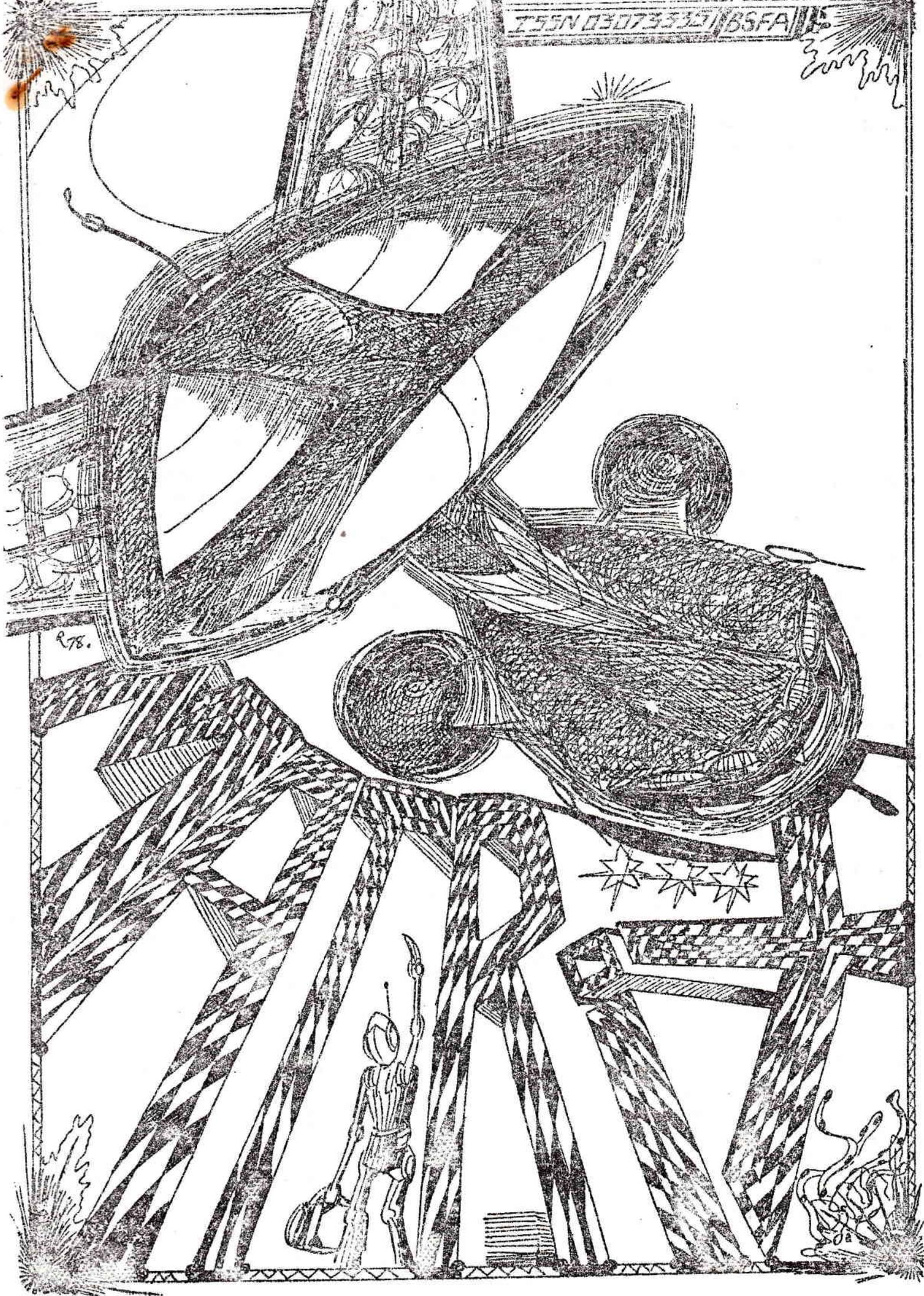


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Evans



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known fans who have been involved in both the convention scene and the fanzine publishing field. They have a wealth of experience and ideas, and after having spoken to John on the phone this afternoon, I'm sure we're going to see some interesting developments in future issues.

