

matrix

Issue 112

The newsletter of the
British Science Fiction Association



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December 1994 - January 1995

MATRIX

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The news magazine of the

British
Science
Fiction
Association

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A STATEMENT From The Committee

The Committee and Council of the British Science Fiction Association wishes to apologise for the absence of *Matrix* in the last two mailings, and also for the lateness of mailings this year.

Matrix

As you know, Steve and Jenny Glover resigned as editors of *Matrix* because they felt they could not do justice to their heavy involvement with the *Worldcon* if they kept up both jobs. Our loss was the *Worldcon's* gain.

We had only one volunteer to edit *Matrix*, so we were obliged to accept the offer in an effort to ensure that the magazine appeared. Sadly, the volunteer did not make good that offer so we were back where we started. We had no volunteers and all the other committee members were fully occupied with their other BSFA work. We are fortunate that Chris Terran offered to take on *Matrix*.

Vector

Catie Cary has advertised for production assistance with *Vector* with no results. Consequently, although she commutes between Guildford and Hemel Hempstead on a weekly basis, Catie and her partner produce *Vector* among their other domestic commitments. It's a testament to their dedication that *Vector* is produced to such a high standard under such conditions, although it's sometimes late getting to the printer.

Committee/Council

Although the BSFA is, for historical reasons, a limited company, it is run entirely by volunteers in their spare time. None of us receives payment for our work, beyond any expenses incurred, and from time to time the BSFA has to take second place to work or family commitments.

Looking Ahead

We have a thousand members whose help could make the running of the BSFA much easier and more efficient, so why not volunteer? The more input we receive from members, the more exciting and timely the mailings are likely to be. With our new *Matrix* editor and with the completion of Catie's redesign of *Vector* we hope to get our mailings back on schedule in 1995. Once again, any help you can give us will be gratefully received.

And look out for a surprise later next year. We're planning something special to coincide with the *Worldcon* in Glasgow.

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BSFA Membership

This costs £18 per year for UK residents, £9 for unwaged. Please enquire for overseas rates.

New members: Alison Cook, 27 Albemarle Drive, Grove, Wantage, Oxon., OX12 0NB

Renewals: Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading, RG6 1PL
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The deadline for the February-March 1995 issue is 13th Jan 1995.

EDITORIAL

Seasons they change, as do editors. The handover was as shaky as that of a blindfolded relay team (for which we apologise) but the baton is now firmly — if somewhat nervously — grasped.

This issue was put together at very short notice, so I hope you'll excuse any rough edges; the next issue will carry more news, a better thought-out design, and — though this is up to you, of course — letters. I profoundly regret that I've been unable to trace any post that was sent to *Matrix* over the past few months, so if you've written to us please accept our apologies. And don't let it put you off writing now — I regard a lively letters column as very important to *Matrix*, but it needs your help, obviously.

I'd like to mention a few people whose help in putting *Matrix* together has been invaluable, in some cases essential. First of all, thanks to the contributors, who all delivered fine pieces at only a few days notice. A special thanks too must go to Jenny Glover, who gave advice and assistance above and beyond the call of duty, despite being very busy herself, and Steve Glover who imparted much encouragement and wisdom. Thanks for technical help goes to Jim Trash, and above all to Mike Ford who rode up on his white charger at the very last minute to rescue everything from oblivion.

I hope you find something here to enjoy over the holiday season, and wish you all a merry Christmas and the very best for 1995.



Sf prides itself on open-mindedness, its receptivity to new ideas, its willingness to view current issues from a more distant and dispassionate perspective than that offered by the mainstream. How well does it live up to this in these millennial days? How *really* open-minded are writers and readers of sf, how ready to learn? How good is their vision?

An example: John Clute is regularly criticised for using words like 'haecceity' and 'solitudinousness' in his criticism, and for a certain baroque quality of syntax. One wonders when, precisely, the critics decided that they knew all the words they needed to know. When did they say 'I now know enough: I can switch my brain off'?

Language is vaster than empires, and more slow; it teases with felicity and crackpottery, it confounds and enchants, it uplifts. Clute's

criticism is hot and joyful, and celebratory (perhaps too much so), and unfolds its meaning slyly; it can be re-read with pleasure after the book in question has been absorbed, when further meanings emerge, ginning. Whether you agree with Clute's judgement is not the point, of course . . .

But this is no encomium to JC (who is not our saviour). As well as readers, some authors seem to suffer from this blindness to the novel (both meanings), being happy to produce volume after stale volume of formula-driven pulp. It's all the more regrettable because some of them clearly have talent. Cyberpunk was 10 years too late, instantly old-fashioned, and soon descended into self-conscious self-parody; now it has vanished into academia. Superannuated goths and hopeful vampirettes now stalk the shelves, pandering and soliciting among the unicorns and elves.

There are, as always, exceptions: Jeff Noon's *Vurt* reminds us that Britain has both vibrancy and decay (or perhaps vibrancy *in* decay); the astonishing re-invention and mythification of Victorian England continues apace in Stableford and Newman *et al*; Robinson's *Mars* books — and very *English* they are too, in their obsession with landscape and historicity — will perhaps combine red, green, and blue into a clear and illuminating whiteness, not a memory this time; Holdstock's green, primal dreams continue to entrance and subvert; and Pratchett makes us *laugh*, lest we forget.

Another blindness: where is today's culture reflected in *sf*? We read Bester and Dick and Pohl, and smell the fifties; Moorcock and Aldiss and Dick (again) exhume the sixties; and so on. Perhaps this view is only apprehensible from a distance; but perhaps this really is a conservative, exclusive time.

There are subcultures in Britain, potent and radical, wholly excluded from today's *sf*: rave culture's techno-eroticism and political estrangement (science fiction indeed), the black community's confident anger, the Asians' busy distance. Neither producers nor consumers these (count the black faces at your next convention), and no wonder; they are not *addressed*.

Sf can manage this Janus-trick of looking both ways: inward and outward, future and past, home and away. But first we must be able to see today clearly.

—Chris Terran

NEWS

Media

British-based Duster Productions has begun pre-production work on a movie of Arthur C. Clarke's 1961 novel *A Fall of Moondust*. Mat Irvine will direct and the script is by Chris Boucher; the story has been updated slightly to reflect technological developments since the novel was written, particularly in the computer field. David A. Hardy is providing conceptual artwork.

A new series of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is currently in production by BBC Radio and BBC Enterprises, for broadcasting in 1995.

In September 1995 the BBC will hold a 'Young Writers' Festival, and as part of this BBC Radio 4 in association with Radio 1 FM is launching *First Bite*, a search for new talent. Original radio plays and stories are required from writers aged 16 to 30. There are five categories: a 60 minute play; a 30 minute play (plays must be original, not dramatisations); five linked 4 minute dramas (for Radio 1 FM); stories of 11000 words broken into 5 parts of 2200 words each; and short stories of 2200 words. Entries — as many as you like — must be in by January 31st 1995, and entrants must be between 16 and 30 inclusive at any time between August 23rd 1994 and January 31st 1995. Tapes as well as scripts are acceptable.

For more information and an entry form send an SAE to: Room 620, BBC Broadcasting House, London, W1A 1AA. Guidelines on how to write for radio are also available: send an A5 SAE to Lizzie Davis at the same address.

Some details on the forthcoming film of William Gibson's short story *Johnny Mnemonic*:

Director: Robert Longo

Screenplay: William Gibson

Cinematography: Francois Protat

Cast:

Keanu Reeves (Johnny Mnemonic)

Dolph Lundgren (Street Preacher)

Henry Rollins (Spider)

Don Franks, Ice T, Udo Kier, Dina Meyer, Barbara Sukowa, Beat

Takeshi

In the *Star Wars Screen Entertainment Pack* for the PC George Lucas reveals some of his plans for the new *Star Wars* films:

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away Good and Evil battled to determine the fate of the Universe. The struggle is chronicled in *Star Wars*, nine episodes which depict the reign of the Empire and a small, brave band of rebels who threatened to topple it.

The middle third of the story was told in *Star Wars: A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Return of the Jedi*. We followed a young farm boy, Luke Skywalker and his commitment to the Rebel Alliance. We watched as Luke learned about the Force from Obi Wan Kenobi and Yoda, and felt his pain when he discovered that Darth Vader, the most highly regarded commander in the Imperial Navy, was his father.

The *Star Wars* saga actually begins 40 years before Luke has the

pivotal meeting with Obi Wan that sends him down the path to his destiny. The first three episodes begin with the friendship of a young Ben Kenobi and Luke's father, Anakin Skywalker. When Ben meets Anakin, he sees that the talented pilot is very strong with the Force and decides to train Anakin in the ways of a Jedi. But the Emperor senses Anakin's growing power, and determined to harness it for the Empire, sways the young Jedi to the Dark Side. Anakin Skywalker ceases to exist, and in his place Darth Vader emerges.

The new movies will feature all the action of the first three. Much of the drama, however, will revolve around betrayal - between friends and within the Empire. In this part of the story, things are not always as they seem and you never quite know who the good guys and the bad guys are. I plan to start the screenplay for episode one by the end of 1994, and release the prequels by the year 2000.

— George Lucas

Awards

BSFA awards

These were presented at Sou'Wester, this year's Eastercon, held at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool.

Novel: Christopher Evans, *Aztec Century*

Short Story: Robert Holdstock and Garry Kilworth, "The Raghorn"

Artwork: Jim Burns, cover for Paul J. McAuley's *Red Dust*

Special Award: *The Encyclopedia of SF*

Arthur C. Clarke Award

This went to Jeff Noon for *Vurt*.

Hugos

Novel: Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Mars*

Novella: Harry Turtledove, "Down in the Bottomlands" (Analog, Jan 93)

Novellette: Charles Sheffield, "Georgia on my Mind" (Analog, Jan 93)

Short Story: Connie Willis, "Death on the Nile" (Asimov's, Mar 93)

Non-Fiction Book: John Clute and Peter Nicholls for *The Encyclopedia of SF*

Dramatic Presentation: *Jurassic Park*

Professional Editor: Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Professional Artist: Bob Eggleton

Original Artwork: Steven Hickman for the Space Fantasy Commemorative Stamp Booklet, produced by the US Postal Service

Semi-Prozine: *Science Fiction Chronicle*, editor Andrew Porter

Fanzine: Dick and Nicki Lynch for *Mimosas*

Fan Writer: Dave Langford

Fan Artist: Brad W. Foster

Also presented at the Hugo ceremony was the John W. Campbell Award for the Best New SF Writer of 1992-1993, which went to Amy Thompson.

Nebulas

Novel: Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars*

Novella: Jack Cady, "The Night we Buried Road Dog"

Novellette: Charles Sheffield, "Georgia on my Mind" (Analog, Jan 93)

Short Story: Joe Haldeman, "Graves"

Philip K. Dick Award

Joint winners were John M. Ford for *Growing Up Weightless* and Jack Womack for *Elvissey*.

John Clute won the 1994 Pilgrim Award for SF criticism, given by the SF Research Association. Previous winners include Joanna Russ, Samuel Delany, and Ursula K. Le Guin.

Novas

Best Fanzine: Greg Pickersgill's *Rastus Johnson's Cakewalk*

Best Fan Writer: Greg Pickersgill

Best Fan Artist: D. West

Locus awards

SF Novel: Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Mars*

Fantasy Novel: Peter S. Beagle, *The Innkeeper's Song*

First Novel: Patricia Anthony, *Cold Allies*

Horror Novel: Lucius Shepherd, *The Golden*

Collection: Connie Willis, *Impossible Things*

Art Book: *The Art of Michael Whelan*

Short Story: Connie Willis, "Close Encounters"

Novellette: Dan Simmons, "Death in Bangkok"

Novella: Harlan Ellison, "Mefisto in Onyx"

Special Award: *The Encyclopedia of SF*

Bram Stoker awards

Novel: Peter Straub, *The Throat*

Collection: Ramsey Campbell, *Alone with the Horrors*

Non-fiction: Robert Bloch, *Once Around the Bloch*

James Tiptree award

Nicola Griffith, *Ammonite*

The Science in Print competition encourages scientists to explain an area of physics or physics-based technology to the non-technical reader. The awards and cash prizes were presented at the National Physical Laboratory by Professor Frank Close, Head of Theoretical Physics at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Oxfordshire. The joint first prize went to Paul Lister for 'A Crashed Rainbow' (about the properties of light) and to Dr Carl Norman for 'The Life and Times of Edward Lepton' (an entertaining account of the life of an electron). Congratulations also to BSFA member Roy Gray, who received £200 and a 'Highly Commended' for his 'The Bug in the Box', about sensing technology.

News From Arthur C. Clarke

Arthur paid a visit to the UK from his home in Sri Lanka in August; he writes:

The most memorable event was on the 25th, when I was taken to the Science Museum for what was supposed to be a short filming session for *Mysterious Universe*. However, as I approached the Lunar Module, I saw Apollo 11's Buzz Aldrin coming towards me, and quickly realised that something was afoot. I was then whipped off to the BBC's TV Studio to take part in *This is Your Life*. In quick succession Buzz, my old physics master Bobby Pleass, OMNI's Kathy Keeton, Alexei Leonov (the first space walker and commander of the Apollo-Soyuz mission), Group Captain Fennessey (who selected me to work on GCA in 1942), brother Fred and the Ekanayakes marched on to give an account of my life. It was an amazing and totally unexpected appearance, and I don't see how the organisers managed to do it in such a short time - and to make sure that nobody breathed a word to me! I'm dying to see the final result, which I believe will be broadcast around November.

On the 28th (the day before leaving) I was picked up by limousine and taken to meet Patrick Stewart (Captain Picard of the Enterprise). However, when I arrived at the hotel, someone quite different was standing on the sidewalk: Richard Dreyfuss (*Jaws*, *CE3K*). We chatted briefly till Patrick arrived, and then drove to the Raddison Edwardian hotel near London Airport to meet a large Star Trek audience. I spoke for about thirty minutes without any problems or pauses, and had quite a surprise when I mentioned that Patrick was doing the commentary on our *Great Bases* documentary - and that David ("Darth Vader") Prowse might accompany us. At that point, David who was sitting next to Patrick, rose and introduced himself! I was then whipped off to Borehamwood to meet Stanley and Christina Kubrick, and spent two enjoyable hours reminiscing with them. Stanley revealed that he's still working on *Supertoy*, and would like to send me the latest treatment, but I gracefully declined. However, I promised to send him some of the ideas I still have for this project, and so may yet get reinvolved, if only peripherally.

Thanks to: Jenny Glover, Dave Langford, *Locus*, John Ollis, *SF Chronicle*, Maureen Speller, Jim Trash, Jessica Yates and others. News, cuttings, and dippings of an SF or Fantasy related nature are always welcome. Send any interesting items to the editorial address. Email contact is also welcomed.

... and finally ...

Douglas Adams (42) joined Pink Floyd on stage at Earl's Court on October 28th for a performance of *Dark Side of the Moon*, playing guitar on "Brain Damage". "We've been rehearsing, and I won," said Adams shortly before the gig. The seating didn't collapse.

Authors beware! This issue of *Matrix* was not brought to you by **Dramatica**, a "story creation and analysis" program for Macs and PCs published by Screenplay Systems Inc. of - naturally - California. You get a "story engine" to help with those pesky plot things, and "character building tools" (ahem); the program will create stories in any genre. The company's name seems to hint at their target market.

Mexicon Hat

The following statement was issued by the *Mexicon Hat* organisation:

In May 1994 *Mexicon* died and the *Mexicon Hat* was born.

The end of the *Mexicon* series of sf conventions left a surprisingly large cash residue; rather than distribute it piecemeal to the usual fanfunds and charities or send 50p to everyone who had ever joined a *Mexicon*, it was decided to take advantage of this unusual opportunity to try something new in British fandom.

Everybody knows there have been many excellent ideas within fandom that have never made progress because there just wasn't enough money to get them going properly - the people with the ideas aren't always the ones with the money.

The *Mexicon Hat* offers a solution to this problem. Where there is a sound idea that will benefit sf fandom and that will be self-supporting once it is off the ground the *Mexicon Hat* can lend the money - interest free - to get it going. Loans are likely to be just a couple of hundred pounds, and will be repayable once the project, whatever it may be, is running.

All we need to know to approve of a loan is: *Does this sound like a Good Idea?* and *Will these people repay the loan as arranged, so that we can re-use the money on some other brilliant scheme?*

The *Mexicon Hat* is interested in lending to projects that can:

- benefit British fandom in whole or in part;
- demonstrate that they have every reasonable chance of succeeding;
- be expected to repay the money borrowed within the agreed time.

The proposer has to show that their idea is worthwhile and interesting, that they have a genuine budget and financial plan, and that they are putting in as much money of their own as they can reasonably raise.

The *Mexicon Hat* is administered by a committee of five experienced and knowledgeable fans who will assess projects to receive loans, and publicise the activities of the *Mexicon Hat* and its related projects to fandom at large. Project proposals will be considered by by all five committee members, and a simple majority vote is required to confirm a loan. There are also five Reserve Trustees, able to step in whenever a Trustee retires or cannot for any reason judge any specific case.

