

LES SPINGE

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Les Spinge rides again, not for the first nor the last time, though on the present occasion in something of a different disguise than usual. We have recently moved house from London to Huntingdon and now live in a proper house with a bit more room than we used to have. I've told the story of our move and its problems elsewhere; suffice it to say here that with this and our other hobbies we've not had the time nor the inclination to do much in the way of fanac. But short of treating fandom seriously (something I could never do) these periods of gafia are bound to occur. It is, after all, just a ghodan hobby.

A FANZINE

Egg six came the other day, overdue but non the less welcome. Egg is the only fnz in the faanish tradition currently appearing in Britain with any frequency (it even includes two filk songs), and I was interested to read Peter's strictures on fanzine-publishing fans. I suppose I come into his category of hoary ancients with a dormant fanzine always on the point of coming out. Careful, Peter - any further lengthening of the interval between Eggs and people will be putting you in the same category. Well over half of the current Egg is taken up with the letter column. This is a sign of a healthy fanzine, even though part of it is taken up with comments dealing with Heicon, which must read very dated now, more than two years later. Most of the rest of the issue consists of columns of variable quality, from John Brosnan (good) via Gray Boak (indifferent) to Ian Williams (trivial). Egg is a light in the current darkness, being a faanzine with a recognizable personality, helped along by a clearly defined format - the yellow cover with obligatory aardvark, quotecolumn on the back cover, and that rarity in the UK, two colours of ink. But one of the essentials of a fabulous faanish fanzine is some frequency of publication, and (though who am I of all people to criticise?) Egg is falling from this ideal, I fear. Please, Peter, can we have more of the same more often?

A BOOK

'Challenge of the Stars' published by Mitchell Beazley Ltd. Text by Patrick Moore, illustrations by David Hardy. This book is dressed out with a competent text by Patrick Moore, an introduction by Arthur Clarke and an epilogue by a NASA official, but its main purpose is to present the astronomical paintings of David Hardy, which are a fine imaginative selection. There are about 33 of these paintings, arranged in the obvious order beginning with cis-Lunar space and ending with a strange and beautiful vision of a planet in a globular cluster with its indigenous life-forms. David Hardy's work is of a high artistic level and technically competent (in the '2001' sense). My favourites are the view of Jupiter from Analthea, and the the photon-ship exploring the Trifid nebula, both very evocative pictures. Rosemary's favourite is the one of

the frozen surface of Pluto. The book did great things for our senses of wonder, though for some unaccountable reason the picture on page 47 of a night scene on a planet on the edge of our Galaxy suggests Hobbiton to me whenever I look at it. The text is usefully informative but it doesn't have the depth of imagination that the illustrations do. That is as it should be, for the book is the illustrations backed up by the text, not the other way round. I can strongly recommend this book to any sf fan; it holds the interest and exercises the imagination. It is instructive to compare it with books in a similar vein published in the fifties. The imagination was there then too, but the technological advances since then have been greater than we could then have imagined. Think what computer technology was like twenty years ago, for example. And the concept of the nuclear rocket, now under active development, was something no-one then would have considered seriously, at least not on such a short time scale. I wonder what a similar astronomical picture-book will look like in 1992? It's going to be interesting to wait and find out..

ANOTHER FANZINE

A xeroxed Heckneck turned up yesterday which caused some pause for thought on my part. In theory, fandom is an international thing, based loosely on science fiction and drawing us all together; on the other hand, it is true that for the most part we stick to our own national fandoms with only limited cross-fertilisation. I have always believed that the more contact there is between one national fandom and another, the better. So ventures like Heckneck deserved strong support. But it's an uphill struggle all the way; there is quite enough inertia in British or US or German fandom to discourage anyone, even without the more difficult task of crossing national and language barriers. The biennial Eurocons were started to be a uniting force in European fandom, but from Manfred Kage's account of the Trieste event it seems that this is not working too well as yet. Perhaps it was a mistake to link the convention with the film festival: a sf convention on its own would be freer. The next Eurocon (which we hope we'll be able to attend) should be less of a conference and more of a convention. I don't agree that Heicon was in any way a failure. Some unpleasant things happened, but it went off as smoothly as most conventions do, and there was plenty of variety to suit all tastes. Heicon, it is worth remembering, was a world convention, so the presence of a large contingent of English-speaking fans is hardly surprising. Presumably future Eurocons will attract less of a delegation from the USA. One thing disturbs me - the suggestion that the programme at Trieste was organised with the view to getting a good coverage in the newspapers. If we are going to allow such a consideration to determine the content of a convention, very soon the whole point of conventions will be lost. We should think of the attendees only - let the press draw their own conclusions, and if these be adverse, does it matter? This little Heckneck is somewhat of a cri-de-coeur on the part of Manfred Kage, and he says much with which I agree. Let us hope that contact between British and German fandom is not entirely lost