This twentieth issue of MATRIX, for those of you who are into contrived numerological coincidences, also appears in the twentieth year of the BSFA's existence. To mark this, Terry Jeeves and Eric Bentcliffe have produced their recollections of the BSFA's formation. I'd like to thank Tom Jones for commissioning Terry's article, Terry for writing it at short notice, and Eric for, at even shorter notice, coming up with an article originally published in TRICIDE, a slightly edited version of which appears here. Also within these pages: a look at the British Fantasy Society and Tom Jones on his first convention, as well as views, news, reviews - and our usual share of abuse (together with the odd compliment).

I had virtually completed the typing of MATRIX when Richard Smith's Poll results finally arrived. I managed to squeeze something, albeit abbreviated in, but must tender my apologies to Richard for not being able to print the whole thing, which I hope will see light in some form in the future. There were indeed some very interesting results: I spent a good half hour looking through muttering agreement and the occasional highly coloured disagreement. I find it highly interesting to see how far we agree in our tastes: perhaps more so to see how far we disagree. Also received too late to include in the lettercol was a five-page letter from Don West describing last issue's Statement as "a muddle of evasions, omissions, fantasies bordering on falsehood and self-contradictory special pleading." But here I too must close. Au revoir!

 ***** THE BSFA FILE..... Tom A. Jones *****

COMMUNICATION

With a geographically scattered committee it is difficult to get everyone together at committee meetings so apart from the many letters and phone calls that pass between us we have a round robin. This was started last year and it's now doing its seventh tour round the committee. It's used to distribute news and views, particularly the latter, and is run with a no-holds-barred rule. Criticism is rife but (usually!) constructive. Each 'issue' contains about 20 items, some new, some going around for a second time. Some items, such as finance and the various magazines, are permanent. When I sent it off a couple of weeks ago, we'd reached item 60. It's the VC's job to decide when a discussion has finished, provide a summary and ensure whatever action has been decided on is initiated.

The round robin also throws up items of disagreement or considerable interest which need a thorough discussion and so are included in the next committee meeting.

Whilst the round robin could not be the only means of communication, it is very useful and I'm not sure how we got along without it.

JOBS

Having been 'on the inside' for about 4 years now I'd forgotten that the majority of you probably don't know what each committee member does. Sandy Brown kindly reminded me, so I'll tell you what I do as VC and in future issues we'll deal with the other committee members.

First the official bit. The Chairman's post in the BSFA is an honorary one, offered to someone who has contributed considerably to the field and, being frank, whose name is good publicity value. Thus the Vice-Chairman is the 'executive head' of the Association and as such chairs all Council and Committee meetings. Though it's not a laid down part of the job I also take the minutes at the various meetings (it saves having a minutes secretary).

I receive a considerable amount of mail for the Association, some I can pass on to the appropriate committee member, the rest I deal with. Committee members also pass mail on to me. The mail is very varied, e.g.

- a) letters offering help - always welcome.
- b) letters of constructive criticism - ditto
- c) " destructive " - usually filed and forgotten and a curt note sent to the writer.
- d) advertising bumph from many sources, most of it junk.
- e) letters from various sources soliciting some kind of assistance from the Association.
- f) etc. - usually the hardest to deal with.

The VC is also the link man with the outside world in matters not relating to the magazines or advertising. For example, when trying to set up the ill-fated SF Conference the VC acted as the link with the Conference Centre and, along with the business manager, tried to get speakers. As a further example the VC obtains the Carnell Award and tries

to organise a suitable venue for its presentation.
 The VC writes these reports for MATRIX.
 The VC is also the hatchet man. If any committee member gets out of line it's up to the VC to take the appropriate action.
 The VC is not a dictator, he acts independantly of the committee only when authorised by them to do so and in all matters he is immediately responsible to the committee and ultimately to the membership as a whole.

The time needed to do the job varies, some weeks a couple of hours is fine, others 2 or 3 evenings are necessary (particularly when minutes or these reports have to be produced).

As the BSFA expands so the load on the VC will increase. So, apart from the time needed I believe the VC also needs the following qualities/abilities:

- a) to write reasonable intelligible English.
- b) to be critical without being abusive
- c) to be impartial
- d) to deal with bodies outside SF
- e) to be thick-skinned
- f) to be diplomatic with all that entails
- g) enthusiasm
- h) accept the fact that there's very little glory attached to the job.