The *Mexicon Hat* is fully accountable to fandom at large, and will publish annual accounts and newsletters in January and July of each year to this end. All assisted projects will be written-up for the newsletters by their proponents. Publications will automatically be sent to all *Mexicon Hat* Supporters, and can be obtained by any interested parties on request. Information will, of course, be circulated to *Ansible*, *Critical Wave*, *Matrix* and other news-sheets in the UK and abroad.

We also hope to receive money from a variety of sources, to be recycled out as loans. Anyone interested in helping the *Mexicon Hat* can become a Supporter by donating at least £5 per year. This will ensure that newsletters and accounts are sent regularly. Donations from convention surpluses will also be gratefully received; we are especially keen to liberate "dead" money from long-past conventions. Any such money - and there is rumoured to be quite a lot - would be more useful in the *Mexicon Hat* than in a dormant bank account, so please contact us with any details.

The collection of more money really is of some importance; if the *Mexicon Hat* can gather cash in excess of its present working balance we'll be able to offer outright grants as well as interest-free loans.

Finally, to cover all eventualities, we have a built-in self-destruct mechanism. If the *Mexicon Hat* has not proved itself an active and useful institution in terms of loan applications fulfilled and further finance attracted by 1st January 1997, all money in its charge will be distributed to the usual good causes and it will cease to exist. However we certainly believe there is a place for an organisation able to assist worthwhile but underfunded ideas; ingenuity and affluence do not necessarily walk hand in hand.

If you would like to be involved in the *Mexicon Hat*:

1. Put appropriate projects in touch with us, if you think they would benefit from our assistance.
2. Send a donation of at least £5 (payable to 'MEXICON HAT') - become a Supporter for a year!
3. Pass on any useful knowledge - projects in difficulties, sources of donations, potential Trustees, anything at all! We intend to cover a broad range of interests within science fiction fandom, and will be keeping alert to new developments, and the more people acting as eyes and ears the better.

Loan Application guidelines are available now from the Admin address below. The information we need and the undertakings to be given by borrowers are quite straightforward but must be carried out in an orderly and unambiguous way, so please request information before making any other representations.

ADMINISTRATION ADDRESS (Please send large SAE with requests for information):

MEXICON HAT
3 BETHANY ROAD
NARBERTH ROW
HAVERFORDWEST
PEMBROKESHIRE
SA61 2XG
Phone 0437-769671 / Fax 0437-769881

Mexicon Hat Trustees: Rhodri James, Christina Lake, Greg Pickersgill, Martin Tudor, Pam Wells.

Current Reserve Trustees: Tony Berry, Mark Plummer, Maureen Speller, (two others to be announced).

Publishing News

• **Pollen**, the sequel to **Jeff Noon's** Arthur C. Clarke Award-winning novel **Vurt**, has been delayed by Ringpull Press until the new year.

• **Robert Silverberg** has written two new **Majipoor** novels, **Sorcerers of Majipoor** and the short novel **Mountains of Majipoor**. Both should be out in 1995; Pan will issue **Mountains** but a publisher for **Sorcerers** has yet to be agreed.

• At the 1995 Eastercon Penguin will launch a new horror and dark fantasy imprint called **Creed**. One book a month is planned, and the first titles will be *The Night Inside* by Nancy Baker, *The Hallows* by Michael Scott, and *Nightrider* by Sheila Holligan. Other authors signed up include Freda Warrington, Graham Joyce, and Storm Constantine.

• **The Zone** is a new magazine specialising in sf stories, with no fantasy or supernatural horror elements. It also publishes interviews, reviews, articles and poetry on sf themes. Issue 1 came out in August and *The Zone* will appear three times a year; price is £2.00. Contact: *The Zone*, SA Publishing, 13 Hazely Combe, Arreton, Isle of Wight PO30 3AJ.

Bantam

November: *The Death Gate Cycle Vol. 7: The Seventh Gate*, Margaret Weiss & Tracy Hickman; hb • *The Dolphins of Pern*, Anne McCaffrey; hb • *Dragons*, Anne McCaffrey; hb (non-fiction picture book)

December: *Star Wars: Crystal Star*, Vonda McIntyre; £10.99, hb — Issued as a very competitive price, this is the latest addition to the fast-growing *Star Wars* canon. "With the New Alliance firmly established, Princess Leia Organa has taken a strong leading rôle in government. But even then, safety and security are not assured. As Luke Skywalker and Han Solo take advantage of the stability of the new order to follow rumours of a lost enclave of Jedi Knights, Leia's and Han's children are kidnapped! In disguise, Leia and Chewbacca follow a trail of clues to find the children..."

Doctor Who Books

November: *Doctor Who: The Crystal Bucephalus*, Craig Hinton • *Doctor Who: The Handbook: The First Doctor*, David J. Howe, Mark Stammers, Stephen Walker • *Doctor Who: Parasite*, Jim Mortimore

December: *Doctor Who: State of Change*, Christopher Bulis • *Doctor Who: Falls the Shadow*, Daniel O'Mahony

Gollancz

November: *Interesting Times*, Terry Pratchett; £15.99, hb • *Justice City*, D.G.Compton; £14.99, hb • *New Worlds 4* — The last volume of the reborn icon. • *Archangel*, Garry Kilworth; £15.99, hb — Horror from the noted sf writer.

HarperCollins

November: *Parasite*, Pat Cadigan (no details) • *Dead Boys*, Richard Calder; £7, hb — Sequel to the controversial sf novel *Dead Girls*. December: *Freezeframe*, Katherine Kerr (no details)

February 1995: *The Time Ships*, Stephen Baxter; £14.99, hb • *Expiration Date*, Tim Powers; £7, hb

March: *Ancient Echoes*, Robert Holdstock; £7, hb

Legend

November: *Moving Mars*, Greg Bear; £4.99, pb • *Harp of Winds*, Maggie Furey; £5.99, pb • *Redwall* and *Mosflower*, Brian Jacques, £4.99 each — These are both reprints of fantasy novels originally published in 1986 and 1988 as

children's books.

December: *Ships of Earth*, Orson Scott Card; £5.99, pb — Far future sf, volume 3 of the **Homecoming** sequence. • *Galactic Dreams*, Harry Harrison; £4.99, pb — Sf collection, including a new **Bill the Galactic Hero** story. • *Mattimeo* and *Mariel of Redwall*, Brian Jacques; both £4.99, pb.

January 1995: *The Weight*, Allen Steele; £7, hb — Ultra-hard sf. • *One Hundred and One Damnations*, Andrew Harman; £7, hb — Fantasy comedy.

February: *Serpent's Blood*, Brian Stableford; £7, hb — First volume of a new three-decker planetary romance. Brian's novella "The Hunger and Ecstasy of Vampires" will appear in the Jan and Feb issues of *Interzone*; it features Oscar Wilde and Sherlock Holmes as characters and forms an eccentric couple with "Les Fleurs du Mal" (*Asimov's*, Oct 94). Upcoming too in *Asimov's* next year Brian has "Mortimer Gray's History of Death". • *One King's Way*, Harry Harrison; £15.99, hb — Delayed from October. • *Ironhand's Daughter*, David Gemmell; £7, hb • *Bloodstone*, David Gemmell; £7, pb. March: *New Legends*, Greg Bear (ed.); price unknown, hb — Bear's first appearance as an editor, it features stories by Greg Egan and Ursula Le Guin among many others. In an interview in *Locus* Bear said: "I wanted the anthology to criticise the whole paradigm of science, talk about how it's changing our world, about what it's going to do, good and bad. We need this criticism desperately, and there's been such a large amount of fiction that doesn't do the job, by writers who either were turned off in high school by science teachers or who feel that they are congenitally unable to do this sort of thinking. They feel more comfortable with historical perspective, rather than future perspectives. They want to do ancient paradigms, the familiar, comfortable paradigms. The things that have always excited me have been the things that were scary, really scary. Change is coming. Science fiction has always been about change." • Coming in June is Bear's *Lamarckia*, which is set in the universe of *Eon* and *Eternity* 500 years before *Eon* begins. This promises some interesting new slants on evolution and genetics on the eponymous planet.

Millennium

January 1995: *Blood*, Michael Moorcock; £7, collection.

February: *I, Arnold*, Phil Janes; £7, hb — 'Round three of the *Galaxy Game*' • *Legacies*, Alison Sinclair; £7, hb. March: *Fate*, Mary Corran; £7, hb • *Kaleidoscope Century*, John Barnes; £7, hb • *The Aliens Omnibus*, Steve Perry; £7, pb

Pan

November: *Sorrow's Light*, Freda Warrington; £4.99, pb — New fantasy from the author of *A Taste of Blood Wine*. • *The Bidden*, Ben Leech; £4.99, pb — Horror (with sf elements; it is set 20 years or so in the future) from the author of the praised *The Community*. • **Frankenstein** tie-ins: *The Making of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Kenneth Branagh; *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Leonore Fleisher; *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley. December: *Odd Warlock Out*, Christopher Stasheff; £7, trade pb — Latest addition to a long-running series that started as comedy sf but turned rapidly into fantasy. • *December*, Phil Rickman; £14.99, hb — New horror from the author of the excellent *Candlelight* and *Crybbe*.

Pocket UK

November: *Star Trek, The Next Generation: Dark Mirror*, Diane Duane • *The Quorum*, Kim Newman — Paperback edition of a fine horror novel. • *Star Trek, Deep Space Nine Vol 8: Anti-Matter*, John Vornholt

December: *Star Trek VII: Generations*, J.M. Dillard • *Star Trek Vol 72: The Better Man*, Howard Weinstein

January 1995: *Star Trek, The Next Generation: 33*, Anonymous

February: *Star Trek, Deep Space Nine Vol 9: Proud Helios*, Melissa Scott

Unfinished Business

The British Science Fiction Association has been busy over the summer, although activities have been poorly advertised because of the lack of *Matrix*. Maureen Speller attended Wincon to run a stall. In association with Friends of Foundation, the BSFA sponsored a reading by Jeff Noon, winner of the Arthur C. Clarke Award for his novel *Vurt*, and Jeff was also interviewed by Paul Kincaid.

The BSFA and Friends of Foundation co-organised a late summer event in London, to which we were pleased to welcome Stephen Baxter, John Clute and David Pringle as guests. At least sixty people attended the event. Both organisations are particularly grateful to Kevin and the staff at the Jubilee Tavern, York Road, who kindly took on the event at very short notice when our previous venue decided it couldn't accommodate us after all.

Discovering that The Jubilee had a private room available very cheaply, and impressed by the welcome from the staff, Mark Plummer and Maureen Speller decided to book the room and restart the BSFA London meetings. An initial social evening was held on Wednesday 26th October, and meetings will henceforward occur on the fourth Wednesday of the month. On November 24th we welcome Rob Holstock. There will be no meeting in December because of the close proximity to Christmas. On January 25th our guest will be John Whitbourn, author of *A Dangerous Energy and Pops and Phantoms*, and on February 22nd, we welcome Brian Stableford. Meetings begin at 7pm in the upstairs room at the Jubilee, but many fans congregate earlier in the downstairs bar. Food is available at the pub before 8pm.

Mark Plummer has worked closely with the BSFA at these events and assisted the organisation in many other ways over the last few years. We felt, therefore, that his contribution really ought to be formally recognised. With their agreement, Mark has now been co-opted onto the Council. We're very glad to have his help and expertise.

The BSFA was also out in force at Novacon, with the usual table in the dealer's room, running the now notorious but very popular tombola, which raised several hundred pounds for the BSFA. Thanks particularly to Steve Brewster, Sue Jones and Moira Sheaman, who ran the desk while the Committee was meeting, and thanks to all who helped during the weekend or who donated books to the tombola.

We expect to be carrying out similar fund-raising and promotional activities next year. We would very much like to enlist the help of BSFA members with these. First, if you have any books, CDs, videos, or other small items in good condition that would make suitable tombola prizes, we would love to hear from you. In most cases, collection can be arranged.

We would also like to hear from people who would be willing to help run tombolas and desks at conventions. At present, we rely on Maureen Speller being able to attend conventions as she is the only Committee member with a car who is able to move material round the country. The BSFA's fund-raising and promotion activities have been severely curtailed this year as Maureen has had many problems with her car and also because her husband was made redundant in May. Fortunately, both car and husband are now working but it has underlined just how much the BSFA is having to rely on the one person.

We are not expecting people to attend lots of conventions but we would like to hear from people who would be prepared to spend perhaps just the Saturday helping at a convention in their area, or who are prepared to help move books and magazines to convenient points. We all have busy lives but a little help here and there would make things much easier all round. Helping with a desk is also a good way of coping with your first convention; you'll meet lots of people without having to try hard.

We would also like people to suggest other fund-raising ideas, particularly with the 1995 Worldcon coming up. We obviously intend to have a strong presence there and we need to have lots of ideas for attracting attention to our wonderful organisation.

We also want volunteers to help with the desks there. This is a very large convention and we are going to need lots of help. An hour a day from fourteen people would go a long way to solving our staff problems. Think about it. We'll be asking again.

Lastly, we're planning to start producing t-shirts for sale next year. We've already had some suggestions for suitable things to put on them, but what would you like to see? After all, we hope you're the people who are going to be buying them. We're looking for witty slogans, quotations, suitable artwork, anything appropriate. Surprise us!

Any suggestions for fund-raising ideas, witty slogans for t-shirts, offers of help etc to Maureen Kincaid Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ.

BSFA Notes

CHANGES TO AUDIT REGULATIONS

As a company the BSFA is subject to the requirements of company law, including the expensive necessity of having an annual audit. However, changes have been made to company law recently to relieve smaller companies of this burden. Having an annual turnover of less than £90,000 the BSFA falls into the smallest category of company, for which the audit requirement has now been removed completely. The reduction of our costs by at least £250 per year would make a significant impact on the Association's limited resources.

There is, however, an administrative problem if we wish to follow the new requirements of the law, for the BSFA's own Articles of Association (that is, its 'constitution') specify that an audit should be carried out each year. Thus, the current position is that the BSFA's internal regulations are more onerous than those of company law. This can be changed by passing a resolution in general meeting to remove the audit requirement from the company's Articles, a move which the Committee recommends to the membership in the interest of reducing costs.

There is still a requirement to produce each year accounts which comply with all the relevant laws and accounting principles and which will have to be presented to the members, adopted in general meeting, and published in *Matrix* as usual. So in terms of the financial information available to the membership there will be no change from the current position. In addition the new legislation provides that if 10% of the membership of the company request an audit within one month of the financial year end, then, despite the small size of the company, an audit must be performed.

If anyone has any queries or wants further information please write to your Treasurer, Elizabeth Billinger. If you wish to debate the matter by way of letters to *Matrix* please respond by the deadline for the next issue, Jan 13th 1995.

LISTS WANTED!

Earlier this year, the BSFA attempted to launch, in conjunction with Friends of Foundation, a project which we thought members would be able to help with.

We want to compile lists which could be used by the BSFA and the Foundation when people enquire about books on particular subjects. For example, we might receive a request for a list of books about robots or about first contact novels. Rather than having either the Information Group or the Foundation's Administrator spend hours hunting through books for ideas, we thought we could enlist the expertise of BSFA members.

Sadly, the response to our first request for information was very disappointing. Only three people sent suggestions. So, we're relaunching this project, hoping that you'll be able to help.

Once again, we'll start with Arthurian stories and robot stories.

All we need is for you to list up to ten of your favourites in either category, send them to Maureen Speller, and she'll collate a full list from all suggestions, which can then be used by the SF Foundation and the BSFA to help with future enquiries.

Given that we know that BSFA members are enthusiastic readers, we feel sure that you'll be able to help us.

Contact: Maureen Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ.

BSFA AWARDS

It's that time of year again . . . time to start taking stock of the year and deciding what you are going to nominate for the BSFA Award. Incidentally the new editor, the estimable Chris Terran, wondered out loud what last year's winners were so we agreed to sound a second fanfare, so for those of you who missed it the winners were as follows:

1993 BSFA Awards

Best Novel: *Aztec Century* - Christopher Evans

Best Short Fiction: "The Ragthorn" - Robert Holdstock & Garry Kilworth

Best Artwork: Jim Burns

Special Award: *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* - Edited by John Clute & Peter Nicholls

For the first time in my memory all the winners got together to be photographed at the end of the Awards ceremony as they all seemed to be close friends. I hope I can persuade this year's winners to do the same regardless of whether they have ever met each other before.

Now might be a good time to look at the nomination form. If you have read lots of eligible material then you may be ready to fill it in now, if not just blue tac the form to somewhere where you will keep seeing it until you are ready to vote.

To get the required familiarity, the usual tactics need to be employed; i.e. go to the library, order the books you were dying to read anyway and nominate the best of them; if you've left all your magazines and anthologies mouldering all year then now is the time to get stuck into them. If you have a luxury method of seeing the material like having deep pockets or a friend with deep pockets (like the library . . .) then you should have even fewer problems.

Who am I talking to? You. All BSFA members are eligible to vote and it's not difficult; there's only a second class stamp between us.

— Nicholas Mahoney

Orbiter Writers' Workshops

The BSFA runs writers' postal workshops - these are known as the Orbiters. Each group (or orbit) consists of five members, with one member chosen to be the coordinator of the group.

