in a small submarine, they sett off following a strange radio signal, to seek the link between the plague and the sharks. The yarn is illustrated by Ron Miller (I disliked the 'Deela' illos; however the plot is deftly unwound in traditional, 'Golden Age of SF' style as distinct from today's bland offerings. It will hold you from the first sentence as each new piece fits neatly into the jigsaw. My only criticism being the somewhat 'Deus Ex Machina' of the ending...otherwise, an excellent novel.

## TRON

Brian Daley  
Ballantine \$2.75

Based on the latest Disney SF film. Computer/games ace Flynn has had his programs stolen by Dillinger, head of the giant combine Encom and inatigator of a 'Master Control' by which he hopes to rule the world. Aided by two friends, Alan Barclay and Lora Baines (mandatory female interest akin to a 'token black'), Flynn breaks into Encom and seeks to discover proof of Dillinger's villainy. However Master Control has its own plans and shrinks Flynn into the world of its sadistic computer games where he encounters electronic analogs of Barclay, Baines and even Dillinger in the form of the warrior Sark. Various games-based battles ensue before the Master Control is defeated and Dillinger/Sark given his come-uppance.

A rather juvenile, action-packed adventure with touches of Star Wars, etc. Long on electronic battles, short on characterisation, but a good lead-in to seeing the film.



THE PATCHWORK GIRL

Larry Niven  
Orbit £1.25

Earthmen, 'Iunies' and Belters have differing views on capital punishment and organ bank supplies so a Conference is called on Luna to re-examine procedures. Then someone tries to kill Belter, Chris Penzler and Gil Hamilton sets out to solve what is virtually a 'locked-room' mystery. Background is well set (quibble..wouldn't a laser capable of burning a hole in a man's chest do likewise for the window it was fired through..and thus release all the air?) The murder problem is really a convenient peg on which Niven hangs a rather light-weight, but entertaining yarn concerning sexual doings on the moon and the problems of spare-part surgery using criminals as a stock source.

INTO THE SLAVE NEBULA

John Brunner  
Corgi £1.50

On the eve of Carnival, rich man's son, Derry Horn discovers two brutal murders which change his playboy life. He sets off on an unformulated crusade which gradually becomes a hunt for a murderer, the reasons behind it and the problem of where do androids come from (which is pretty obvious quite early on). An action-packed pot-boiler using implausible premises and a hint of the castle-storming sequence from 'Frankenstein'. Only Brunner's masterly writing raised it to the level of a good read. Smooth, fast, entertaining, but nothing to earmark for anthology or future Award.

SWORD OF THE LICTOR

Gene Wolfe  
Arrow £1.75

Hot on the heels of the hardcover comes this third part in the 'Book of The New Sun' series. Severian, ex-apprentice Torturer is carrying out his role of Lictor for the Archon. Becoming dis-satisfied, he flees the city to resume his travels. Joined by a young lad, he encounters enemies old and new, strange monsters and various adventures. Pace slows for the padding of a 'bedtime story' then resumes the enthralling, on-going theme. For newcomers, the two earlier titles were THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER and CLAW OF THE CONCILIATOR ...which tell how Severian is expelled from his Torturer's Guild for showing clemency and how he begins his quest as vivid as one of Jack Vance's best creations.

WORLD ENOUGH AND TIME

James Kahn  
Mayflower £1.95

The 23rd. Century, and an action-packed opening sees Hunter Josh Green finding his wife abducted and family slaughtered. Teaming with Beauty, a centaur whose wife has also been taken, he sets off on the trail of the Vampire and Creatures responsible. The way is beset by a variety of perils, but they are aided by the bionic Jasmine. In some ways, resembling a Simak 'quest', but without the philosophising robot (but with Jasmine's epee becoming a sabre every so often), this yarn is part 1 of 'The New World Trilogy'. Plenty of imagination and excitement, but nothing to raise it into the award class. It's a highly entertaining 'read'