A POSTER

A reproduction of 'King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid' by Sir Edward Burne-Jones is available from Athena Reproductions. This is one of Burne-Jones' best works, and one that we both like very much. King Cophetua sits in the foreground in his armour, gazing up at the beggar girl who wears a startlingly modern looking dress of some leather type material. Top left on a balcony are two angelic looking children. The whole composition is thoroughly pre-raphaelite, and full of detailed, refined medievalism. The expressions on the faces of the King and the girl are especially fine. This is a picture which we enjoy having hung on our wall in a prominent position. The reproduction is good, though the paper is perhaps just a bit too shiny for best effect. We recommend this poster to any poster-fiend with a blank bit of wall. The girl's dress might form the basis for an interesting garment, too.

THOUGHTS ON COLLECTIONS.

of fanzines, I mean. Not people's personal collections, but the Fanzine Foundation type collections that are intended to preserve fnz for fannish posterity. The British one of these used to be the BSFA's Fanzine Foundation, and years ago I and most other British fnz publishers used to send copies to it in the theory that a copy would thus be available to be referred to whenever anyone needed to. But the BSFA nowadays seems to consider fandom beneath its dignity, and last Easter the collection was sold off to all comers. I suppose the nearest thing to a comprehensive collection of British fnz now is the British Museum's collection, though I know that it does have gaps in it. The BM fanzines aren't all that accessible, either, requiring a day at the BM and an advance warning to them of what you want. OMPA used to have a set of its mailings, but somewhere during the troubled times of 1967-69 it got lost: all we have now is a set of OFF-TRAILS. I've started to try and gather copies of old OMPAZines, but haven't got very far as yet. Rosemary operates the British Fantasy Society's fanzine library, which is quite a flourishing concern, a number of people borrowing regularly from it. It is mainly confined to fantasy/horror/S&S fnz, though, as one might expect. While we have control of it the BFS fnz library is certainly not going the way the BSFA one did. But I can't really see any way a general fnz collection in Britain could be gotten together, now, in such a way as to ensure its preservation. The best thing we can all do is to ensure that the BM gets a copy of everything that's published. That way we can at least be sure that there is a copy of each fnz surviving somewhere.

TELEPHONE ANTICS

A friend of mine (Ian Bailey) went out one evening recently to make a phone call from a public box. When he got there there was already an occupant so he settled down to wait. After a couple of minutes the person (a he) put down the phone, dialled again and made another call. Twenty minutes later he was still at it, so Ian observed his operations with more interest. It turned out that this fellow was picking up the phone, dialling a random three-figure number (not the operator or anything) and then talking to himself into the receiver. Ian naturally got a bit narked at this (he'd been waiting nearly half an hour by now) so

he opened the door and asked if the occupant would mind his making a quick call. The person hummed and haahed and then moved over to let Ian make his call. He didn't leave the box, just squeezed into one corner. After a few choice words about its being a private call he left the call box and disappeared off down the road. Ian now tried to make his call. But the box was out of order. It's sad to think there are people so lonely they have to spend their evenings making imaginary phone calls to themselves. What sad experience must have driven that person to such extremes?

STONEHENGE

For the first time in my life I got to see Stonehenge when we passed by it on our recent holiday. Rosemary had been there once or twice before, but for me it was the first time. I suppose a place like Stonehenge ought to have some kind of atmosphere - eerie, perhaps, with the stones looming up tall and dark through a swirling mist, and in the background the faint chant of druids. But when we were there the sun was shining and tourists were wandering around and talking in all manner of languages, French, Dutch, German, even English. The place held no menace or deepness at all. It was just peaceful and gentle, and felt as though the gods that lived there had gone away millenia ago, leaving the stones to sleep on by themselves. Maybe it's just that I've never been there on Midsummer Eve. (Rosemary asks me to insert a note that she disagrees, having found the place much more atmospheric than I did).

TELEPHONES

We are amused by the situation of having two telephones, one upstairs and one down. The main reason for this is so that Rosemary can answer the phone without having to charge up and down stairs, but it does make it possible for both of us to answer the phone at the same time and hold a three-way conversation with the person on the other end. The only disadvantage is that our own voices come over much louder than the third party, so we can't talk too loudly. And if the room doors are open an echo drifts up or down the staircase a fraction of a second later than the telephone voice. It can be off-putting. Jane (Rosemary's sister) is intrigued by hearing both of us at once; I understand she's already pressuring her parents for an extension phone at their house (she's only six, by the way). Incidentally, our number is 0480-56072.

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Here again is our NEW ADDRESS:

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This fanzine is going out as a postmailing to the October 1972 OMPA mailing, and to a random selection of other folk who I think might be interested.