Each member of the group places a manuscript in the parcel, writes constructive critical comments on the other manuscripts in the parcel, and sends it on its way. In return they receive four criticisms on their own manuscripts. The parcels go round the group in varying times, but the average is ten to twelve weeks. It is important that each member does not hold on to the parcel for more than two weeks. (Exceptions can be made if all agree.)

If you are interested in writing, then the Orbit groups are for you. But, beware, they are not ego-boosters; they can be and should be hard work. If you think you've got what it takes to not only receive constructive criticism, but to give it, then the Orbit groups should work for you.

Currently there are seven ordinary orbit groups, two novels groups and a non-fiction group. Ordinary groups can circulate anything from short stories to extracts from novels, from fantasy to horror. Novel groups are fairly self explanatory being for novel extracts only, again from fantasy to horror. The non-fiction group, is for people interested in writing critical articles on any aspect of sf and fantasy, including reviews; it also discusses the difficulties involved in such writing.

A quarterly newsletter is also produced, named *Trajectory*. This usually includes market information, competition details, and letters from Orbit members.

If you are interested in joining any of these groups, please contact the Orbiter Coordinator: Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull, HU5 2JB. Tel: (0482) 445804

— Carol Ann Green

FILM REVIEW

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Following closely on the heels of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Francis Ford Coppola's latest production is *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* directed by, and starring, Kenneth Branagh. Like Coppola's version of *Dracula*, this film was obviously produced with the objective of sticking as closely as possible to Mary Shelley's original novel.

The first thing one notices, compared to other Frankenstein films, is the toning down of the traditional gothic characteristics. Those spooky castles with tall spires, hideous gargoyles, clammy dark passages, etc; instead Frankenstein's house is a middle European country mansion set in its own stately grounds and his laboratory is a loft in the town of Ingolstadt, complete with light streaming in through ceiling skylights and holes in the deteriorating rafters.

The funny thing is, the film still maintains that same gothic feel of the forbidding and unusual. This it achieves by the use of many subtle features. For instance, Frankenstein's house has very large rooms with sparse furnishings, a long sweeping curved stairway and a family chapel with intricate wrought ironwork; the university where Frankenstein goes to study has a very tall multi-tiered circular lecture theatre and his laboratory is equipped with many unusual electrical devices, gears, pulleys, levers and metallic vats that fit in so perfectly with the period. The touch I particularly liked was the depiction of the contents of his diary, which described the experiments he was undertaking and reminded me of the drawings of the extraordinary devices invented by Leonardo da Vinci.

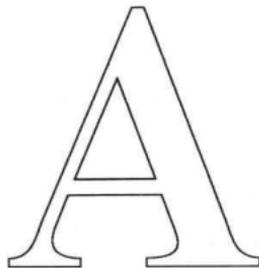
The film sticks quite closely to the book, covering Frankenstein's upbringing and education, the impact on him of the death of his mother, the cholera epidemic and other historical conditions which drive his state of mind, and lead up to his attempt to recreate life. It is about a third of the way through the film before we see the creation scene. This is portrayed as a period of frenetic lever and chain pulling activity, followed by an over-the-top struggle by Frankenstein to get the creature to stand; not helped by the fact that he is sweating from his labours and the heat from a burning cauldron, whilst the creature is dripping and oozing creation fluids.

The monster is played by a hardly recognisable Robert de Niro (for me it was only his right eye that gave the needed clue). Again, in an attempt to get away from previous depictions, the film steers away from the traditional angular looks and the bolt through the neck. Instead we can see that he is obviously constructed of sewn-together body parts from numerous different people. The production also takes great care to show a gradual healing process, as first stitches start falling out and then the red rawness at the junctures of the body parts starts fading as it changes to scar tissue. Similarly we see the monster undergoing improvements in his limb coordination and speaking ability as he gradually becomes more aware of what he is and who created him.

As the film plays out, we see the inherent tragedy of the story, as the monster attempts to make a life for itself in the only way it sees possible, whilst Frankenstein has to deal with the consequences of his actions.

The film is not fast moving, but still very enjoyable. There are some neat cameo appearances by John Cleese as a university professor and Richard Briers as a blind old man. Watch out for the latter in particular, as his scenes feature some of the most corny dialogue I have ever heard. Overall though, by concentrating on the aspects Mary Shelley emphasized and by maintaining the gothic feel without resorting to the usual clichés, I would say that it successfully manages to breathe fresh life into an old, often repeated, story and is well worth seeing.

— Paul J. Allwood



Primary Coat

Colin Greenland tries on his new jacket

One thing people always ask an author is: 'How much say do you have in your covers?'

The answer generally is: little, or none. Book covers are packaging, and publishers have art departments to deal with such things. Even if the art department consults you, they may decide they know better, as HarperCollins did about the dismal painting they received from a clearly unenthusiastic artist for the mass market paperback of *Harm's Way*. When I started to whine and beg for a new painting, they said: 'Actually, we've already had one, but we didn't show you that because we knew you'd hate it.'

So much for consultation.

This time, perhaps partly to make up for last time, and partly because it's a Tabitha Jute novel, they gave me Jim Burns.

Who phoned me up and said: 'What would you like?'

I was delighted, naturally.

One reason I was delighted was that Jim works mostly for American publishers, who command vast markets and therefore much larger budgets. If your publisher decides you deserve Jim Burns, they must like you.

Another cause for delight was, Jim reads the book. You and I, who love to read books, deride covers by artists who haven't; but the fact is, they're rarely paid enough to have time to read the book. They have to scurry from brief to brief to make anything like a living.

The third and most delightful thing was, Jim is the best. Technically. Imaginatively. And vocationally.

Few of cover artists are sf fans. Jim is. He's steeped in the stuff. He revels in it. His 1985 collection *Lightship* is a whole treasury of space opera scenery, props and characters.

Though it's classic Jim Burns, the cover of *Seasons of Plenty* represents, he says, something of a turning point for him. He's used a new technique, exploiting the different drying speeds of water and acrylics. It's a new scale - at 3'x4', this is a big Burns, giving him more scope, better resolution in print and a better show at an exhibition. And it has been, he says, more fun. Usually a book will yield a page or so of notes of nice visual bits, things that might go on the cover. Out of *Seasons* he got five pages. His pleasure meant a lot to me, not least because up to that point, nobody else in the world had read it.

Jim regrets it's not always practical to consult his authors. Most of them, obviously, he doesn't know personally. Most live in America. But he knows me, and knew I wouldn't mind him ringing up with peculiar questions, like: 'How big is a Thrant?'

Thrant are something like a big ape, as Tabitha discovered on board the *Ugly Truth*, and something like a big cat; and it's possible for a human to have sex with one, because Grant Nothing does, in *Seasons* - but is she bigger than him, or smaller?

While I was still puzzling over that one, the phone rang again. 'Jim Burns here. Colin. Has Xtasca got a navel?'

Well, has she? It, I mean? The Cherubim, children of the void: born, or built? Um ...

Then there was the coat.

Tabitha, on board *Plenty*, has a coat she likes to wear.

She collected Saskia, and her coat. It was a long black leather coat that they had found in her apartment, left behind, like everything else here. It wasn't new. In fact it was pretty shabby. The sleeves were a bit short, and the pockets were too small to put your hands in properly. But she liked it, and wore it constantly. It flapped and swung in the artificial gravity as they raced down Morningstar Drive to the Midway Lifts. Saskia won easily.

'Do you know anyone who's got a long black leather coat?' Jim asked me. 'I need one to photograph, so I can get the folds right.' He sounded slightly embarrassed about it, as though he thought I might expect a mere coat to be of no consequence to the Master of Bradford-upon-Avon. I, on the contrary, know something myself of the problems of *getting the folds right*, and I sympathised completely.

Cautiously I said: 'I've got a long black leather coat.' I warned him: 'It's pretty shabby. I bought it at Brick Lane market for a tenner, secondhand. I'm rather fond of it, actually.'

'Do you think I could borrow it?' asked Jim Burns.

So I sent him my coat; and in return, though I'm sure he didn't think of it that way, he sent me a sketch of Tabitha Jute that was almost scary. She looked so real I started to worry about the things I've been writing about her, and what she might say if she knew.

And when I saw the finished painting, I nearly cried.

I suppose, thinking about it now, that it wasn't very professional behaviour to sit cross-legged on the floor of the art director's office and gaze moistly at your new cover painting with your mouth open making hoarse little cooing noises of inarticulate rapture. What you're meant to do is stand with your head back, rub your chin and talk about barcodes and format ratios. We did all that too, afterwards, but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I just wanted to sit there forever, looking at her.

I've lived with this woman for twelve years now, on and off. That was the first time I've seen her.

Patsy Antoine, my editor, had the same reaction. She told me: 'I didn't want to leave it there.' She said: 'That's her, isn't it? That's Tabitha.'

Let me warn you, Tabitha Jute is not at her best, in *Seasons of Plenty*. She is in over her head - who wouldn't be? And let me promise you, she will come through, eventually, somehow, in the third and final book.

But it is her. It's Tabitha Jute. In her long black coat.

And Jim Burns says: 'I'm more pleased with that painting than with anything I've done in a long time.'

So am I. Oh yes, Jim: so am I.

—Colin Greenland

SF AND FANTASY ON VIDEO

Geoff Cowie

Current releases

MARIS THE WONDERGIRL (Manga Video, cert PG, 48 mins, £8.99)

A.k.a. *Supergal* a.k.a. *Maris the Choji*. In this space comedy, adapted from a *manga* story by Rumiko Takahashi, Maris is a Thanatosen and six times stronger than the average Earthling. She is employed by the Inter-Galactic Space patrol but is always broke because she accidentally smashes everything she touches. She is accompanied by a shape-changing fox with seven tails (a traditional creature from Japanese folklore). There is at least one reference to another piece of Takahashi - note the fleeting appearance of Jariten (Urusei Yatsura) in the beach scene.

This is a very funny video with much visual humour, but then it was just as funny in Japanese, and Manga Video have ruined the 'out-take' end credit sequence (which some fans thought was the best part) by compressing it to half the original width. Maris has a rather displeasing American accent. This is one of several recent releases where Manga Video (possibly inspired by favourable comments about Crusader's 'regional British accent' *Unkunkuku*), have given the characters a strange mix of international accents. All the other UK anime labels have produced dubbing to a consistently acceptable standard. Only Manga Video seems to have concluded that indifferent dubs sell just as well as good dubs, and that those who complain mostly don't buy Manga Videos anyway.

CLASH OF THE BIONOIDS (Kiseki, cert PG, 116 mins, £12.99)

A.k.a. *Macross - Do You Remember Love*; the movie spinoff from the original *Macross* Japanese TV series. There are several versions of the movie and this is the shorter one adapted for the American market. Visually it seems to differ little from the shorter (117 mins) Japanese edition, except for the titles and the fact that in the Japanese edition the aliens' dialogue is subtitled - in Japanese. An extended, two-hour version also exists and Kiseki may use this as the basis of a subtitled release of *Macross - Do You Remember Love* in Feb. 1995. So if you don't like dubbing you should wait for that.

This is rather different from most anime that has been released in the UK so far. Two hours of SF adventure intertwined with a triangle love story, played straight (i.e. no comedy) and with a sex & violence rating low enough to earn it a cert. PG, and lavishly animated. And all the characters are at least young adults. The story starts at the point where the giant battleship *Macross* is fighting near Saturn and has been out of touch with Earth for some time. During an attack, impetuous space pilot Hikaru disobey's the orders of his superior, Lieutenant Misa Hayase and consequently is able to rescue singer Lynn Minmay.

During the subsequent action, Hikaru becomes emotionally involved with two quite different women, the fun-loving singer and the severe officer Misa Hayase.

And the bionoids? The aliens comprise not one but two forces, the *Zentradi* and the *Meltrandi*, both bio-engineered and at war with each other as well as with Earth. The plot has much to do with alien culture; there are scenes in which the *Zentradi* puzzle over Terran artefacts [*As do I. - Chris*] or are bewildered by song broadcasts, but it would be unfair to give too much away. There are a number of points which would presumably have been familiar to Japanese viewers (or readers of the fan script translation) but are unclear in *Bionoids*: One of the female *Meltrandi* attackers, Miria 639, on the *Zentradi* ship reappears in later scenes with the *Macross* fighter pilot Max. In the final battle a split develops between compromise and

perpetual war factions in the *Zentradi*; a key sequence is an attack on the flagship *Boldoza* which happens to be an intelligent organic warship.

The dubbing, which probably is that done by the Japanese using American voice actors, is acceptable, with all the major persona sounding in-character. It preserves the Japanese versions of the character names, and the prominently featured Japanese songs (not subtitled). It's a fairly exciting, if not over-plotted story and has, in pilot Hikaru, Misa Hayase and singer Lynn Minmay, three interesting and quite believable principal characters. The animation, intended to be seen on a big screen, looks a bit cramped and lacking in crispness on video but there is some excellent art in the 'city' sequence at 1hr 3mins onwards. Indeed, this section, once seen on a big screen, is alone enough to sell the video.

This is distinctly better and more serious than *Macross II* and goes a long way to explaining why the original *Macross* was so popular in Japan. Verdict: worth a look, but if you want a more literal, possibly expanded and less dumbed-down version, wait for the subtitled edition (and write to Kiseki encouraging them to issue it).

ROUJIN Z (dir. Otomo; Manga Video, 80m, cinema release cert.12; video release Sept. 12th).

The theme of *Roujin Z* is a real one that is worrying Japan's rulers as I write this - the care of Japan's large elderly population. Japan has the world's longest life expectancy. The story opens as conscientious student nurse Haruko is calling on Mr Takazawa, a bedridden old man she looks after in her spare time. Mr Takazawa is taken away to become the guinea pig for a project in computerised health care. So far, this sounds like the scenario for a rather sombre or low-key film like *Tombstone of the Fireflies*, or *Only Yesterday* (both infinitely more worthy of UK release than *Guy*, below), but this is a film by the creator of *Akira*, and the action gets more and more amazing as the story unfolds.

Though this is a shorter and more modest film than *Akira* was, it still stands out from the flood of anime releases.

GUY (Amimania, cert. 18, 70 mins, £12.99)

Disappointing first release from a new British label, which promises to provide '18-rated anime with attitude'. *Guy* is a space/tentacle/monster adventure distinguished mainly by liberal displays of lesbian soft porn. Fairly harmless but likely to be appreciated mainly by fans of *Urotsuki Doji 2* and its ilk.

Most anime is 'cute' and, by Japanese standards it is, suitable for family viewing, so it's no surprise that the raunchier stuff dredged up for UK '18 cert' video is often rather uninspiring. Perhaps we should send Chris Smith the sales figures for Disney's million-selling family-orientated animated videos.

GUNBUSTER 3-4; 5-6 (Kiseki, 60 mins ea. PG, £10.99) subtitled. Continuation of the 6 part series, in which cute schoolgirl Noriko follows in the footsteps of her space hero father. Vol. 2 has the super-deformed 'classroom' inserts between episodes, just like the original Japanese release. The series incorporates unusually many of the most popular ingredients of Japanese animation and as it progresses the mixture of adventure, romance and SF becomes increasingly serious, with Part 5 almost unbearably emotional and action-packed, and the concluding part 6, for artistic reasons, letterboxed and in black & white.

A rare opportunity to see the best of anime in subtitled form. Highly recommended.

WAX, OR THE DISCOVERY OF TELEVISION AMONG THE BEES (David Blar, 85m, £22, limited edition of 500)

Bizarre and intriguing SF video about enigmatic Mesopotamian bees, state of the art weapons, and strange planets, and narrated entirely in voice-over. The hero seems to be having a nervous breakdown and there are a lot of striking video effects. Should appeal to fans of literary SF, cyberpunk, or art cinema. Available from BBR, PO Box 625, Sheffield S1 3GY.

THE WIND OF AMNESIA, Manga Video, 80 mins, £12.99, cert 15.

Also known as *A Wind Called Amnesia* which is a more literal translation of the original title, this movie is adapted from an SF novel by Hideyuki Kikuchi. A sudden disaster strips mankind of all memory, speech and reason and thus brings about the abrupt extinction of civilisation. The hero, Wataru, survives with the help of a non-amnesiac boy, and later teams up with a strange young woman, Sophie. It's a road movie of a sort, in which the journey serves to break up the story into sections. One of the most fascinating sequences occurs when the two stumble on an ideal town, still

inhabited, and under the control of a master computer.

A strong script and good dubbing that recaptures the tone of the original dialogue make for compelling viewing. There are a few wobbly bits in the plot, and the use of voice-over seems a little excessive at times, both problems deriving from the original version. On the plus side, some of the visuals are superb. A serious-minded movie, and surely one of the best things Manga Video have done so far. Surprisingly, the Manga version seems much more powerful than the original, even though I'd read a script for the latter.

GALACTIC PIRATES I,II,III, Western Connection, £10.99, 50mins, cert.18.