UNDER HEAVEN'S BRIDGE

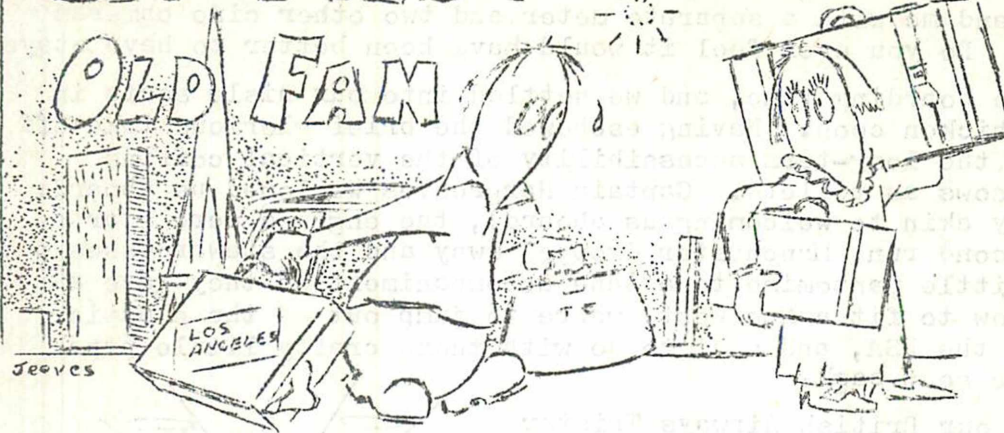
Ian Watson & Michael Bishop  
Corgi £1.50

The mixed crew of the 'Heavenbridge' are frustrated in their attempts to communicate with and understand the enigmatic Kybers of the planet Onogoro, which orbits a binary. Then it is discovered one of the stars is about to go Nova, so the expedition returns to Earth along with six 'dead' Kybers. This had all the ingredients of a real problem/menace yarn..but sadly, the initial fire bogged down in a mass of verbiage leading to one of those irritating, do-it-yourself endings where you sit back and ask yourself..."So what?"



# GO WEST OLD FAN

Or... IF TODAY IS MONDAY, THEN  
THIS MUST BE  
LAS VEGAS



Flying to America is relatively easy (if you can cramp a six-foot length into a 21" seat pitch); getting to the airport is the tricky bit. In 1980, we had driven down to Reading, left the car with the generous Freemans and Keith had ferried us to and from the airport bus. This time, to avoid the long drive South, we had elected to fly out of Manchester..and could have left the car in long-term storage. However, having heard numerous horror stories of how they play 'Dodgem' cars once your back is turned, and having friends whose vehicle was badly vandalised there, we cast around for an alternative method. A local firm, Richardsons, run a coach direct to the airport, the only catch being that their schedule meant we would get to the terminal some 4 hours before departure time and would land on return, some 3 hours before the next coach back to Sheffield. Since their outward run left at 8-15 am. we booked a taxi for 7-30 to make sure we could call for a replacement should the ordered one fail to arrive.

Travel arranged, we spent the night before departure in packing. By valiant self-denial, I avoided shoving in one of the dippers and a ream or two of paper. Val didn't understand that I might just want to publish a special issue of ERG whilst in California. However, this did enable us to get the baggage down to a suitcase and travel bag each. It wasn't until we reached the USA, I discovered I had also managed to pack a stack of heavier shirts set aside for use when we got home again..oh well, they might have had an early winter in the desert.

Came the morning of August 5th., another of the hot, 85° days we had been enjoying for a month or two. We rose at 6-30 for a leisurely breakfast and were just wreaking mayhem on a final cup of coffee when the taxi arrived...ten minutes early! The driver then made further gains of unlost time by winking through the traffic to drop us at the luxurious street corner from which the coach would collect us some 40 minutes later. Along with an old lady heading off to Toronto, we stood and shivered in the early morning breeze until Mr. Richardson's pride and joy clattered and rattled its way into view. By virtue of ill-fitting doors and windows, the fully air-donditioned coach got us to Manchester by 9-40am, and from here it was easy...eat, sit, walk, drink tea, check in the cases, then eat, sit, walk and drink tea again until boarding time rolled around at 1-15. We had arranged to meet the Bentliffes in the lounge, but they had craftily flown off to Greece or Switzerland before we got there.



It was during this wait that I discovered that the batteries were flat in the cine camera metering system..naturally, replacements were not available on the airport. However, some skilful tinkering (i.e. a good strong bash) revealed that the batteries were OK, but the automatic metering had packed up....and me with a separate meter and two other cine cameras stashed at home!! Do you ever feel it would have been better to have stayed in bed?