That's why there is an unofficial 'rule' that no-one serves as VC for more than two years, because if one did have all thos abilities to start with, believe me you wouldn't have them after 2 years!

Perhaps this is a good time to once again call for volunteers (or nominations) for the next VC as my term of office ends Easter 1979. I hope this has made the point that the job is important and must be filled. I've recently read in fanzines and been told by fans that there are lots of people dying to help the BSFA, so this is their big chance. Though I've asked before I've had exactly zero replies, so even if you only think you might be interested please write to me. And finally it's no good mentioning your interest in a fanzine, or in passing to a committee member at a pub or convention to show you're really interested and it's not a passing whim. You must write.

A STAPLE DIET

I've been amused, and bemused, at the passion that the type, position and number of staples in the magazines produces. Being one of the people who give up a Saturday Sunday and, sometimes one weekday evening to put the mailing together I get somewhat angry at the critics who obviously have no idea what a slog it is to staple over 1,000 copies, and what a boon the electric stapler is (though even I started to see the point when my copy of VECTOR shed its staples).

So we've caved in and bought (£17) a manual which is man enough for the job and it was used on last (and all subsequent) mailing's VECTORS. I don't think these staples will come out. We still think the electric is strong enough for MATRIX, though, and will continue to

use it on that journal. We hope that makes you happy (wonder what they'll find to mean about next?)

LITHO

We've no recovered from our precarious financial position and our priority will be a return to a lithoed VECTOR. We've had a large mailing on this topic and 99% are in favour of returning to litho as quickly as possible. Our present thought is that we will switch back to litho with the first issue of 1979. Which gives one more duplicated VECTOR. This gives sufficient time to consolidate a good financial base.

SIGN OFF

I received a good letter from Sandy Brown which I'd intended to excerpt and comment on but have run out of space - sorry Sandy, I'll try to squeeze you in next time!

TOM JONES.

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MEMBER'S NOTICEBOARD
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Norman Milburn is in need of stereo cassettes of the first few "Hitch Hikers Guides to the Galaxy" programmes; reasonable condition Nebulas 2 in paperback; early 'Perishers' collections, and would like to hear from any American members who'd be willing to offer a bath and a night's floorspace for a trip round America that he's planning. Contact Norman at 2, Kent View Gardens, Seven Kings, Essex.

CLOSER TO THE EDGE is a new A4 stencil reviewzine, published bimonthly. Free with a stamp from Steve Green at 'Ad Astra', 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7QL, UK. Trades welcomed, but return postage should be included for unsolicited mail.

ASTRON 3 will be out around Xmas '78, with articles by Bob Shaw and John Brunner, and also featuring interviews with Judy-Lynn Del Rey and Joe Haldeman. ASTRON is a large format stencil-litho zine, available by order only. Details (include IRC or s.a.e.) from Steve Green.

REALITY PLUS is Britain's regular fanzine review column, featuring news and views of zines throughout the world. Also includes information on forthcoming conventions, local SF groups etc. REALITY PLUS is presently published bimonthly in the reviewzine CLOSER TO THE EDGE, as well as in several other UK fanzines. For the latest edition, send return postage to Steve Green, address above, to who review copies and information should also be sent.

WAIF 2 obtainable for a 12p stamp from Tom A Jones, 39 Ripplesmere, Bracknell Berks. People say of this zine, "It's one of the best zines I've ever seen." (Tom Jones speaking to his typewriter at 2 a.m.)

Neil Talbot, 42a Hobson Rd, LEICESTER LE4 2AQ writes: "thanks for the plug Bill Little gave in ROUND THE CLUBS for the Leicester Science Fiction Group. The only thing he forgot to mention was that we issued a regular monthly news-

Letter free to group members. If anyone wants to see a copy, please write to me, enclosing s.a.c."

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JAMES CAIRNS, 15 BRINKBURN ST., SUNDERLAND SR4 7RG.

KEVIN BROXTON, 418, Leyland Lane, Leyland Lancs., says "one thing I would like is to be in personal contact with someone else who reads SF as much as I do." So get writing!

BERNARD EARP, 21 Moorfield Grove, Tonge Moor, Bolton, Lancs will, by the time you read this, have appeared in the play "A Cure for Love" by Walter Greenwood at the Bolton Little Theatre (6th-11th Nov.) He also did the special effects for the first play of the season, "Journey's end" by R.C. Sherriff, set during the First World War. "...The last time I did Effects on this scale I destroyed three metal dustbins and had three actors play one scene every night flat on their faces after one claimed to have been hit by shrapnel."