Based on an award-winning SF novel by Kambayashi Chohei, this may be better known to some as *The Enemy Are Pirates*. The first three parts have been released simultaneously. At first viewing this series can be highly disconcerting: a fast-paced mixture of cop show, space opera and acid trip, with two detectives, Latell, and Apollo from the Cat Planet, a sweet young cop, Marsha and a talking computer, Dolar. Their last-chance assignment is to rid the universe of the Galactic Pirates: yes, "The enemy are pirates". There is a contemporary music soundtrack and all the dialogue is American streetwise, and fairly well dubbed. This is all great fun and clearly aimed at a fairly sophisticated audience.

Only the first volume was given an 18 cert. for reasons best known to the BBFC, and the other two could have been 15 but were labelled as 18 by the distributor. The complete antidote to *Star Trek*. Try it.

MERMAID FOREST, Manga Video, 56mins, £8.99, dubbed, cert.18.

MERMAID FOREST, US Manga Corps, 55 mins, subtitled, \$35, unrated.

Rumiko Takahashi's *manga* story was based on Japanese legends, in which eating the flesh of a mermaid can confer eternal life — at a price. The eternal life can be a lonely hell. A catalogue of the nasty things that happen in this video, like sudden death, bloodletting, and gruesome medical experiments, could be misleading as it is not particularly gory or explicit. Rather, on a first viewing it works on the imagination to curdle the blood in the way that the best horror movies do.

Manga Video's low-priced mass-market version uses a rather free translation which isn't quite as good as the subtitles, and though the dubbing sounds a little flat, it's quite acceptable. Definitely one of Manga Video's better offerings.

GUNBUSTER (Kiseki, cert PG, subtitled) should appeal to SF fans of all ages. Cute schoolgirl Noriko enters the Space High School for Girls and has a lot of trouble with giant robot-suits. She's following in the footsteps of her hero father, which causes some resentment among her schoolmates. This has fine characterisation, comedy with subtle parody of certain anime themes, action, and even a weirdly deformed 'science' lesson. Recommended.

URUSEI YATSURA TV Episodes Vol.1 (Anime Projects) £12.99, 100 mins, subtitled, cert 15. (Eps.#1-#8)

URUSEI YATSURA TV Episodes Vol.2 (Anime Projects) £12.99, 100 mins, subtitled, cert 15. (Eps.#9 to #16)

The origins of the scenario for this SF romantic comedy is explained in the first TV volumes; those who have only seen the movies may well find these illuminating! The alien devil-girl Lum falls for Ataru Moroboshi, an unlucky youth who also happens to be a compulsive girl-chaser. Ataru's nice schoolgirl girlfriend Shinobu is unamused. In vol.2 some more of creator Rumiko Takahashi's large cast of characters, including Sakura, a Shinto sorceress, and Oyuki, an ice-princess from Neptune, are introduced.

Confused video collectors should note that the short episodes are arranged in 25 min. pairs. These early TV episodes, shot in 16mm with mono sound, have modest production values but the level of comic invention and amusing characterisation remains exceptionally high. Recommended.

Also received and mainly for kids were: **DANGAIO** (Manga Video, £12.99, 80 mins, cert. 15), a typical team/giant robot video series clearly aimed at the young, silly but quite fun. Collectors should note that this actually contains parts #2 and #3 of the original series, plus a short introduction! Pity about the 15 certificate and the swearing. **AMBASSADOR MAGMA** (Kiseki, £12.99, cert.15.) is retro styled

superhero stuff based on Osamu Tezuka's original *manga*. Strictly for kids or retro freaks. **THE GUYVER #2** (Manga Video) £5.99. (2nd of 12), cert 15 is also more suited for the young. In this one, schoolboy Shu gets wrapped up in bio-booster armour, and fights a martial arts expert similarly equipped. The unhealthy-looking *Hellkat* comic is inside the box sleeve. If you like schoolboy wish-fulfilment, then this is the sort of thing you like, otherwise avoid it.

If, like Andrew Boulton, you want to see the uncut version of *Urotsuki Doji* you will face harassment by the police and Customs. Unless, of course, you go to the USA, or Japan, Belgium, Denmark, or indeed many other countries where they don't make the media a scapegoat for complex social problems. However I find it unfortunate that so much fuss is made about this atypical and increasingly tiresome series.

On the other hand, it should be clearly understood by all of you that an early and unrestricted attack of the Alton moral panic would certainly have prevented the release of *Urotsuki Doji* and other adult-orientated anime. This would have removed a cash cow and in turn made the remainder of Manga Video's ambitious release program uneconomic. Without Manga Video's releases there would have been no UK anime market in which Anime Projects, Kiseki, Crusader and Western Connection could release their competing products. So we probably would have had no UK anime at all.

ALSO RECEIVED

BLACK MAGIC MARIO M-66 (Kiseki, 45m, cert.15, £10.99)

Dubbed version of the underground fan classic. A tautly plotted SF thriller about a runaway military robot, made all the more effective by the innocuous mannequin-like appearance of the human-sized robot. Recommended. Subtitled version issued Sept 1993 at £12.99.

DEVILMAN (Manga Video, cert.18, 52m, £12.99)

Stylish and well-scripted horror, despite some indifferent dubbing. Recommended.

THUNDERBIRDS 2086 vol III (ITC Home Video, 100 mins, cert U, £8.99)

Not bearing much resemblance to the original Anderson series, this has American type juvenile stories and dialogue, with Japanese animation. Should keep your kids quiet and the opening animation looks interesting. My nephews didn't think much of it, though.

THE GUYVER (Manga Video, 30m each, cert.15, £5.99)

Three more half-hour episodes of the monster transformation series; juvenile, but exciting and quite well produced. My young nephew likes it. Inside the covers is a comic strip that seems to have been penned by 18 yr. old horror fetishists.

MONSTER CITY (Manga Video, 84 mins, cert.18, £12.99)

A.k.a *Hell City - Shinjuku*. Best known in the fan underground for the visuals which include dream-like sequences and some beautiful character designs. The plot, in which a youth armed with a wooden practice sword takes on a swarm of demons, is rubbish. Manga Video have given the Japanese characters a strange mix of international accents.

TOKYO BABYLON I (Manga Video, cert.15, 46 mins, £10.99).

Despite Manga's tacky efforts on the sleeve to make it seem nasty, it's about a medium, his cute twin sister and her boyfriend, and a cute mysterious girl, and is based on a *shojo manga* (=girls' comic) penned by an all-woman collective. Includes two catchy love songs.

GUNHED (Manga Video, cert 15, 80 mins, £12.99.)

Video release of rather confused live-action SF movie, reviewed in *Matrix 111*.

NOTE: All titles are PAL and English dialogue unless otherwise stated, and all Manga Video and Kiseki releases have hi-fi stereo sound. Other releases may be mono. All videos are available from Cybertek, Agora Centre, Blechley, tel 0908-274850.

— Geoff Cowie

Local Clubs

Please let me know if any of this information is incorrect or out-of-date. I would also like to hear of any new sf-related clubs and societies.

✉ **Jackie McRobert** is currently preparing a comprehensive list of all the sf-related clubs and societies in the UK. This is being done for Intercession next year and will be produced in the form of a map for distribution at the Worldcon; it will also be a valuable resource for BSFA members, so any details given to me will be passed on to Jackie. If you think your club may not be known to us please tell us about it! Send details to *Chris Terran* at the editorial address.

— *Chris*

Polaris, the St. Albans SF Society, meet in The Plough, Tynenhanger Green (nr St. Albans) on the first Tuesday of the month. We are the usual small, local, social club with designs on taking over the world. Details from: "Nostromo", 39 Rodney Ave., St. Albans, Herts AL1 5ST or metowarto@dx.computlink.co.uk

— *Martin Stewart*

The **Birmingham SF Group** meets at 7:45pm on the third Friday of each month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs function room of the Australian Bar, corner of Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street in Birmingham city centre. £10 annual subscription. For details and a sample newsletter (published monthly): news, reviews and events listings as well as BSFG info) contact **Bernie Evans**, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 4SH or tel. 021 558 0997.

— *Martin Tudor*

The **North Cheshire Group** (amalgamating the Chester & Warrington groups; also known as the Warrington group) meets at about 8:30pm on the first and third Thursdays of the month. The current meeting place is the Spread Eagle in Lymm, but as it does change from time to time you should check first: **Mike & Alison Scott**, 2 Craithie Road, Vicars Cross, Chester CH3 4JL or tel. 0244 342396 or email Mike@moose.demon.co.uk

— *Mike Scott*

The location of the **London Filk Meeting** ("Wiggle") is subject to change, but is currently the Melton Mowbray on Holborn (directly opposite the main entrance of Schloss Pru, very near Chancery Lane tube). Usually the last Friday of the month, but changes in December and if it clashes with a major con. Social meeting, not singing. Usually a few people there from very early (after work). Check before travelling. Contact: **Rafe Culpin**, 12 Tower Hamlets Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4RH or tel. 081 521 3784 or email rafe@dx.computlink.co.uk

The **Aberdeen Area Science Fiction Group** meets on a Friday night around the middle of each month, upstairs in the Blue Lamp pub on Gallowgate, Aberdeen. Posters in local shops, libraries, the University etc advertise each meeting in advance. Monthly meetings alternate between a Team Quiz event and Something Else (talks, soapboxes, guest authors etc etc). Entrance/membership free to all except under-18s (the room has a bar). Contact: **Pete Binfield**, 30 South Mount Street, Aberdeen AB2 4TB or email p.binfield@aberdeen.ac.uk

— *Pete Binfield*

Conventions

January is a sparse month for conventions, so we kick off with...

Iran Sept

The seventh UK FilkCon will be at the Royal Cambridge Hotel in Cambridge on 3-5 February 1995. Guest of honour is **Joey Shoji** and Filker of the note is **Phillip Alcock**. Membership is £22 attending (£17 unwaged) and £10 supporting.

Contact: **Transept**, 2 Westbrook Park Road, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9JG

✉ Filk is sf- and fantasy-related music. Sometimes serious, often humorous, filk conventions feature performances, workshops and loads of musical fun.

MicroCon 15

Exeter University, 4-5 March 1995. Guest of honour is **Ramsey Campbell**.

Contact: *Microcon 15*, 17 Polsoe Road, Exeter, EX1 2HL

Timewarp

is a **Star Trek** con to be held at the Grand Hotel, Malahide, Dublin

on 4-5 March 1995.

Contact: *Timewarp*, 30 Beverley Downs, Knocklyon, Dublin 16

Piccon 12

is a one-day convention at Imperial College in London on Sunday 12 March 1995; it features **Iain Banks**.

Contact: *Piccon 12*, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX or email bmh@oe.ic.ac.uk

Trek Dwarf 3

is a combined **Star Trek** and **Red Dwarf** convention at the Holiday Inn, Leicestershire on 17-19 March 1995. Registration is £35.

Contact: *Trek Dwarf 3*, 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough

Star Winds

is a one-day event in Portsmouth on 18 March organised as part of the Portsmouth Festival. It will feature **Ian Watson** and others. Registration is £7.50 or £10 at the door.

Contact: *Star Winds*, 38 Outram Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hants PO5 1OZ

ConFusion

Held in Geraardsbergen in Belgium on 8 - 9 April 1995, ConFusion's guests will be **Christopher Priest**, **Leigh Kennedy**, **Jannelles Smith**, **Bob Van Laerhoven** and **Hugo Raes**. According to the organisers, "Geraardsbergen is a small town, where the inhabitants are unified by the mountain dominating the city, and the water, which is soaking the underground. The mountain is often used by famous cycle races, like the Tour de France; meanwhile, the water is protruding as wells all over the place. The mountain is as high as the Saturn V moonrocket: 110.60 metres."

Programming includes items on biotechnology; humour; Perry Rhodan; Huxley, Orwell, and Zamyatin; and a lecture on chess in SF. Rates: £20 until 31 Dec 95; £21.50 until 15 Mar 95; £23.50 thereafter. Contact: *ConFusion*, c/o Peter Motte, Abdijstraat 33, B - 9500 Geraardsbergen, Belgium.

Confabulation

is the 1995 Eastercon to be held at the Britannia International Hotel in London's Docklands on 14-17 April. Guests of honour are **Lois McMaster Bujold**, **Bob Shaw**, and **Roger Robinson**. Membership is £20 attending and £10 supporting if you join before 31 December 1994; children born on or after 14 April 1981 pay £10 attending, and children born on or after 14 April 1987 do not need to pay anything, but can join the convention (and get a badge) for a nominal £1. Hotel room rates (inclusive of VAT and full English breakfast) are £31 per person per night for a twin or double, and £37 for a single.

Contact: *Confabulation*, 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH or email confab@moose.demon.co.uk

Intersection

The big one! The Scottish one! The 1995 World Science Fiction Convention — the 53rd — will be taking over Glasgow from 24-28 August. The programming, in various ways, will exploit the theme of "intersections": for example, guests of honour **Samuel R. Delany** and **Gerry Anderson** (creator of *Thunderbirds* and many other favourites) will attempt to find some common ground between literary and media sf, and the intersection between science and sf will be explored. Membership is £80.

Contact: *Intersection*, Admal 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR or email intersection@smof.demon.co.uk

1996 Eastercon flies to Heathrow

Evolution, the 1996 national SF convention, will be held at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow on 5-8 April 1996. Originally the Brighton Metropole was to be the venue but the management there was not willing to host the event and another site in Brighton proved impossible to find. The Radisson - a 5-star hotel with a swimming pool (so look out for some interesting events there!) - has not been used for an Eastercon before, but the *Archon Star Trek* convention was held there earlier this year and was a great success. Guests at Evolution will be **Vernor Vinge**, **Jack Cohen**, **Colin Greenland**, and **Bryan Talbot**. Reduced room rates have been negotiated as follows (breakfast included): £30 per person per night sharing in a double or twin room; £28 pppn in a triple room; £50 for single occupancy of a double room. These rates also apply for the previous and following weeks.

Refunds are available for members unable to attend outside Brighton. Membership rates for Evolution are £20 attending and £12 supporting and child rate; these apply until 18 April 1995.

Contact: *Evolution*, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX or email bmh@oe.ic.ac.uk

Minor Incisions

Simon Ounsley

I've been thinking back and it's frightening. The last time I did a fanzine review column for *Matrix*, the Falklands War was on. At that time, I was co-editing the first issue of a new fiction magazine called *Interzone*, a pint of beer cost two and a half pence; and the editor of *Matrix* had to paste up his issue on the dining room table. And I should explain to some of our younger, more technically oriented readers that when I use the word "paste" in this context I am not talking about simply pressing a button on a keyboard. I am talking about real paste. (It comes in a bottle and you have to squeeze it out.)

(Oh yes, you're right — I lied about the price of beer.)

In those days, it never occurred to me to explain in my *Matrix* column what fanzines actually were. I just sort of took it for granted that people knew, and most of the time they probably did. But now the world has changed and most fans of sf know a lot more about *Star Trek* than they do about Arthur C. Clarke. The world of the printed page has been buried in an avalanche of videotape, and those strange things with coloured paper and staples which some fans still send to each other must seem to many to be an anachronism — like Jean-Luc Picard picking up a telephone with a circular dial to speak from the bridge of the *Starship Enterprise*. I mean, why don't we just phone people up? Why don't we send E-mail? If we must use the post, why don't we send videotapes?

I shall attempt, briefly, to explain.

Fanzines grew out of necessity. In the early days of science fiction, fans of the genre were few and far between, not everyone had a telephone, and people were less mobile than they are today. So they invented fanzines so they could communicate with like-minded people. Over the years, this necessity diminished but fanzines continued because people like them and they were developing into a kind of art form all of their own. Over the years, too, they began to be less concerned with science fiction and more with the fans themselves: less likely to carry book reviews and more likely to have convention reports, in which the antics of the fans were often reported in greater detail than the events of the official programme. And this still holds true to this day. Many fanzines still mention science fiction, at least in passing, but the subject matter as a whole tends to be wider than that. Like life, for instance.

So what, you may ask, have fanzines got to do with you? After all, you joined the BSFA because you were interested in science fiction. All this "fan" business seems a little obscure. And so, indeed, it is. But consider this: we are all of us coming from the same place. We are all here because we have the kind of mind which is — or has been — stimulated by the limitless potential of science fiction. We are interested in "what ifs?", in what might be out there, in "where did we all come from?" and "what are we doing here anyway?" We are interested in looking at our existence in new, different ways, through the filter of an alien mind or a world turned upside down by some extraordinary twist or tweak of reality. And when it comes down to it, all science fiction is rooted in the real world. The most fantastic alien that has ever been created (suggestions on a postcard) will still have its origins in the author's experience of the here and now. This is a limitation and also a great strength of science fiction. Because all science fiction reflects back on the real world — and the best science fiction illuminates it very tellingly indeed.

So when we write about the real world in fanzines we are not necessarily looking at it in the same way as the man who comes to read the gas meter or the guy who runs "nPVC Garden Gnomes PLC" — unless of course, as is entirely possible, they are science fiction enthusiasts themselves. We are looking at it in a quirky, often surrealistic sort of way, expecting at any

moment to see the fantastic emerging out of the commonplace, and looking at it also — and this is important — with an open mind, prepared to give a chance to concepts and ways of being which might have the man who comes to read the gas meter throwing up his hands in horror and bolting off without his torch. The best fanzines, like the best sf conventions, are a meeting place, a nexus, a — goodness me — an interzone even, where people who are open to new ideas can come along and trade them. Where people can sit down and warp reality together, bouncing their visions of the world off the distorting mirror of somebody else in the hope of revealing some new truth or insight. (Or, to be perfectly honest, just of getting a laugh.)