Came boarding time, and we settled into our aisle seats in the non-smoking chicken coop. Having eschewed the brief glorious take off view in favour of the long-term accessibility of the vertical coffins euphemistically known as toilets. Captain Hargreaves welcomed us aboard, (a process closely akin to welcoming us aboard), the engines were started and after a 50 second run, Manchester dropped away and the stewardesses put on a delightful little pantomime to a tape accompaniment as they gave a fashion show on how to fit a Mae West, where to jump out of the elastic ran down short of the USA, and what to do with those crafty little paper bags tucked in the seat back.

As our British Airways Tristar settled in to devouring the first leg of the journey, we settled into a diet of free drinks, free food, and in-flight entertainment. (Don't knock B.A., we've now flown the Atlantic four times and twice across America and have no complaints against them). The only catch to the audio on offer was its small range. Two 'chat' programs and three bilge ('pop') channels, thus leaving only the operatic music for us to enjoy.. which we did until it proved to be only a one hour tape..and even the 'One Fine Day' aria gets a bit tedious the third time round. Not to worry, after a meal of salmon, roll & butter, chicken Provencal, chocolate gateaux, cheese, biscuits and coffee, we settled down to watch Peter Ustinov as Poirot in the film, 'Evil Under The Sun' before landing at Bangor, Maine at 7.40 in our evening, (2.40 in their afternoon).



The Bangor stop meant reclaiming our baggage from the carousel before wending our way through the US customs and Immigration..the ONLY place where Americans make you feel slightly unwanted.. "When are you going back?" can be disconcerting to someone only half way along the route into the country. Having convinced the ogress on the gate that we had no intention of stealing the Statue of Liberty or of writing naughty words on the Whitehouse wall, we were allowed back onto our re-fuelled Tristar, now under the captaincy of..I kid you not..Captain Morgan and his merry crew and off for a further round of drinks, eats, and cat-napping in between further snatches of an unchanged audio tape. Passing North of Niagara, we overflowed Erie, Ontario, and on across the USA. Our passage over the Grand Canyon was made notable by everyone crowding to that side of the aircraft with accompanying trim problems for Captain Morgan..it reminded me of the time in 1942 when I sailed into Durban aboard 'Duchess Of York', to see a woman standing on the jetty, serenading the incoming troop ship. Everyone rushed to the rail..the ship tilted and the captain had to order us back to a more even balance before we capsized the boat. Happily, this didn't happen to flight BA 201, and after a further scrummy meal we landed at Los Angeles airport at the UK time of 3-20am...in L.A. it was a more civilised hour of 7-20pm., and only just approaching dusk.



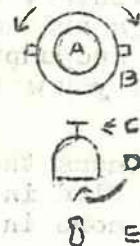
LOS ANGELES airport is in the throes of massive expansion work to accommodate the vast influx expected for the next Olympics, and this proved to be the only point at which the otherwise excellent Cosmos Tour organisation slipped a bit below par. Chaos reigned as our baggage arrived down the carousel and umpteen members of Tour 713 strove to locate the 'friendly Cosmos representative' who wasn't waiting to greet us. There was a further snafu as we tried to carry bags out of the airport..it seems that so many bags had been ripped off (it would have been dead easy) that special guards had been installed to pounce on anyone without a baggage chit. Naturally, they neglected to tell this to travellers, and left it to the guards (hefty shouldered black women) to shriek their warnings over the airport din..in their own version of garbled American slang...which simplified and translated, came over as.. "Yagottaravabaggigecheck to getarfa the gayt". Naturally, many of our band missed this detail and as the guards grabbed at their bags, began to think that American hoodlums were trying to steal their bags. Well, it makes for entertainment doesn't it?

Eventually, all was sorted out, our Cosmos rep surfaced from wherever she had been hiding and we were all stowed aboard a bus and rushed off to our hotel...THE RAINBOW. Now the hotel was quite OK, but happened to be run by Japanese (and largely for Japanese) so that hordes of little yellow men and women in horn-rimmed spectacles jammed the foyer, lifts (say 'elevators') and peeped round corners in the corridors. We finally made it to the seventh floor and sagged on the bed. Later, on comparing notes with others, we were to rate this as the low point of the trip. Weary after a long journey, hassled and unorganised on arrival and now a seemingly low grade hotel plus a body-time of 5-30am. One or two were on the point of turning tail and running off home. Happily, we didn't and the rest of the Cosmos organisation proved superb, with only one more sub-standard hotel to lower our spirits.