BSFA SERVICES

THE LIBRARY - Kept at the Science Fiction Foundation. For subscription details, contact the Administrator, Malcolm Edwards, Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex R88 2AS.

INFORMATION SERVICE - for that fact you've forgotten. If you want to remember it again, contact Dr Roger Gilbert, Dept. of Genetics, University of Swansea, Singleton Park Swansea, Glamorgan.

MAGAZINE CHAIN - subscribe to one or all of the current us magazines, paying a small subscription fee and the outward postage to the next person on the list. Contact Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Rd, Reading Berks RG6 1PL.

DUPLICATION SERVICE - Magazines will be duplicated and materials supplied at reasonable prices (due to bulk buying) If you're thinking of producing a fanzine, contact Keith Freeman (address above). It is also possible for fanzines and advertising matter to be distributed to BSFA members at a charge to be worked out with the Treasurer, Chris Umpleby, 4 Kirkdale Terrace, LEEDS LS12 6BA.

(S.A.E.'s would, I'm sure, be welcome in making enquiries).

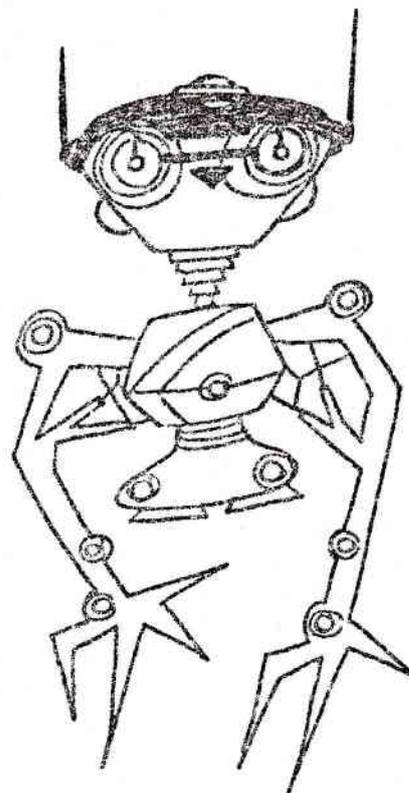
THE ORBITER - a postal writers workshop where manuscripts are circulated in a dossier for comment and criticism. Members willing to take part or set up their own version can contact Rog Pile, 46 Trenoweth Estate, North Country, Redruth, Cornwall TR 16 4 AH.

***** ** COMPETITION TIME ** *****

Last issue's competition produced quite a good response, 99.999% of who leaped with glee on the fact that I'm spelled 'Puudly' wrong (now, how did you know that was a dumbwitted spelling mistake and not a hamfisted typo??) The winner, whose name jumped out of the container during the Jethro Tull concert the other night, was C.R. BERDLEY, who will Be Hearing From Me...

The correct matching of the authors and titles was:

A FAR SUNSET (Edmund Cooper)
THE WORLD HENDERS (Lloyd Biggle)
EARTHMAN, COME HOME (James Blish)
THE WRECKS OF TIME (Michael Moorcock)
SHADOW OF HEAVEN (Bob Shaw)
THE HEAVEN MAKERS (Frank Herbert)
THE SWORDSMAN OF MARS (Otis Adelbert Kline)
THE NIGHT OF THE GOLF (Fritz Leiber)
CITY OF ILLUSION (Ursula LeGuin)
THE NIGHT OF THE PUUDLY (Clifford D. Simak)



FOR THIS COMPETITION: In which books do the following characters appear? Answers to the MATRIX editorial address, please: Michael Valentine Smith; Harry Purvis; Shevek; Billy Pilgrim; Kim Kinnison; Jason dinAlt; Gulliver Foyle; Jorje X. Mickie; Winsron Smith; Mitchell Courtenay; Lije Bailey, Simon Moon.

(n.b. some of them appear in more than one book.)

IN THE BEGINNING

THERE WAS

KETTERING

b

y

Terry Jeeves

When Tom wrote to tell me that the BSFA was approaching its 21st anniversary, I was staggered... could it be that long? When he continued with a request that I tell the story of how it came to pass... I was completely croggled (*from the verb 'croggle!'). My memory needs a lot of nudging to go back as far as yesterday... but to shove it back 21 years!... All I can pick out are a few highlights of the operation. I offer them here in the hope that they may amuse... and may coax someone with a better memory than I to take up his pen.