And the very best thing about fanzines is that you can be a part of it all yourself. You don't have to just read them. You are encouraged, indeed, *not* to just read them. You can send letters to them, you can even do *your own*. And when you do your own fanzine, you are free to put in it whatever you want. There are no commercial limitations imposed on you. Even in these dying gasps of the millennium, fanzines still remain miraculously free of commercialism. You can simply write away about whatever you want to your heart's content and then you can send it out to people and get response! The only potential drawback is that some swine like me might come along and tell you if they don't think it's very good — but I'm sure you can cope with that.

(And, technophiles take note, this is finally where you get to use that mega-expensive DTP package someone bootlegged for you months ago and has been sitting unheeded on your hard disc ever since because you had nothing to do with it. Now's the time. Get those templates made and those paragraphs justified. The world is your oyster.)

So it all sounds fun, doesn't it? It does to me. Maybe I'm just easily amused though, so now I'm going to talk about a few actual fanzines and you can send for some or all of them and see what you think for yourselves. All the fanzines I'm going to mention are available for "the usual", which means a show of interest, letter of comment, maybe an article or artwork (if it's that kind of fanzine), or your own fanzine in trade. Which means that you can just write off and say please and the chances are you'll get a fanzine in return. And if you enclose a few postage stamps as well they'll probably love you for ever.

Right then — let's look at the fanzines.

Greg Pickersgill's *Rastus Johnson's Cakewalk* won the Nova Award for best fanzine of the year at the recent Novacon convention — and deservedly so. Greg has been one of the most influential figures in British fandom in the past twenty years and *RJC* has continued this tradition, providing a welcome focal point for discussion of the state of fandom. *RJC* is not the sort of fanzine you leave lying around unread. Greg is that rare thing in the world of fanzines — and, indeed, anywhere else — someone who says what he thinks and damn the consequences. If everyone was like Greg, the world would be a more colourful and very much more difficult place to live in. Saying what you think can help to clear away confusion and get things done, and also be damaging and hurtful — but one thing is certain: it makes for riveting reading. One of the things which has made *RJC* so compulsive is wondering what Greg is going to say next and who he's going to say it about. I don't think he sets out with any malevolence in mind, it's just that he has a lot of anger inside him and sometimes it has to come out, and the person who gets most damaged by some of his less temperate writing is probably himself. I write a lot of things about my personal life in fanzines but I've always got one eye on what my readership is going to think of me in reaction to what I write, and because of that I hold back a bit. I think that's true of almost everyone, but it isn't true of Greg. He doesn't so much wear his heart on his sleeve as plastered all over the page. This is what he says and this is what he is and if we don't like it we can damn well go and read someone else's bloody fanzine.

Incidentally, Greg also won the Nova for best fan writer this year, but said he thought he didn't deserve it. I think he's a better writer than he thinks he is. *RJC*'s prose flows and you can hear Greg's voice behind it and that's not as easy to achieve as some might think. He also wrote (in *RJC* 3 I think) that he couldn't tell an anecdote to save his life (or something like that) and then went on to give the lie to this statement by writing a piece about famous sf author Chris Evans' intestinal difficulties

which is as funny a piece of writing as I've ever come across. Maybe he should write more anecdotes.

Maybe he should write more about anything, indeed, other than the state of fandom. (Yes, you've guessed it. This is the more critical bit.) It's probably ridiculous of me to mention this because after all *RJC* is obsession-driven and Greg is obsessed about fandom and why not, but I have to say that at least 70% of this current issue is about the state and nature of fandom (elitism, fan rooms, the position of fanzine fans in relation to the whole etc etc) and I have to say that I'm getting a little bit sick of it. Indeed, if you're new to fanzines, I can't really recommend *RJC*, good as it is, as the ideal place to start because the chances are you'll find it altogether too inward-looking, too much concerned with the state of its own navel. Having said which, there is other good stuff in the issue: Greg's line-up for the ideal SF anthology, for instance, (yes, Greg is very much in the "What the hell's wrong with SF in a fanzine anyway!" camp, and I'll go along with that every time) and — stand-out part of the issue — a wonderful letter from famous *Interzone* writer David Redd. In this, he writes persuasively about the nature of at least one virtual reality which is waiting for us around the next bend into the future and does so by reference to the fantasy writings of the Brontë family. This is fanzine writing at its very best: an interzone indeed, past and future meeting in a moment of inspired creation: the future oozing fully formed from a single mind. It's worth getting *RJC* 7 for this alone.

Martin Tudor's *Empties* is in many ways an antithesis of *RJC*. Whereas the vast majority of *RJC* is about fandom, *Empties* hardly mentions it at all. There's a reason for this. The present issue (No. 14), along with several before it, has a theme: in this case "First Times . . .", so people write about their first time going to a football match, their first parachute jump, their first time buying a computer etc etc . . . And Darroll Pardoe chips in with a single fanfannish connection: his first fanzine.

Personally, I think making a habit of theme issues is shooting yourself in the foot. Unless you choose a good subject, it's a recipe for a series of articles that are necessarily repetitious, and the tendency for there to be little or no connection with fandom is also a minus, at least as far as I'm concerned. I've criticised *RJC* for an over-obsession with fandom, but my own preference in a fanzine is to have a mixture of the two types of writing: fanfannish orientated and non-fannish orientated. To have almost no fanfannish connection, other than the fact that the people writing the articles are fans, is to lose much of the sense of immediacy that a good fanzine should have. I've talked about *RJC* not remaining unread for very long because you're dying to know who Greg's been talking about. There just isn't the same desperate urge somehow to find out about how someone got on at their first football match or whether their first computer was a Sinclair ZX or an Amstrad PCW.

Having said which, if you've got to have a theme then "First Times . . ." isn't a bad one. At least the articles are about essentially different subjects and there are some gems among them: Richard Standage's excruciating description of his "emergency circumcision" (every bit as engaging and horrific as it sounds — to this male reader anyway), and evocative pieces by Chris Murphy on his first experience of TV, and David Redd (him again) on his first Punch and Judy show. The stand-out article though is Helena Bowles on her first (and — as far as I know — current at the time of writing) pregnancy. This is a wonderful piece of writing, telling eloquently of the conflicting emotions which an unexpected pregnancy can bring. It's intelligent, moving, compulsive reading. I can't recommend it too highly.

But, to be honest, there are an awful lot of rather slight articles in this issue too. They're all readable and might have gone down quite nicely with meatier pieces to either side but a succession of them gives the impression of something rather hollow. All in all, there's a marked lack of passion in the issue all the way between Helena's opening article and a closing (and memorable) letter from Eda Wheeler about her sense of geographical alienation. The articles in between might have worked better with a bit of editorial glue between them but Martin, though he contributes an editorial and one of the better, weightier articles (about the first time he had sex), is a bashful editor and prefers to leave his writers just to get on with it for the most part. This is a pity. Fanzines should have their editor's

personality shining through them. Martin leaves his altogether too much in the background for my taste.

Attitude 3 from the editorial trio of Michael Abbott, John Dallman, and Pam Wells is perhaps the most ambitious fanzine of the ones I'm reviewing here. *Attitude* was launched about six months ago with the specific intention of becoming a central point of fanfannish interest and generating enough ongoing discussion to spill over into a convention some time in 1996, thereby miraculously carrying British fandom over the slough of despond into which it might otherwise sink in the wake of next year's Glasgow World SF Convention. Having set themselves such a praiseworthy, demanding and unprecedented agenda, their first issues were almost certain to disappoint and, as far as I'm concerned, they duly did. My favourite parts of the first two issues were a cartoon by D. West (the Clute one in issue two for those that saw it) and an article in issue one by Linda Krawecka about buying a dog. This was a wonderful piece of anecdotal writing, looking at the whole exercise from the kind of skewed viewpoint I was talking about in my introduction, but it seemed to have little to do with the rest of the issue or with the overall concept of the fanzine. The other articles had some interesting ideas in them but they seemed to be filtered through a kind of viscous numbing sludge, as though the editors were weighed down by the responsibility they had placed upon their own shoulders.

This sludge seems to infect much of issue 3 as well, notably the contributions from editors Michael Abbott and Pam Wells. Michael is an engaging and stimulating conversationalist but so far the sort of concerned urgency he exhibits in person doesn't seem to have found its way onto the printed page. Or, to be more precise, the concern has found its way but not the urgency. His article this time is about his love affair with Britain but most of it seems rather dull and repetitive and the article only comes alive close to the end, when Michael writes about opening up an Ordnance Survey map of the place where he grew up and reconnecting with his childhood through the landscape he can see on the page before him. This is a memorable moment and perhaps bodes well for the writing that Michael will produce when he's finally broken through the sludge.

Pam's contribution is more uniformly unsuccessful, written not in the usual, informal style of the fanzine but in the self-consciously literary style of the small press magazine or the creative writing class. Pam is trying desperately to communicate here and the feelings are real — ones from deep inside of her. There is passion but there is also sludge. Rather than helping to communicate, most of the words actually seem to get in the way. This is an ambitious piece of writing and to try out a new kind of style is praiseworthy but I'm kind of surprised that this article actually made it as far as publication. I mean: "a snatch of a song from yesteryear"? Are you serious? When you're using words you normally only hear on Radio Two, you really ought to know you need a re-write.

Elsewhere, the passion seems to be kept in by deliberate suppression. John Richards contributes a telling insider article about the organisational shortcomings of Helicon but wraps it up with the words: "it may be efficient and it may be democratic but, for raving egotists like myself, it isn't very much fun". Whereas I think simply to say that it was crap would have been more appropriate. Mind you, I suppose this is admirable tact and diplomacy. No doubt it's personally damning that my own tastes run more to Pickersgill's style.

Maureen Kincaid Speller contributes to the general mealy-mouthedness with what is, I suppose, a polemical piece about the virtues of visionary rather than extrapolative science fiction. Hurrah! But she refers to a speech in which the opposite opinion was put forward by someone she simply refers to as "Mr Author" throughout the article. Why on earth doesn't she name the guy? It would be so much more interesting if she'd got a bit personal. How can you have polemic without blood? I found myself wishing that Greg Pickersgill would leap onto the stage, take off "Mr Author's" mask and then, when we'd all had a chance to see who he was, chop off his head with an axe. I mean, in this fanzine supposed to have attitude or what? Let's see a few windows broken, you guys.

The fanzine review column, at any rate, comes as a welcome breath of fresh air after all the pussy-footing about. Jim De

Liscard? I've been in this fanzine business sixteen years but I've never even heard of the guy. He knows a thing or two though. There should be a law against new people coming in and knowing so much. With a few well-chosen swipes, he puts his blade through a good proportion of the rotting planks of fanzines. Listen to this for instance: "(Fanzines) always seem full of people who obviously got extremely excited about being able to write another 'What I Did In My Holidays' essay when they were at school." Now why does that make me think of *Empties*?

And to make matters worse, he mentions numerous fanzines, including his own, which I've never heard of and which are, apparently, "not generally available". Whaaaat? (Ellitist bastards.) And what is even worse: they sound really good, full of the sort of surrealist humour I really love: "people leaving whole counties behind in hotel rooms, inflatable partners in hand-bags in case the original bursts" and "fourteen pubs balance on top of each other on a ley line and all the trains go to the same place". All sounds good, doesn't it? Pity we can't get them. "Waaauughhh!" is they used to say in the Disney comics.

So, fanzine review column aside, is this issue of *Attitude* another disappointing one? Well yes and no. While most of the articles still fail to deliver, the letter column is starting to bubble along quite nicely, which is an unusual thing for a letter column in my experience. As often as not they tend to be rather boring. Now this suggests two things:

1) That many other readers haven't found the fanzine as disappointing as I have (and this does indeed seem to be the case), and

2) The editors are now within sprinting distance of one of their objectives, which is to get enough discussion going to spill over into the mooted con.

Which means in turn that

3) They're probably perfectly happy to say "Yah boo sucks!" to me whatever I think of their fanzine anyway.

Moving on, *Moriarty's Revenge* 3 from Dave Hicks is the next one along. Dave was producing a fanzine with Pete Wright called *Old Scrodd's Almanac* (I think) back when I was writing my regular *Matrix* review column ten years ago, then he fell silent until just recently when *Moriarty's Revenge* made its debut. Issue 3 is good, readable stuff with an engaging report on Wincon, some observations on the nature of fanzine art, and yet another interesting letter column. Not much more to say about this one really except that Dave's a good writer and I hope to see further issues. Good grief - is that really all I have to say? It seems to be. Next . . .

Lilian Edwards' *The Wrong Leggings* provides just the mix of fanciful and real world material I like: with a couple of "fannish controversy" items (on the transatlantic fan fund (TAFF) and her ambivalent attitude to letters of comment), two pieces of travel writing (on Prague and Budapest), and a guest piece of non-travel writing from Christina Lake. Christina has always wanted to go on a round-the-world tour but has never had the guts to go through with it before. She thinks the time is right now but on the other hand . . . As a confirmed stay-at-home in the great adventure of life, I found this an entertaining piece of sustained pontification and I look forward to further articles by Christina on the same subject in the decades to come.

Lilian can also be a very good writer when she puts her mind to it and for just about all of this fanzine she does. My favourite bit is her idiot's guide to the various architectural styles of Prague:

"Romanesque: old and thick. Rounded arches. Looks like it has been designed using a very elementary Paint program which isn't clever enough to do ovals."

"Gothic: architectural technology progresses to the point where walls can be thinner and buildings taller and more graceful, 'extending to God'. In fact they got so tall and thin they had to be held up with extra struts called flying buttresses, rather like the way I have to make my geraniums stay up by fastening them to garden canes."

Yes, yes. More please. This is excellent writing and it occurs to me that Lilian could easily give up her lecturing job and write books full of this sort of stuff: explaining brain surgery in terms of needlepoint and the theory of relativity in terms of pepperoni pizza and that sort of thing. Go for it, Lilian.

Ian Sorensen isn't as good a writer as he'd like to be but he's a better one than he thinks he is and he's heading further in the right direction all the time. The previous *Bob*, in amongst other more uneven material, featured a wonderful article about family funerals which was funny and touching at the same time and cast a bit of doubt on the widely held belief that Sorensen is shallow, glib, has no soul etc etc . . . This time (in issue 7) he's put his finer feelings back in his wallet (or whatever other impenetrable place he keeps them) and goes all out for being funny once again. And most of the time he succeeds. The least good article is one about the troubles he's been having with his car (memo to new fanzine writers: never write about the troubles you're having with your car — for some reason they never seem to be funny) and the best is a wonderfully surrealistic piece called "Sitcom Verité" in which Ian mixes in elements of his everyday life with unintentionally funny news reports and attacks by geese etc etc. Ian's earliest fannish work consisted of his so-called "fannish operas" which as far as I can remember were a series of puns strung together and performed at conventions — and it's interesting that his touch seems surer in the "screenplay" format of "Sitcom Verité" than it normally does in his prose pieces. Is this significant, I wonder?

Bob is rounded off with four pages of lavish D. West cartoons. West won the Fan Artist Nova Award this year, and if you see these cartoons you won't be surprised. My favourite single moment in the fanzine, however, is Jackie McRobert's response to an inquiry about her sexual history. She says . . .

No, no, on second thoughts I can't tell you. You'll have to send for the fanzine to find out . . .

And finally, as Trevor Macdonald would say, we come to *Galjin* 4 from Steve Green. This is another theme fanzine but Steve has chosen such a good one (Secret Fears . . . Private Pleasures) that it actually works very well. (You will, of course, ignore the fact that I am one of the contributors as a source of potential bias here). Did I mention things that would scare the gas meter man in my introduction? This is the sort of thing I had in mind, I think: Dan Stefan on the artform of tattooing; Jenny Fields on body piercing in a very strange place; Deborah Ryder on the legal implications of sado-masochism; Steve and I on fears of death; Linda Krawecka on the joys of nakedness; Eunice Pearson on childhood fears; Steve again with an hilarious piece on sex as learned behaviour . . . You get the general idea. It's as interesting as it sounds. Get it.

So that's it then. Did you notice a slight dichotomy between my gung-ho introduction about the wonders of fanzines and some of my comments on the actual zines? So did I. That's hardly surprising perhaps, as in the immortal words of Theodore Sturgeon 95% of SF is crap, and it's nowadays generally assumed that this also applies to everything else. Well, I reckon the content of the fanzines I've discussed is averaging considerably better than that . . . and the top 5% of it is brilliant. Can we ask for more?

Probably. Have a go yourself. Do better.

Here are the places to write to get the fanzines:

Rust Johnson's Cakewalk 7: Greg Pickersgill, 3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 2XG (available for "the usual" as described above or by subscription (£1 for a single issue or £3 for six))

Empties 14: Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG (for the usual or £5)

Attitude 3: John Dallman, Flat 4, 27 Terront Road, London, N15 3AA (for the usual but if you trade fanzines please send three copies)

Moriarty's Revenge 3: Dave Hicks, 8 Dyfrig Street, Pontcanna, Cardiff, CF1 9LR (for the usual)

The Wrong Leggings 2: Lilian Edwards, 39 Vleworth, Edinburgh, EH10 4JE (for the usual)

Bob 7: Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY (for the usual, I guess)

Galjin 4: Steve Green, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ (for the usual but return postage (a 19p stamp would do, I guess) required with show of interest)

— Simon Ounsley

Skywatching

Mark Ogier

takes his final look at satellite TV

These were the voyages . . .