Before turning in, we tried to ring our various friends in L.A. The room phone refused to respond to our manipulations, so Val went down to the desk and was given garbled instructions by a Japanese girl, only to have them corrected by another Japanese gentleman on the desk. Suffice it to say that neither set of instructions would work..so we ended up hunting up dimes and using the phones in the lobby. Contactes were established and we headed off to bed for a much needed sleep.

Next morning, we were up and about at 7am. The day began with the first of many investigations into America's answer to the Rubik cube...the bath/shower water control system. During our stay in the USA, we used some ten different hotels..and never encountered the same system twice.

Each room has a bath-cum-shower, but there the resemblance ends. For the benefit of the would-be traveller to the USA, I'll describe here one of the many varying systems likely to be encountered... Cast a look at the diagram on the right..and remember the Americans don't include those letters and arrows to help you..nor do they label taps or directions as 'hot' and 'cold'. So, since you may be confronted with a mono-knob as in the diagram..or one, two or three separate models..getting a shower requires ingenuity..and persistence. Here's how it goes....







Pull, push and twist everything in sight until things start to happen. In the model shown, one pulls out the central knob A to start the water flowing, then rotates the outer ring B left or right to get hotter or colder water...as hot taps usually take a while to warm up, this can prove tricky. Having got the water to the right temperature, one pulls up the little button marked C. This transfers the water flow out of tap D up to the shower head. Since it is held in by water pressure, any easing off in the flow will cause it to pop out again and revert to the normal bath input. Catch E, ? Well Americans don't seem to like plugs, so in their place they have a little lever (called a 'levver') which blocks off the water's outlet hole..when it is working properly. If it sounds rather tricky that's only because it is..and hows the origin of the injunction to suspected criminals to 'come clean'..obviously they hadn't managed to sort out the water problem.

Having showered, we sallied forth to breakfast..in the U.S.A. about 99.9% of the people eat out for every meal, including their breakfast. Since the dollar had risen considerably against the pound to a level of \$1.76 as against the £2.42 in 1980, prices seemed higher..bacon, two eggs, hash browns coffee (unlimited), toast and jelly came to about £2. We particularly liked the American way of waiting at the door to be taken to a (spotlessly clean and set) table, the friendly greeting and enquiry as to our health and happiness, and the quick, excellent and pleasant service which seems to earmark EVERY dealing in America from the first coffee order of the morning, right up to buying a picture postcard.

Thursday morning, and having cleared the breakfast hurdle, we sneaked a quick look at the imposing L.A. library before going on a coach tour which included the Mexican style Calle Olvera market with its quaint stalls and ethnic offerings. Next we went to the Hollywood Bowl, scene of many spectacular offerings. Naturally, I took both cine and still photographs of the Bowl, the tiered seats, and the performer rehearsing to an orchestral accompaniment...it wasn't until we were on the way out I noticed that 'Photography Is Forbidden During Rehearsals'..oh well, what do you expect of silly Limeys? On to Graumann's (now Mann's) Chinese Theatre to inspect the star-names let into the pavements and the impressions of their hands and feet in the cement (John Wayne has tiny tootsies and Greta Garbo is flanked by two names I never heard of)..then on to Beverley Hills and lunch on salad and tacos in Farner's Market..and back to the hotel with 15 minutes in which to wash, brush up and re-charge our batteries before being collected by Margaret and Dick Trueman for a lovely coastal drive followed by a scenic tour and home with them for some delicious iced drinks (L.A. was cool today, only 98°) before a superb meal. Dick has a great Osborne 1 computer set up with twin floppies and a great Epson printer, so we played with that while before admiring son Glen's paintings and home-designed catch all bed...which held tapes, records, clothes and umpteen other things. The only snag was the need for a Coles crane if you wanted to sweep under it.

Several 'phone calls were made to Len and June Moffatt, and the Truemans then transported Val and I down to the LASFS home base on Burbank Blvd in time for the start of their Thursday evening meeting. Of that....more in the next issue of ERG

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