Things boiled up at a Convention in Kettering. Dave Newman, a long since gaffiated Liverpool fan had the idea that fandom was becoming moribund (now where have I heard that before?) and that its ranks were steadily diminishing as members gaffiated. What was needed, was NEW BLCOD. (Dave had a touch of Dracula in him). Granted the need - what could be done? Who supplied the answer must remain shrouded in the mists of fannish antiquity... but it was decided that we must form a society with the avowed intention of introducing readers of SF to the great world of Fandom. Sorry folks, but that was the prime aim of SF in those days... to bring in more new fans from the ranks of the people who simply read their SF... and then turned over and fell asleep. As a sort of secondary target, the BSFA was to spread the gospel of SF, publicise it and coax in more readers to the fold.

Things might have died right there... everyone was agreed that it was a good idea, we must form a society some time... but right now the bar was open and good drinking time was vanishing into limbo. However, coming to the rescue of Dave Newman came that knight of fandom and auctioneer par excellence... Ted Tubb. He stormed to the platform and bulldozed that fannish group like Ted Sturgeon's 'Killdozer'. If we wanted a society then by golly, NOW was the time to form it. We had to stop putting things off to further meetings, and start acting. By sheer force of willpower, Ted virtually created the BSFA by his own blood sweat and toil. Maybe if we remember that fact as well on anniversary day, it would be a nice way to say 'Thank you, Ted!'

Incidentally, while all this was going on, and Ted was plugging for a society while simultaneously shooting down hecklers and dissidents in the aud-

ience, Dave Newman was frantically recording the whole procedure on Norman Shorrocks's (or maybe it was Eric Jones's) Ferrograph... so somewhere, slowly de-gaussing itself, is a complete tape record of how the BSFA came into being. It might be a good idea if the BSFA committee instituted a search for it.

Anyway, thanks to TED, we got a BSFA... now who was going to organise it... we needed a secretary... who would do that job? A long lull silence.... Finally it was proposed that Eric Bentcliffe and I do a joint act as we were currently doing with TRIODE, and be joint editors. So it fell to our lot to organise the first membership drive.

Archie Mercer was elected into the Treasurer's chair. Dave Newman became Chairman... a post which caused no end of trouble to the infant BSFA when he gaffiated two months later.

Ted Tubb agreed to edit the BSFA's magazine (it wasn't until a later meeting that I suggested the name VECTOR and had it accepted).

So there we were... All looked well set for our new society... which is always the time to run for cover.

Dave Newman gaffiated... with all the minutes and planning information of the budding society. Then Ted Tubb mailed me the material for VECTOR 1 and resigned from the editorial chair owing to pressure of writing commitments. Chaos... no editor... and no guidance from the chair. We re-grouped. Eric Bentcliffe took over the full secretaryship on his own shoulders. I became VECTOR's editor and i/c BSFA publications. (what became of those, by the way?)

So for the BSFA's first year, I produced TRIODE with Eric Bentcliffe... and duplicated four issues of VECTOR... and edited three of them... some, with colour duplicating as well. There was also another little job I managed to get off the ground... and still feel a bit peeved about. A new member, Karl Dollner, was keen on making a GALAXY checklist, so I advised him on how to set about it... and another new member, Keith Freeman wanted to help with typing... so I passed Dollner's Checklist to Keith for typing. In the meantime, I wrote to H.L. Gold, then Galaxy's editor, and got a nice letter as a frontispiece for the forthcoming Checklist. The complete work was handed over to my successor when I gladly handed over at the end of the first year... and it sank without a trace... and didn't appear until a third editor took over a year later and published it - but in the meantime, H.L. Gold's letter had vanished from sight... and neither Karl Dollner, nor Keith Freeman got any credit for all their exceedingly hard work.