It is with something of a combination of relief and sadness that I begin this, my last *Skywatching* column. Relief because now I can afford not to watch some of the dreadful so-called SF screened on the Sky movie channels, and sadness because, well, gosh, I have ENJOYED myself over the last three or so years. Even watching dross can have its high points.

Since my first column, way back in April '91 (really!) things have gradually improved on the Sky front, particularly in their offering of SF series, such as *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Deep Space Nine*, *The Flash*, *Something is Out There*, *The X-Files* - and probably others I've forgotten - before anyone else in the UK. Whether this is a good thing depends on whether you like the programmes, of course, but while not every episode of these series has been brilliant, I have certainly enjoyed the majority of them.

And it is also fitting that my swansong comes at the same time as the screenings of *The Next Generation's* final season on Sky One. This series has been a regular feature of *Skywatching* over the years, and frankly without it I would probably not have had half as much to say. The final episode is still a month or two away, but it has to be said that in this seventh season the series is showing signs of age.

While there have been a couple of truly memorable episodes, including a particularly good version of the "parallel universe" story, there have been a lot of dull ones. As far as I could tell, "Parallels" used the accepted scientific theory of parallel universes, and featured Whorf (Michael Dorn giving a wonderful performance) finding himself drifting between different realities. There was character drama of the sort that *Trek* has become famous for, a bit of action, and a mind-blowing climax fettering hundreds, if not thousands, of Enterprises.

But such enjoyable storylines have been few. Some of the others have been truly dire, such as a thinly veiled eco-message about warp drive supposedly mucking up the fabric of space, a boring story about Data's mother, and others that have fallen somewhere between inspired and indifferent. Frankly, it seems about time that the Enterprise crew took a rest.

Of course, Sky will no doubt be showing the NEW *Star Trek* series, *Voyager*, when it eventually arrives early next year. You may have heard of the casting problems, but these have now been sorted out and

the show is going ahead. Perhaps someone else out there will be keen to chronicle the voyages of this new generation of *Trek* characters . . .

The only other new show that I have watched recently is *Highlander - The Series*.

When one of the listings magazines noted that the first episode was "part one of 44" I felt like giving up before the opening bars of the theme. But since the producers had managed to get the rather loud and impressive Queen song "Princes of the Universe" from the first film to use with the credits, I managed to survive.

Those who enjoyed the first *Highlander* film (I will draw a veil over the second) will be on familiar territory with the series. It focuses on the adventures of one Duncan Macleod (Adrian Paul), a relative of the film's hero, Connor (Christopher Lambert). He makes a guest appearance in the first episode to tell us a bit about the series' hero's background.

Highlander was about a race of immortals who, down the centuries, are bound to destroy each other until only one remains and is able to claim "The Prize". In the film, of course, this honour went to Lambert's character. Yet here, in the series, we are being told that he has a bosom buddy/dansman, whom he spars with and helps defeat a nasty immortal in the first episode.

But if "there can be only one", surely Connor and Duncan have to try to destroy each other, or in the end neither of them will win? If you take the film as part of the series' canon, which the producers seem to, then it is inevitable that Duncan will be killed at some point - assuming the action of the series takes place some time before the first film's story.

In the first episode there is a good deal of sword fighting, and one or two nice effects. But the second could just as easily be a straight drama, since it revolves around Duncan's friend's quest to find his father. You don't even see a sword, and Duncan could just as easily be a "normal" human for all the good his long life does him. It would be like Clark and Lois with no Superman in at all - dull, in other words.

Adrian Paul is a rather wooden hero, and he gets little help from the two other main characters. Clearly cast for his rugged looks (kind of a cross between Sean Connery and Timothy Dalton), he wields the sword convincingly but falls down as soon as he is called upon to act.

Okay, so I sat through only two episodes. I may try again, but if a series cannot grab me by the end of the second hour, I have to be forced to watch any more. Perhaps, if someone wishes to take over this column, they might be able to report if the show gets any better.

And so, I take my leave. It only remains for me to thank former editor Jenny Glover for being kind enough to ask me to contribute in the first place, and being tolerant enough not to complain when I missed the odd deadline (only by a couple of days, though!), and to wish the new "boss" Chris Terran good luck at the helm.

Of course, you have not got rid of me that easily, and I may drop into these pages from time to time to tell you about a new satellite series or perhaps give the odd movie review.

But for now, *a la prochaine*.

One to beam up . . .

— Mark Ogier

BSFA INFORMATION GROUP

Has it ever really bugged you that you can't quite remember the name of the assistant engineer in that huge spacepiece in a book that you can almost, but not quite, recall - and where all you can half-remember is the middle bit of one of the sub-plots? Did you once read and enjoy a book by an author that no one else seems to know and would like to find out whether he/she has written any more?

If so, then the BSFA Information Group is here to help (hopefully!).

In re-launching the service, we need three things from members:-

- Questions and queries about our favourite genre;
- Any suggestions for what you would like to see the group doing (author or subject summaries, for instance);
- Offers of assistance from members with interest and expertise in specific sub-genres or time periods and who would be willing to provide assistance.

The latter of these is obviously of great importance as we cannot claim to be "experts" in all fields. We are aiming to compile a database of volunteer specialists and other information sources that we can use to answer your questions. The more obscure questions we will post on the Internet and open up to all BSFA members via appeals in Matrix. One way or another we are convinced that we are able to provide relevant answers.

So, if you have any questions, or are willing to offer help in particular areas, please contact:-

Paul Billinger	Paul Allwood
82 Kelvin Road	15 West Carr Road
New Cubbington	Retford
Leamington Spa	Notts.
Warwickshire	DN22 7NN
CV32 7TQ	

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

— Paul Allwood

It seems a long time since I last sent *Matrix* a missive from Star's End, and a lot has happened, so let me get the preamble over. For new readers and short memories this is of course the Science Fiction Foundation Collection, the UK's major resource in SF, now enthusiastically supported by the University of Liverpool. Chapter Two of our particular "Second Foundation" starts here. Our MA in Science Fiction Studies is now up and running and has been supplemented by a number of research students looking into topics such as language and SF, dystopian fiction, and the Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool (remember them?) The idea of "doing a degree in science fiction" once more seemed attractive to the press, who are as usual about twenty years behind the times, but although I had an ominous feeling on one occasion when I realised that I was speaking to the radio-listening population of Leeds between a medium and the secretary of the local UFO-spotters society, most coverage was favourable if unimaginative (i.e. students "boldly going where no students have gone before" and the like). Indeed, the best coverage we've had so far (save a thoughtful piece in the Spanish daily paper *El Pais*) was from the *Daily Telegraph*, which caused me immense amusement when I discovered precisely which fans knew about it...

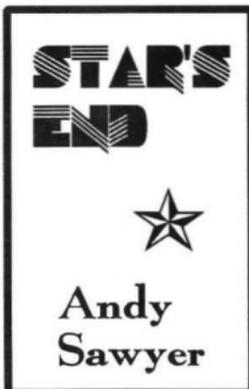
Each burst of publicity brought an equal burst in enquiries, from people wanting to sell me things to people wanting to know if there is a national SF society they can join (where's my commission, Maureen?), but significantly, people wanting to know more about the Collection and the MA course. Meanwhile, Cheshire libraries' "Meeting the Future" festival reached its climax, with a series of talks and readings by prominent authors all round the county, only a few of which I was able to attend. Despite a few patchy audiences, Cheshire seemed pleased with how it turned out. The broadcasting media were not left out: listeners to the Radio 4 programme on SF poetry, "Holding Your Eight Hands" (on Thursday November 3rd) might, if their hearing was keen and their headphones on full volume, have heard a few faint mutterings in the background as the narrator enthused over some long-forgotten magazines. That, dear readers, was me.

A decision to brave the boxes of foreign-language material coincided with a call from Cyril Simsa to ask if I wanted some more, and another box of Czech SF duly arrived. Much of this has now been catalogued, and it consists of some astonishing stuff. While I speak not a word of Czech, (or any other Eastern European language) and so am reliant entirely on Cyril's meticulous notes for my cataloguing, it's clear that we must have in the Foundation Collection a record of events in Eastern Europe over the last few years which must be unsurpassed except in the few institutes in this country which specialise in this material - and, I suspect, much of what we have might well be unavailable there. Once our holdings are properly listed, I will be trying to publicise what we have and encourage its use.

Talking of listings, I recently completed the listing of magazine and critical journal holdings only to receive half a dozen boxes of stuff which means revising the list once again. We also now have a considerable amount of duplicate magazines and books, which are available for sale. I am not going to prepare a listing books - I don't have the time - but I have a partial listing of magazines which I will send for an SAE. Condition in many cases is not too good, but if anyone is after reading copies of magazines such as *Galaxy*, *Astounding/Analog*, *Authentic*, *Amazing*, and the like, anything you buy will raise money to go towards new material for the Collection. As an example of recent purchases, Friends of Foundation (now officially established as a charity) have just bought a large collection of critical material, thanks to a donation from Sou'Wester, and I have just spent £2,500 of a £5,000 British Library grant for preservation and conservation. This money went on acid-free boxes and archival envelopes for the magazine and manuscript holdings. Thank you, one and all.

Which brings me inexorably towards the point. What else do we want? And how can you help?

Anyone who supports the Foundation can become a Friend (address below). And anyone who wishes can donate either money (cheques payable to "Friends of Foundation") or material which can be sold to raise money for further purchases of books and equipment. Or, particularly if you are a publisher (whether of books, fanzines, or



other media) you can donate directly. We are particularly in need of small-press material (fiction and non-fiction), critical works on all types of imaginative literature and film, and audio-visual material including tapes and CDs. Historically, the Foundation has been short of cash, and reliant on the generosity of fans, writers and publishers and a number of people who have given their time to make things work. We are now in a much more hopeful position. Thanks in part to investments in our future like those detailed above, we are able to buy and start the long process of planning. I'm applying for further grant aid, for instance. However, we all know that grant applications are not always successful and the wheels of application grind exceedingly slow. We will always be as dependent on the kindness of individuals as we are on our value to institutions.

This is not always a bad thing. Our strength is our networks. Many of the enquiries I get are answered not out of a book but out of someone else's mind: knowing someone who might know. Knowing who is one of the few people who can knowledgeably discuss arcane subjects like lucid dreaming or science fiction of the nineteenth century. This is pure librarianship, but just as SF is ordinary literature with that added extra, so science fiction librarianship is something more. Librarianship with added fandom? Perhaps. The Science Fiction Foundation Collection has been built upon the kind of commitment which has created some of the best aspects of fandom, and is probably British fandom's proudest achievement. Long may it stay so. But enough of waxy lyrical. (It must be the effect of Novacon, and the late-night story-time, an event which must be repeated.) There will be, I hope, plenty of time to discuss the possible directions which we may wish to grow in. The next issue of the Friends of Foundation *Newsletter*, due out in December, will tip a tentative toe into the waters. Meanwhile, if there is any more information you need, here are the addresses.

THE SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION COLLECTION

The University of Liverpool Library
PO Box 123
Liverpool
L69 3DA
Tel: 051-794-2696/2733
Email: asawyer@liverpool.ac.uk

FOUNDATION: THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

(Published by the Science Fiction Foundation):
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University of York
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York
YO1 2EP

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FRIENDS OF FOUNDATION

For further information about the Friends of Foundation, membership and donations, contact:
Rob Meades
75 Hecham Close
Walthamstow
London
E17 5QT

MA. IN SCIENCE FICTION STUDIES

Liverpool University offers a full-time M.A. course in SF Studies. For details, contact:
Dr. David Seed
Department of English
The University of Liverpool
PO Box 147
Liverpool
L69 3BX

— Andy Sawyer

AGM Minutes

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Science Fiction Association Ltd. held at the Britannia Adelphi Hotel Liverpool on April 2nd 1994.

The meeting was opened at 2pm.

As none of the members of the BSFA Council present at the meeting wished to chair the meeting, it was proposed, and passed *nem. con.*, that Darroll Pardoe take the chair.

The Minutes of the previous AGM were accepted by the meeting and passed *nem. con.* There were no matters arising.

Maureen Speller gave the administrator's report on behalf of herself and Cate Cary, co-Administrators. She noted that the BSFA had coped well with a difficult year. There had been financial problems caused by the membership rates having not been raised the previous year, and it was proposed that the question of raising membership rates be discussed later during the AGM. However, the BSFA had begun to take tables in dealers' rooms at conventions and was once again recruiting at a steady rate. The tombola at Novacon raised over £300, and a similar tombola was being run at the Eastercon. The BSFA had been mentioned in various magazines and had been given a free advertisement thanks to an advertising exchange arranged with the organisers of the Arthur C. Clarke Award. Adverts were also appearing in convention programme books and fliers were being distributed with convention membership packs. All these activities were generating new members. It was also hoped to acquire advertising income from publishers advertising in BSFA publications.

Maureen Speller also noted that there had been problems in producing *Vector* as Cate Cary was working away from home during the week. Mailings had been delayed on occasions and she thanked members for their understanding and patience. Jenny and Steve Glover had just announced their intention to resign as editors of *Matrix* and a new editor was being urgently sought. *Focus* was appearing regularly with great success.

For the future, Maureen Speller reminded people that the BSFA needed to ensure greater financial security for itself, through generating advertising revenue, increasing membership rates and increasing the number of members. The Worldcon would be held in Scotland in 1995, and the BSFA hoped to have a presence there.

Elizabeth Billinger delivered the Treasurer's report (summarised in the accounts for the Association below).

Dave Langford, Andy Sawyer and James White retired from the BSFA Council by rotation. Dave Langford and Andy Sawyer offered themselves for re-election. Alison Cook had been co-opted onto the Council during the year to act as Membership Secretary, and now offered herself for election. All three elections were approved by the meeting, *nem. con.*

It was proposed to the meeting that the membership subscription be raised this year. It was noted that the rates had not been increased last year and the company was suffering as a result. It was proposed by Maureen Speller and seconded by Cate Cary that the membership rate be raised to £18. One person voted against this but the proposal was carried by the meeting.

There was some discussion about the hardship which might be caused by the steep increase in rates. It was however proposed to the meeting that students and the unemployed be given half-price membership on receipt of suitable proof of their status. This was proposed by Maureen Speller and seconded by Carol Ann Green. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

John D. Rickett raised the matter of reduced subscription rates for the retired, and his suggestion was seconded by Bridget Wilkinson. It was passed *nem. con.* by the meeting.

It was proposed by Elizabeth Billinger that the auditors, Messrs. William Hinton, be re-elected as auditors to the British Science Fiction Association. This was seconded by Moira Shearman and passed *nem. con.* by the meeting.

During Any Other Business, the matter of professional collation and mailing costs was discussed. Some members of the BSFA felt that substantial savings might be made by returning to manual collating, but objections were raised by committee members who had previously participated in the collating sessions at Reading University. The difficulties of persuading people to help with collating were discussed and it was considered by many people that the size of the task was now too large to be handled on a volunteer basis. However, other members of the meeting felt that this matter should be researched. Terry Hunt proposed that a cost-benefit analysis of professional collating against manual collating by

volunteers should be carried out. This was seconded by Colin Harris but was not passed by the meeting.

Roy Grant proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee for their work during the year, which was seconded by Moira Shearman and passed *nem. con.*

Maureen Speller proposed a vote of thanks to Darroll Pardoe for agreeing to chair the meeting. This was seconded by Carol Ann Green and passed *nem. con.*

The meeting closed at 2.35pm.

Directors' Report and Accounts

COMPANY INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1993

DIRECTORS: A. C. Clarke J. White M. J. Edwards
D. R. Langford M. S. Speller J. Raine
K. McVeigh A. Sawyer J. Glover
S. Glover C. M. Cary E. A. Billinger
I. M. Banks C. A. Green

SECRETARY: E. A. Billinger

REGISTERED OFFICE: 60 Bourmouthe Road
Folkestone
Kent
CT19 5AZ

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1993

The directors submit their report and accounts for the year ended 30 September 1993.

Directors' responsibilities

Company law requires us as directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements we are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

We are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable us to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 1985. We are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention of fraud and other irregularities.

Results

The results for the year are set out overleaf.

The directors are satisfied with the results for the year and with the state of affairs at the balance sheet date.

Activities

The principal activities of the company during the year were the promotion of science fiction and the publication and distribution of science fiction magazines.

Directors

The directors who held office during the year are as follows:

A. C. Clarke J. White M. J. Edwards
D. R. Langford M. S. Speller J. Raine
K. McVeigh A. Sawyer J. Glover
S. Glover C. M. Cary E. A. Billinger
I. M. Banks C. A. Green

I. M. Banks and C. A. Green were appointed on 30 May 1993. D. R. Langford, A. Sawyer and J. White retire by rotation and being eligible D. R. Langford and A. Sawyer offer themselves for re-elections.