It was about this time, that 'Doc' Weir died, and fandom in general wanted to perpetuate his name by a collection. This was handled by the BSFA... but when the total was around £10, it was realised that to hand such a relatively small sum to his widow would not be a great help to her, so at a committee meeting of the BSFA held in the Liverpool clubhouse, it was decided to institute the 'Doc' Weir Award. The current Treasurer, Gill Adams, said she could purchase a goblet... and (I seem to recall that I was the BSFA's Chairman at that time) came up with the basis of the award - and in view of the considerable controversy and bad-mouthing which the award seems to have attracted in recent years, I'd like to outline what was decided.

The purpose of the Award was to perpetuate Doc's memory.

To avoid petty bickering as to who was eligible and who was not (we must have been bloody prophets even if we failed in this aim) we made the rules as simple as possible:-

To ensure that any interested fan could vote (not just BSFA) and not uncles, dads, brothers, etc. We made the voting qualification... "anyone sufficiently interested in SF to attend the annual Eastercon is qualified to vote".

The criterion as to who is eligible for your vote (we did NOT ask for pre-nomination) was made even simpler. "A voter may vote for anyone he would like to see win the 'Doc' Weir Award."

and that was it. You can vote for your sister Kate if you like... but unless a majority of other fans also fancy her, she just won't win.

Several misguided fans have called the award a sop for long service or a put-up job. To them I would simply say RUBBISH. Naturally, people who are sufficiently interested to vote, ask around to see what the current thought is... then if they agree, they cast their vote the same way... but there is no put-up job. Each person may vote for literally anyone they choose. Obviously, if a group of malcontents wanted to discredit the award, they could do so easily by simply getting a large enough group to attend a convention and then vote for Mickey Mouse. However, the point of the award is to perpetuate Doc's name, not to discredit it, and all such behaviour would be just that... and perhaps would manage to saddle future administrators with the task of cooking up rules.

Incidentally, I would add that the BSFA has always been merely the administrator of the award and has no other standing as to laying down rules about it. Times may have changed this attitude, but that is how and why it came about.

Times and attitudes change. For my money, the BSFA is still doing a good job of putting fandom - and SF - in front of the public... but, and this is a personal thought, I would appreciate seeing it getting its name into print wherever possible by the Chairman writing to press, media etc when suitable occasions arise, and, since the idea is to establish the BSFA as a responsible and sensible body, I'd like to see the end of some of the more way out material which has appeared in recent mailings. It may be fannish... but unless we decide that we want a fannish BSFA, then we should take more care with our public image. Remember... bringing new blood into fandom is not the same as thumping the tub for the zanier side of fannish behaviour.

T.J.

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* . . . SO THEY ALL GOT UP *
* AND WALKED AWAY *
* *****
* by Eric Bentcliffe *
* *****
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There's quite a deal of discussion around fanzines and fandom at the moment as to whether or not the BSFA is a necessary adjunct to British Fandom... or even, whether it has anything to do with Fandom!

Now these are dialectical problems which are much too profound for your humble author to attempt to resolve. But, they do provide a pertinent excuse for a little time-binding relevant to the forming of the Association...

Anyway, it all began some weeks before the 1958 Kettering Convention - the third, and, alas, last of the conventions to be held at the George Hotel, famed for its Blog Drinking and Brag Playing facilities. Vince Clarke had circulated most of the active fans of the period with a little thing called "DON'T JUST SIT THERE...", the message of which was, basically, that UK fandom was in danger of ingrowing its existence. It had become so esoteric to anyone now appearing on its fringe that it had no apparent connection to the Science Fiction Fandom that it was supposed(?) to be. We were, it intimated, in danger of bringing true a fannish parable of the time....

"The last fan sat alone in his room - no-one knocked at the door!"

So, it was agreed that a meeting would be held during the convention weekend; that the bar would be closed early and Norman Shorrocks' room locked and barred at the same time, and to make absolutely sure, all zap-guns, playing cards and femme-fans would be confiscated at 3pm on the Sunday Afternoon.

Now I'm not going to give a coherent account of that meeting; apart from the fact that it happened a long time ago and I have carefully incinerated my notes, it was rather a traumatic experience for me - and I'm referring now to the fact that I was inveigled into becoming a member of the committee rather than the diabolical locking of the Shorrocks Room and the loss of his portable still for several hours of Convention time!

I think that Vince spoke first and embroidered on the message in his pamphlet; Dave Newman, I think, then elected himself chairman of the meeting and proceeded to wake all those who had already dropped off and introduce the man who did the real damage - Edwin C. Tubb.

Now, Ted Tubb, as anyone will know who has been to a convention auction and purchased a tattered Volsted Gridban pb under the misapprehension that it was progressive porn, has a Silver Tongue. A harsh voice, but a Silver Tongue. A harsh voice, a silver tongue,

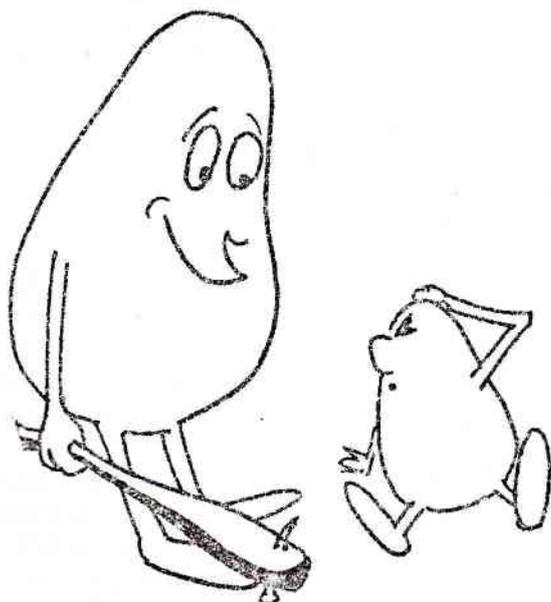
and a Warm Heart. "Why should we," he enquired, "carouse every Easter and some of us even more often, when there are science-fiction readers all over the country deprived of this privilege - soberly, secretly reading their SF when they could be here, with us, buying us drinks, worshipping at our feet, carrying us up to bed at dawn....."

It was a magnificent speech, and even before he had finished it and we'd wiped the tears from our eyes, it had been unanimously decided that we all knew what had to be done - Ted Tubb must be Chairman of whatever it was we were about to form. However, we reckoned without Ted's adeptness and experience in fandom, for before he could be elected and as a continuation of his speech, he announced just how disappointed he was that he was unable to stand for office due to his numerous dependants, and a bad foot. Gritting our collective teeth at his anguish, we still avowed that he shouldn't escape scot-free!

Sometime round about here, a noble being managed to get things bogged down by bringing up the topic of what the new organisation, association or society should be called. This was a very clever gambit and resulted almost in the meeting being adjourned until 1959, or '60. However, after much altercation it was decided to call it THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION, over several dead bodies.

It was now becoming obvious to those of us who hadn't managed to escape out of a window, that someone was going to be elected to something if someone wasn't careful. It had been all right deciding on a title for the association, it hadn't, even, been too bad being locked in a room with no Blog for five hours.... but, we'd have to be very, very careful now....

The crucial moment, the crunch, was delayed, briefly, by an argument as to how many officers the Association should have, what their powers should be... and several more (frantic) attempts to get the meeting adjourned until 1959!



Eventually, though, Dave Newman called the meeting to order again and uttered that we must get on with the business of electing suitable officers to the Association. Within 5 nano-seconds he had been elected as Chairman!

It had been decided earlier, that the Association would have a committee of four initially, their titles to be Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer & Editor. And approaching the moment of truth obliquely, it was decided to vote on the Treasury department next - this being generally agreed upon to be the least difficult post to fail. Archie Mercer, his caravan in dire need of repair and renovation, was prevailed upon to accept the post.

Walt Willis was put forward as the editor of the Association's journal - he not being present at the meeting; but the already-elected Chairman ruled his swift election out of order. The post was then 'offered' to Ted Tubb, who, still suffering from laryngitis after his heroic earlier speech, was unable to say 'no' loud enough to avoid being elected!

Now we came to who was going to be Secretary - and a long, loud silence! Norman G. Wansborough was proposed, but with unusual alacrity managed to escape, at that very moment, through a tunnel he had dug into the Devil's Kitchen. Terry Jeeves was proposed, but regretfully declined on grounds of insanity! I was proposed and since Terry had just used the excuse I'd thoughtlessly written on my cuff, found myself in a most awkward position. Momentarily paralyzed, I could only temporize by saying that I couldn't possibly do the job myself - "All right," they said, "so, we'll elect Jeeves to help you!" Before I could think up an adequate answer to this, the meeting was adjourned and the noise caused by the rapid exodus of a horde of thirsty fans drowned my feeble cries for mercy.