Auditors

A resolution to re-appoint Messrs William Hinton, Chartered Accountants as auditors will be put to the members at the Annual General Meeting.

On behalf of the board

E. A. Billinger, Director, 2 April 1994

REPORT OF THE AUDITORS TO THE MEMBERS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1993

We have audited the accounts below which have been prepared under the historical cost convention and the accounting policies set out in Note 1.

Respective responsibilities of directors and auditors

As described above the company's directors are responsible for the preparation of financial statements. It is our responsibility to form an independent opinion, based on our audit, on those statements and to report an opinion to you.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the directors in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the

accounting policies are appropriate to the company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable reassurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of the information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 30 September 1993 and of its loss for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985.

William Hinton
Registered Auditors
Chartered Accountants

Ross House
The Square
Stow on the Wold
Gloucestershire

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1993

	Notes	1993 £	1992 £
Turnover	2	11,577	10,376
Cost of sales		<u>7,284</u>	<u>6,428</u>
Gross profit		3,593	3,878
Net operating expenses		<u>5,726</u>	<u>4,807</u>
Operating loss		2,133	929
Interest receivable	5	<u>13</u>	-
Loss on ordinary activities before and after taxation		2,120	929
Retained profit brought forward		<u>2,956</u>	<u>3,885</u>
Retained profit carried forward		<u>£ 836</u>	<u>2,956</u>

The only recognised gain/loss for the period is the loss for the year of £2,120.

There were no acquisitions and no discontinued operations in the year.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 1993

	Notes	1993 £	1992 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible Assets	6	58	62
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	400	300
Cash at bank		<u>1,865</u>	<u>4,077</u>
		2,265	4,377
Creditors			
Amounts falling due within one year	8	<u>1,460</u>	<u>1,456</u>
Net Current Assets		805	2,921
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		<u>£863</u>	<u>£2,983</u>
Capital and Reserves			
Profit and loss account		836	2,956
Other reserves		<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>
		<u>£863</u>	<u>£2,983</u>

On behalf of the board

E. A. Billinger, Director, 2 April 1994

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 SEPTEMBER 1993

1 Accounting policies

Accounting Convention

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of tangible fixed assets over their expected useful lives as follows:

Library - 10% per annum on a reducing basis

2 Turnover

Turnover represents income from subscriptions, publications, advertising and associated sales.

3 Operating loss

This is stated after charging the following:

	1993 £	1992 £
Auditors' remuneration	274	247
Depreciation	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>

4 Employees

The company had no employees during the year. The services of the directors have been provided on a voluntary basis and free of charge, as in previous years.

5 Interest receivable

	1993 £	1992 £
Bank interest	<u>13</u>	-

6 Tangible fixed assets

	Library £	Awards £	Total £
Cost			
At 30 September 1992			
& 30 September 1993	<u>913</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>940</u>
Depreciation			
At 30 September 1992	878	-	878
Charge for the year	<u>4</u>	-	<u>4</u>
At 30 September 1993	<u>882</u>	-	<u>882</u>
Net book value			
At 30 September 1993	<u>31</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>58</u>
At 30 September 1992	<u>35</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>62</u>

7 Debtors

	1993 £	1992 £
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>400</u>	<u>300</u>

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	1993 £	1992 £
Trade creditors	1,001	968
Current corporation tax	19	19
Accruals	<u>440</u>	<u>469</u>
	<u>1,460</u>	<u>1,456</u>

9 Share capital

The company has no share capital being limited by guarantee.

You Do It With Mirrors

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Dave Langford
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Fourteen Months Before. It was one of those incautious moments. I was at Boskone 29, enjoying the heady sensation of being a guest and looking forward to liberal supplies of bourbon, groupies, contracts and coffee. "We can get them all for you," Ben Yalow explained, "except perhaps for the bourbon, groupies and contracts."

The Boskone newsletter (*Helmuth*... *Speaking for Boskone*) had just been impressing me with its deeply professional policy of printing anything I submitted. After a few too many beers in the hotel bar I heard my mouth say, "British con newsletters are usually so boring and stark and functional." Interested in what I would declare next, I began to pay attention and found my lips issuing the statement, "What they need is better production, and traces of literacy, and more funny bits so fans will read the whole thing including the tedious programme changes." My tongue went madly on to utter, "In fact I could—"

Suddenly I found that even here in kindly America I was surrounded by committee members of Helicon, the 1993 British Eastercon, all wearing wide, fanged smiles. "You're on, Dave," someone cried.

"Glimmmmmmpf," said my nostril as I choked on the beer.

The Langford theory of newsletters was no more than a few vague prejudices at the time. Keeping it simple seemed a cunning plan: no elaborate DTP systems that encouraged the priests of the inner mystery to spend hours at a time laying out perfect paragraphs like exquisite corpses in satin-lined caskets. An independent survey of what I was already using for *Ansible* favoured WordPerfect, into which any fool can type text.

(*Technical Bit Which May Be Skipped:* a non-Windows WordPerfect 5.1 with Bitstream FaceLift fonts, if you really must know. The committee's weird idea that we could move stuff between the computers using Laplink was rapidly superseded by my own high-tech solution known as Hurling Floppy Disks Across The Table.)

What was the thing going to be called? Helicon was named for its site, St Helier in Jersey, and the last con newsletter there had been called *Jersey Yarns*, which made me gently puke. Helicon used a 'sun' logo. Sun... writing... *Helio-graph*. "I am not afraid," I wrote to the con committee, "of the totally bleeding obvious." Harry Bell drew a newsletter logo and we were in business.

Some months in advance I started writing news items. Editorial policy regarded any white space as a tacit admission of failure. And no matter how boring the lists of programme changes, I wanted the whole thing larded with funny bits to ensure it got read from end to end.

Strange anniversaries were ruthlessly researched (with help from Andy Porter's *SF Chronicle* birthday list, to remind the revelling fans that time's winged chariot was parked outside the door and blowing the horn). Besides the complete new edition of the *Encyclopedia of SF*, which I luckily had on disk, I consulted that useful reference *The Perpetual Pessimist: an Everlasting Calendar of Gloom and Almanac of Woe* (by Daniel George)... so the first issue on 8 April 1993 not only had birthday messages for E.J.Carnell, S.P.Meek and Ralph Milne Farley but also revealed that Helicon was auspiciously beginning on the anniversary of a failed prediction of worldwide deluge in 1524.

Thus, helped by the fact that the convention was also a noted fictional birthplace, we were ready for the traditional First Issue of Newsletter problem (i.e. no news)...

WELCOME TO HELICON. And welcome to *Helio-graph* — the newsletter which we understand is pronounced

something like 'Helio-graph'. As noted by Helicon's most famous native, "I have the Heliconian stress on the letter 'y'." (Harm Seldon, in *Forrward the Foundation* by Isaac Asimov.)

BICENTENNIAL: in April 1793, the New England inventor Eli Whitney did a huge service to all sf professionals by inventing gin. (*A Pedant Writes:* That was the cotton gin, you fool. *Helio-graph:* There's no pleasing some fans.)

The first item duly provoked an outraged response in #2, for the benefit of *esoterica* fans:

COMPLAINT: "What's this in issue #1 about some parvenu called Seldon being the most famous person from Helicon? What about us, then?" *Signed:* Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia and Urania.

But I'm getting ahead of events. All too many thrills and spills lay between the hapless editor and the first printed copy of *Helio-graph*. I flew to Jersey days early, leaving Hazel to enjoy herself at home... our different attitudes can be detected from the phone call when I got there. *Me:* "It was great fun, I had a window by the landing gear and the plane stopped at Guernsey on the way so I got to go up and down twice for one fare!" *Hazel:* "Oh! Oh, that must have been so horrible for you..." Being paranoid about electromagnetic damage to disks, I had one set in my pocket, another in my suitcase and a third travelling with Martin House on a Channel ferry. *Martin:* "It's great fun, the crossing lasts hours and hours, and you can drink yourself silly all the way over and watch other folk get seasick and vomit all over the bar!" *Me:* "What a pity that I foolishly booked a plane."

After the usual adventures I was introduced to my newsroom, which in the interests of total security had a combination lock on the door. Fortunately this didn't block traffic too much, since vast numbers of British fans remembered the unchanged code from previous conventions. (Later remark by Chris O'Shea, quoted in a post-final *Helio-graph*: "The secure store isn't. Ops doesn't and the newsletter hasn't.")

As it finally took shape, the awesome newspaper production equipment consisted of a couple of IBMs as I'd requested, a late-arriving laser printer (with an interesting scar on its drum that led to exciting black marks in every left margin and regular hole-wide searches for Liquid Paper), and the Chris Suslowicz Museum of Industrial Archaeology. Yes, after each master sheet slid smoothly from the 1990s DTP system it was carried across the room and backwards through yawning gulfs of time to an ancient, rickety electrostencil cutter and a Gestetner mimeograph that had seen service with the Panzer corps.

While I first stared in awe, the committee broke it to me that Chris Suslowicz, the owner and understander of all this heavy-metal hardware, wouldn't be arriving until — according to my timetable — about half-way through issue three. I retreated to the bar and don't remember any more that day.

Next morning, with large tracts of the newsroom still commandeered for dynamic, last-minute badge production, I and all-round technical supremo John Dallman cut two dozen electrostencils of a dummy front page I'd brought with me. Or, to be precise, we cut or failed to cut the same one two dozen times, fiddling with all the controls (and wincing at the tactless comments of badge-makers who evidently hadn't enough work to do) until in a blazing burst of Null-A insight John noticed that the stylus was bent and changed it. Sparks flew and the characteristic atmosphere of the *Helio-graph* newsroom immediately made itself felt: a billowing mix of ozone and random carcinogens as the cutter burned its way through acres of vinyl. The fine black dust that rapidly accumulated on the computer screens was a useful index of the state of one's lungs, and to conjure up a Lovecraftian vision of nameless, blasphemous ichor you had only to blow your nose.

Then came the mimeograph, which after an hour or two I decided had not after all seen service with Rommel but with Torquemada. Let us draw a veil over this, mentioning only the anguished cries of "Can we fucking ink it from side to side, not up and down?"... the discovery that, Roneo men all, we none of us knew where you put ink in a Gestetner... the ransacking of countless hotel rooms for complimentary packs of tissues after agreeing that we certainly knew how to make ink come out of a Gestetner.

(By happy chance we'd picked the right electrostencil. Con chairman Tim Illingworth had provided a second machine out of the goodness of his heart, having bought it in a junk shop and being sublimely unaware of whether it worked — he thought we could have fun finding out. To add to the "Lady or the Tiger" excitement there was also a second mimeo which, days later, proved to be utterly unusable owing to damage in transit...)

You Do It With Mirrors XON DO IT WITH WILLIAMS

Dave Langford
DAVE LANGFORD

As the first, interestingly tilted and blotchy issue hit the stands, a part-blind fan labelled as 'Blind Pew' popped in with a request that all issues of *Heliograph* be clearly printed in black ink for the benefit of those with dodgy vision. 'Gladly,' I cried, and as an afterthought went to check the huge pile of ink-tubes thoughtfully provided with the hardware. One was red and the rest were green.

IAN BANKS perpetuated a noble sf tradition by breaking his bed on the first night of Helicon. (As Bob Shaw discovered after Brian Aldiss broke a bed during a party there, Tynescon '74 was a 'five-bed convention'. Go for it, Ian!)

After cruel treatment by the Style Police, the *Read-Me* authors promise never again to write about 'medias' (see *But What Can Replace a Fansize*, 1100 Monday). 'We have now been told correct dates and rethought our criteria,' said a spokesman. 'There will be no more such erratas.'

ARCTOPHILES 'are warned that the note on an exhibit in the Art Show means it. Do Not Open The Box if you care about cuddlies!' (*Chris Bell*)

BREAKFAST NOTES. Q: What's red and invisible? A: No tomatoes. . . . The Action Committee for Mushrooms At All Con Breakfasts wishes to thank Helicon for . . . sorry, what was the message?

HOW TO WRITE GOOD. Jane Barnett (aged 15/4), when told by her father that her writing showed poor control of nuance: 'I wouldn't recognise nuance if it came up and gently brushed my leg.'

. . . But most attempts to give the flavour of *Heliograph* as it turned out run slap into the 'You had to be there' syndrome. Famous author Ian Banks is a reliable source of eccentric news at British conventions, and later provided us with another fascinating snippet by crawling around underneath the carpet in the hotel bar. The 'arctophiles' item heralded a running gag about Tom Abba's bear-in-the-box in the Helicon art show, which was shielded from unwary eyes because this unfortunate teddy-bear had been strung up with ghoulish torture-hooks inspired by *Hellraiser*. ('BEAR HORROR SHOCK,' began a later item. 'A copy of *Eon* was sold. . . .') Jane Barnett's father Paul writes as John Grant and under this name was technical editor of the new *SF Encyclopedia*; he realised what a paltry and trivial job that had been when he came to work more or less full-time on *Heliograph*.

JOHN JARROLD becomes President of the World! Well, of World SF. Interviewed by *Heliograph*, the new President prised a beerglass momentarily from his mouth and said, 'I didn't know what was happening. I wasn't even there, don't blame me.'

BRIAN ALDISS demonstrated his mature technique for persuading one of Jenny and Ramsey Campbell's offspring to go to bed, culminating in a stentorian cry of 'FUCK OFF!' (It worked).

STOP PRESS UPDATE: Matt Campbell wishes to announce *Very Loudly Indeed* that Brian Aldiss's amazing Getting-the-Little-Swine-to-Bed technique (*Heliograph* #2) DIDN'T ACTUALLY WORK.

This was our first taste of controversy, when Mr Aldiss put a mildly stropy note under the newsroom door complaining of 'anti-Aldiss material' and asserting that 'I told no kiddies, not even Brian Burgess, to "Fuck Off".' Assured by possibly lying witnesses that the first report was accurate, our protagonist having been a trifle off-sober at the time, we contented ourselves by printing his rebuttal prefaced by 'BRIAN ALDISS, Sci Fi author, corrects. . . . Meanwhile he'd given the newsroom a new euphemism, heavily used by the rest of Helicon whenever alleged abuse was to be recorded: 'Go to bed!'

QUESTION. Why exactly did *Lawrence Watt-Evans* think that he was Brian Aldiss and that John Brunner should go to bed?

Trying to make every item at least a bit amusing was a continuing policy. One slight hitch was noted. . . . Helicon had an influx of 52 Romanians, who all arrived in suits and strange tall pointy hats, like a delegation of heavily politicised garden gnomes. My idle fingers

recorded the figure and on impulse (the line looked as if it could do with a bit more text) made it '52.02'. Well, at least I didn't add 'plus or minus 0.06', but the newsroom had a procession of puzzled visitors. 'We have had trouble with newsletter. Here it says [etc. etc.]. Is special meaning or' (in tones of deepening menace) 'your Western sense of humour?'

Strange tongues were heard everywhere at Helicon, and to aid translation a complex system of colour-coded ribbons and little spots on con badges was supposed to indicate who could interpret between what. Fandom soon reduced the system to chaos. The 'I speak Romanian' ribbons ran out within 52.02 nanoseconds, and others lasted only a trifle longer; soon the committee was running around trying to clip bits from the over-long and generous ribbons issued on the first day. Meanwhile one heard explanations like: 'And that one-quarter of a tartan spot on my badge stands for how much Gaelic I know. . . . Your reporter confirmed himself to be deaf in seventeen languages.'

My biggest linguistic mistake on *Heliograph* was in allowing my eyes to glaze over each time I tried to read a contribution from Colin Fine which appeared to be an essay on the artificial language Lojban. 'Too long,' I kept saying. 'Maybe next issue.' Colin had neglected to hint in his headline that, just after the point at which I invariably fell asleep, this piece announced a new and imminent programme item in which Lojban would be discussed. Oops.

Besided Romanians there were Russians, who were doing a roaring trade in obsolete KGB credentials at their dealers' room tables. . . .

RED SALES IN THE SUNSET: 30 people had joined the KGB at last count. Beware the midnight knock on the door from *Brian Aldiss*, the entire *Family Harrison* and *Anne McCaffrey* (who will be carrying a small, monogrammed flame-thrower).

TRICENTENNIAL CYBERPUNK: In 1693 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz of calculus fame invented the first mechanical calculator that could multiply and divide, thus heralding an exciting new era of arguments over the restaurant bill. ('Fie on you and your Engine, fir, I had only a small *falad* and a Peppfi.')

JOHN CLUTE tergiversates: 'Text is terrifying!'

OVERHEARD: 'If this were a normal con all you'd have to do would be to find someone. . . . [And then you'd know where they were - Ed.] • In Ops: 'We printed out all the programme participant letters and A.N.Other's was three pages long. . . . Programming subcommittee irregular verbs: 'I reschedule, you slip, he runs late.'

TRUTH SHALL BE TOLD: The spellcheck on the mighty *Heliograph* computer, confronted by 'committees', suggests 'comatoes'. . . .

TEN DAY WONDER TANDOORI: *The Taj Mahal* appears to work on the Lovestrackian approach to cuisine: 'I am excited not so much by the actual presence of mysterious Bengali dishes before me as I am by the eldritch rumour and suggestion that these exotic apparitions might one day appear.' Be warned. . . . (*Ramsey Campbell*)

EROTIC SF PANEL: 'The French are suggesting installing teledildonic machines in hotel rooms. . . . *Mike Cole*: 'I'm not sure I would want to put anything of mine into any such orifices.' *Dave Clements*: 'What about your credit card?' *Mike Abbott*: 'By barcoding suitable portions of anatomy you could pay at the same time.' *Brian Ameringer*: 'Surely, when you cross a teledildonics machine with a cashpoint you get someone coming into money?'

DISCRETION. We are not allowed to reveal the number of the room in which *GoH Karel Thole* and *Jean Owen* broke the bed.

In a more serious and scientific vein, the Hotel de France venue has a built-in chocolate factory and shop, leading to a blitz of useful information:

HELICON STATISTICS! We have filled 7 Jersey hotels and drunk 1,600 pints of real ale, as at 1300 Saturday. Chocolate sales: 2,500 champagne truffles, 7 large rabbits, 82 Easter eggs, 1 lifesize Tim Illingworth, and 20 people have taken the behind-the-scenes tour. (Still 3,000 truffles and 8,500 other chocs to go. Must Try Harder.)

Quite a respectable team of *Heliograph* newsroom regulars had somehow coalesced out of all this insanity. I dutifully credited them all, one of my own favourite ideas being to end each issue with a credits box using linked literary 'job titles'. It was sheer luck that, having picked *The Hunting of the Snark* for the first such theme, I needed to credit Amanda Baker:

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Heliograph 1, 8/4/93. Bellman: Dave Langford. Baker: Amanda. Boots: Dave Clement. Boojum: Caroline Mullan. Snark: John Dallman. Ocean Chart: Harry Bell. Strange Creepy Creatures: John Stewart, Mark Young.

I hugely enjoyed watching fans in the bar turn to the end of each newsletter to find what daft link the credits had this time. The sequence went through Niven (Thint: Dave Langford. Grog: Paul Barnett. Speaker-to-Duplicators . . .). Asimov (First Speaker: Dave Langford. Emperor: John Dallman. Mayor: Bob Webber. Mule: Chris Suslowicz. Encyclopedists: John Grant, John Clute. Prime Radiants: Amanda Baker, Pam Wells. Second Foundation: sshh!), Dick (Glimmung, Kipple, Conapt, Pink Beam, Vugs), Wolfe (Autarach, Hierodules . . . the large person who got to be the Group of Seventeen was unamused), Ballard (Drained swimming pool, Spinal landscape, Marilyn Monroe, Traven, Talbot, Travers, Talbert, Travis etc) and more. The real mind-burster that no-one could guess was based on an obscure passage of Aldiss's *Report on Probability A: Impaler of Distortions*, Impersonator of Sorrows, Suppressor of the Archives, Wandering Virgin — 'Thank you for making me a virgin again!' cried Lynne Ann Morse with mixed feelings, and was duly quoted out of context in the upcoming issue.

Incidentally, *The Hunting of the Snark* also gave us Rule 42: 'No one shall speak to the Man at the Helm.' This, alas, was not rigorously applied despite all my efforts, and urgent stints of *Heliograph* typing were apt to be interrupted by arcane queries in strange international accents. Once, overwhelmed by too many satirical birthday congratulations (I was 40 on the Saturday of Helicon), I must admit that the editor rose up and told all the chatters present to 'Go to bed!'

CLOSING CREDITS. *Heliograph* could not have been brought into existence without the help of very many people, but nevertheless it was. (*Chorus*: 'Start again, Langford!')

Newsroom madness grew more and more uncontrollable. Short quotations aside, I'd resolved to rewrite every single story until it was maximally terse, funny and comprehensible, or at least the first two. Meanwhile Paul toiled over increasingly excruciating headlines . . . Helicon had a crowd of weird emaciated punk Finns with nose-rings and things ('Differently intelligent . . . or differently nostrilled?' I mused) who claimed to be zombies and sent in countless bulletins on their rotting state; at one point I found Paul unable to decide between ZOMBIE FACTOID — ITS DEAD TRUE! and DEATH IS NOT THE FINNISH, and could only break the impasse by using them both.

And then there was *Who the Fliqpt*. Although we dutifully recorded programme changes, *Heliograph* production was more or less incompatible with seeing any of Helicon's programme. (The exception in my case was the banquet, which I had to attend because I was giving a speech, on particularly revolting meals in sf. Later in *Heliograph*: MARY CELESTE MYSTERY SOLVED BY IAN SORENSON! 'Dave Langford did the after-dinner speech.') One item, however, spread all over the convention and newsletter like some rampant fungal growth: the scabrous 'If I Ruled the Universe' election campaign.

This featured various mighty beings attempting to sway an ultimate audience vote and thus become Universal Ruler. The candidates were Sir Edmund Blackadder (Neal — Mittenhaw-Hodge), Boudicca/Boudica (KIM Campbell), Genghis Khan (Mike Cule, whose cheerleaders' chant of 'Yak Fat Yak Fat' still haunts me), Tim Illingworth (Chris O'Shea), Ming the Merciless (Alison Scott) and Stupendous Man of *Calvin and Hobbes*: fame (John Richards with mask, cape and of course Hobbes — a battery-powered growler tigger which remorselessly crept along tables and fell off the end), Helicon was duly plastered with campaign posters, mostly vile lies from Blackadder ('ILLINGWORTH plays with Barbie dolls!') illustrated with grossly libellous Sue Mason cartoons. In the end the audience vote for Universal Ruler went to a last-minute write-in . . . Hobbes.

My favourite silly moment in all this came when, after talking to a press photographer and coming away muttering that the bastard wasn't interested in sf but just wanted pictures of weirdly dressed fans, John Richards found a particularly insulting Blackadder poster

in the hotel foyer. He faded into the secure store and, seconds later, the awesome masked figure of Stupendous Man lumbered along the corridors. With heroic and theatrical gestures the offending poster was wrenched from the wall; our superhero turned majestically away to discover that same pressman with mouth hanging open, fumbling frantically for his camera. After one ghastly frozen moment, Stupendous Man demonstrated super-speed.

This is where *Who* came in. Idly filling out a paragraph in which potential world rulers abused each other, Paul remembered a bit-part character from his own fantasy novels and typed: '*Who the Fliqpt* doesn't want to rule the world.' This could have been a mistake. From commenting on the hustings ('*Who the Fliqpt* spells universe glib'), this brutish entity rapidly overran the whole newsletter with fire and the sword. Even my carefully researched birthday lists sprouted addenda like: 'Every day my birthday — *Who*.' If towards the end of Helicon there was a *Heliograph* gestalt, a newsroom group mind, it was undoubtedly named *Who the Fliqpt*. Wrestling wildly over the semicolons, grown men found themselves talking in *Who*. 'Stop nitpicking and let's print the thing.' 'Hah! When *Who the Fliqpt* nitpick, nit know it have been picked.'

Somewhere out there the convention was reeling along out of control: 'Oh God,' cried a passing committee member, 'the organisation's a shambles, we're just about managing to paper over the cracks, and that's not for the newsletter.' There were fewer and fewer programme changes to record, and the news items that filtered in grew sillier. When soft toys start sending in contributions, you know it's time to stop:

LEWIS P.BEAR complains formally about the anti-bear and bearist artworks in the Art Show. Arnold Schwarzenbear . . . [aw, go to bed — Ed.]

One can even be reduced to raiding the newspapers:

THE INDEPENDENT's article on Helicon today catches the subtle, elusive flavour of fandom: 'Otherwise it is unclear who these people are. They could be someone's neighbour or relative . . .'

But the manic *Heliograph* staff made the dangerous discovery that news items from 'outside' were hardly necessary. Desperately witty things — well, they seemed witty at the time — were constantly being said in our own fum-filled room, and could instantly be quoted. If Helicon had lasted a few more days the newsroom might have become a self-perpetuating news vortex, feeding madly on itself and generating endless one-liners to be listed in our ever-longer sections titled OVERHEARD, VOX POP and the like.

'You mean I'm — wow! — a CROSS REFERENCE in the SF Encyclopedia?' • 'Are you claiming to be nubile?' • 'Someone bit me last night and I don't know who . . . ' • 'Isn't it sad when the snappiest dressers in fandom are the soft toys?' • 'Even Ian Banks doesn't know why he crawled under that carpet . . . ' • 'If I turn the Gestetner up to full speed I can make it to the Banq — oh dear.' • 'I want to complain! You didn't credit my comment!' (Anon) • 'A draft of artists?' • 'An acquisition of publishers?' • 'A whinge of writers.' • 'A spittoon of *Heliograph* staffers.' • 'I have a Complaint. Too much chit-chat, not enough news.'

I actually sought out the one aged fan who complained, in the hope of making soothing noises. The conversation went something like this . . . Aged Fan: 'Yes, your newsletter is full of in-jokes and I'm not an "in" person.' Me: 'But that "bear" stuff is about the Helicon art show . . . ' AF: 'Never go to art shows.' Me: 'And this is all to do with the Read-Me booklet — ' AF: 'Couldn't be bothered with that.' Me: 'And "Tim Illingworth" is the convention chairman — ' AF: 'Never heard of him.' Me: 'And this credits line is actually an sf reference to The Book of the New Sun . . . ' AF: 'Like I said, all in-crowd jokes.'

Suddenly it was Monday evening, Helicon was miraculously over. I could start eating again, and perhaps even sleeping! To hammer home the message, I changed the subtitle box of the ninth issue from *Helicon's Newspaper* to *The Last Dangerous Heliograph* and made sure that all subsection titles referred to sf stories about entropy or the closing down of universes ('Travellers in Black', 'The Voices of Time', 'Running Down'). The final, post-closing-ceremony item was typed . . . since nothing hugely newsworthy had happened, this merely offered an 'AT-A-GLANCE SUMMARY OF THE CLOSING CEREMONY. See pages 94-146.' It was all over.

(Actually there was no room to write up the full horror of the closing multi-channel slide show based on 1,000 embarrassing snaps taken at Helicon itself. 45 minutes after the ceremony was due to start, Martin Hogan and his team of ace technocrats carried in the projectors and began to set them up. The audience thrilled as the very first slide that actually appeared read: 'That's All Folks!' Every possible permutation of the guests' pictures and names was shown.

with John Brunner labelled as George R.R. Martin and artist Karel Thole as fan guest Larry van der Putte... then Brunner as Martin and Thole as Brunner... and so endlessly on, to a stream of esoteric technical remarks like 'Now John Brunner's head's in the way of the side screen.' Afterwards Mr Hoare exulted that the committee had confessed they'd never believed he could put on the slide show at all.

It was, as I said, all over. Unfortunately several people said interesting or appalling things at Monday night's final party, and on Tuesday, as the convention was being dismantled around me, I found myself typing up a supplementary *Dead Dog Memorandum*. Our mimeo experts were not in evidence; the laser printer glowed white-hot as hundreds of copies churned out to meet the delicious demand. Then I went home.

But *Heliograph* was the newsletter that would not die. Chris Suslowicz and Cathryn Easthope had a hotel room full of computer gear, and two more ersatz issues rolled out of my fax machine, the *Undead Dog Memorandum* and *Embalmed Dog Missive*. Excerpts follow, as tidied up by myself for the unbelievably rare *Heliograph Souvenir Edition*:

IT IS TUESDAY, the newsletter office is deserted and the equipment has been packed for its eventual return to the mainland. *Thog the Flighty* has discovered that his transportation (Horse, one, for the use of) has been misbooked for the previous day and is sharpening his sword. (Alex Stewart: *Thog zap, plane for wimps. Thog swim.*) Langford has departed for the mainland to avoid the likely bloodshed, pausing briefly to Blu-Tack™ 5,271,009 copies of the *Dead Dog Memorandum* to various walls. 'Stop that man and nail his feet to the floor,' screamed an enraged *Martin Easterbrook*, engaged in convention poster removal. Too late — the denuded corridors had been fetchingly redecorated...

FOOD CORNER. There are no restaurant reports because with typical selfishness all the reporters are still in the restaurants. There is also an absence of newsroom — the final wording on the door was 'go away in a huff and never return', so copy is not arriving, and the Alternative Newsroom is making it all up from a secret location. Stay tuned.

Heliograph 10-ish, 13/4/93. Wook: Dave Langford.

Clattuc: Chris Suslowicz. Chikke: *Thog the Flighty*.
Tamm: Cathryn Easthope. LPFers: BSFA Council. Yips: Ops.

And then it was really over. The egoboo was tremendous (as editor I probably got an altogether unfair share, but that's life). The physical and mental debilitation lasted three weeks. I wonder what it would have been like to attend Helicon?

Three Weeks After. It was one of those incautious moments. I was at Jean Owen's and Martin Hoare's wedding party, reduced to a slithering moral jelly by heady speech-making and champagne cocktails, and Caroline Mullan was telling me what she thought of *Heliograph*. 'All right for a mere Eastercon,' she allowed grudgingly, 'but your approach just wouldn't work for a Worldcon newsletter like ours at ConFiction.'

'Oh, I don't agree...' my mouth began to say, until I suddenly noticed we were surrounded by a horde of feral, red-eyed 1995 Worldcon committee members, licking their lips and closing slowly in. For once my brain managed to insert a few words of its own. 'Er, I mean, you're absolutely right, Caroline.'

This article was first published in the US fanzine MIMOSA ed. Dick and Nicki Lynch. Copyright © Dave Langford, 1993.

Dave Langford
DAVE LANGFORD

You Do It With Mirrors
You Don't Do It With Mirrors

Members' Noticeboard

The Changes (BBC 1975) and **Sky** (HTV 1975). Allister Lehan is looking for copies of these two children's TV series. If you can help, please contact him at: 7 Chesnut Avenue, Bomaderry, NSW, Australia.

The University of Warwick Science Fiction and Fantasy Society would like to hear from other student SF societies, and also to receive fanzines, particularly student fanzines. If you can help, please contact the UWFSS at: Arts Federation Pigeonholes, Students' Union, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL.

Pen Friends Wanted. Indonesian lady seeks to contact SF fans (35 years onward) in Munich and Germany, France, UK, USA. Contact: Irina Bückner, Einsteinstra. 102, D-81675, Munich.

SF pen pal wanted for a 19-year-old physics undergraduate in Madras. Please contact Alison Cook, 52 Woodhill Drive, Grove, Oxon OX12 0DF for more information.

THE WAY TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION by Brian Stableford. Signed pb copies available at £5. Also available: *The Empire of Fear*, £10 hardcover, £5 C-format pb; *Sexual Chemistry: Sardonian Tales of the Genetic Revolution* £8 hc; *The Asgard Trilogy*, £10 boxed set (limited to 500 copies) of 3 pbs. All prices post-free. Order from Brian Stableford, 113 St Peter's Road, Reading RG6 1PG.

For Sale: SF and Fantasy collection including new stock. 1042 new and used hardcovers, paperbacks and trade paperbacks. £1075 the lot. Buyer collects. Tel: Bournemouth (01202) 432489.

WRITING POPULAR FICTION. Brian Stableford's annual creative writing course at Bulmershe Court, will run for 10 weeks from 17 January 1995 at 7.30 p.m. The fee for the course is £32, payable to the University of Reading, c/o The Extramural Secretary, The University, London Rd, Reading RG1 5AQ (tel 0734-318347).

Does this plot mean anything to you? If so, Robin Grant would like to hear from you.

The story opens with a boy who is waiting for his exam results, looking out across Plymouth Bay. Set in the future, he describes robot-driven shops sailing across the water. He is also playing with the thought police, who can monitor for suicidal or terrorist thoughts, attracting them with bad thoughts then distracting them with happy thoughts. He is summoned to the headmaster because he has received 0% in his exams, although a bright boy. Once there, it's revealed that he has achieved 100% and is taken off to become a secret member of society.

Robin adds that society within the book is set up according to how well you do in exams. Those who pass become 'middle class' and lead respectable ordinary lives. Those who fail become 'un-men' and are segregated from the middle class. The main character learns about corruption in his society, and also a plan to change Britain's populace into a non-thinking farming community. He travels to Scotland with a girl he meets on an un-man bike race. They discover that parts of Scotland have been converted back into natural habitats but the experiment had failed. He and the girl hide out at the site of the second experiment but are killed trying to stop the process.

If this means anything to you, please contact: Robin Grant, 122 Embscote Road, Warwick, CV34 5QJ

Richard Brooks has contacted the BSFA in connection with a biography he is writing of Fred T. Jane, the founder of *Jane's Fighting Ships*.

'Before Jane achieved success with his naval annual, he tried his hand at various things, including illustrating and writing science fiction. His novels were published about the same time as H. G. Wells' early work and were: *The Incubated Girl* (1896), *To Venus in Five Seconds* (1897), *The Violet Flame* (1899).

'I am curious about the current views of these in science fiction circles today.'

Mr Brooks would be grateful if anyone could suggest a source for current or original critical opinion of these books. If you can help in any way, please contact: Richard Brooks, 1 Sussex Road, Southsea, Hampshire, PO5 3EX