The Committee, momentarily power-mad, sent out for suitable refreshments and sat comiserating dolefully with one another - at least, we'd had the forethought to provide ourselves with the authority to co-opt additional committee members; and there was always the money to be made from selling the Meat Pie Concession to Brian Burgess at next year's convention! A brief committee meeting was held to define jobs; Terry was to double as assistant-secretary and publisher of the association's journal; Dave Newman was to make his first priority the acquisition of a suitable President to lend the BSFA an aura of Science Fictional respectability.

The rest of the convention passed very pleasantly - everyone insisted on buying the committee members drinks and congratulating them heartily; in retrospect, I think that this was a gambit to ensure that none of the committee were to be allowed to sober up enough to resign!

For the first few weeks everything went uncommonly smoothly. Ted got to work on the first issue of VECTOR (indeed, he practically wrote it himself!), and Terry oil his duplicator in readiness to run it off. As I recall it, the first VECTOR (Summer '58) appeared at the same time as TRIGDE 14 (which, fortunately, I'd done most of the stencilling on prior to getting elected).

But meanwhile, All Was Not Well With The Chairman....

I'd received no replies to letters sent to Dave, and neither had any of the other committee members. Since I was the closest to Dave (in terms of distance, that is) who was, at that time, living on the Wirral and was also a members of the Liverpool Group; I delegated myself to find out what had happened to the lad. I hastily entrained for the Shorrocks residence and discovered on arrival at the appointed destination that Bad News Was At Hand. Norman, with an arm round my shoulder, poured a bottle of Bollinger '43 into me quickly, and informed me that Dave Newman had, apparently, vanished from human ken. And, what was worse, had taken the LiG Club minutes and bottle-opener with him!

And, alas, Other crises were Looming. A certain fraction of London Fandom made a bid to take over the treasury.... They knew how to keep books, and Archie, who only did it for a living, couldn't possibly do it as well as they could...! Resisting this tempting offer wasn't difficult; and we did explain to them that there really wasn't any treasury to take over as yet anyway! More serious was the reluctant resignation of Ted Tubb as OE. Ted was just breaking into the big-time as a writer and he just did not have the time to pursue his writing career and edit VECTOR. He'd done a darn good job on VECTOR No. 1, and those of us who were left were sorry to loose him.

This article, perhaps, should have been entitled 'And Then There Were Three' - the Committee, as elected, now being two men short. However, we closed ranks and consoled ourselves that atleast the fewer involved the more easy to make decisions. Terry took over as Editor and Publisher of VECTOR, Archie continued as Treasurer, and I amalgamated the jobs of Chairman and Secretary.

And due to a fair amount of hard work by the committee, and help, aid and assistance from the majority of active fans of the period quite a lot was accomplished in that first twelve months. Four issues of VECTOR appeared, a convention was organised - the late Bob Richardson was co-opted as Chairman, and with the aid of Norman Shorrocks as programme manager and the combined talents of the Cheltenham and Liverpool Groups a goodly affair was held the following Easter at the Imperial Hotel (now the Imperial Centre Hotel) in Birmingham. A BSFA Library was another project brought to fruition with the aid of Eric Jones and the Cheltenham Group. Karl Dollner, a new member, set to work on a GALAXY CHECKLIST which was shortly to see publication, but which was beaten into print by the first of what was intended to be a series of BSFA Publications of interest to SF readers - "A History and Checklist of NEW WORLDS".

The late Edward (Ted) J. Carnell, had been very helpful since the founding of the Association - each issue of NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY carried free advertising of the BSFA, and this was a great help in bringing in new members - and since NW was the premier British SF magazine of the time (and under Ted's

editorship, of all time, I think), I thought it a good idea to feature the magazine in the first of a bibliographical series. Brian Burgess had, I knew, compiled a comprehensive checklist of the magazine issues. So I wrote to him. With typical Burgess abandon he arrived on my doorstep two days later complete with Rucksack and Checklist! Despite this initial setback... I wrote to Ted to enquire whether he would be good enough to pen a brief history of NEW WORLDS to make the publication complete. This he was kind enough to do; and with the assistance of another new BSFA member, Arthur Tavinder who stencilled the checklist, and Terry, who did his usual immaculate job of duplicating, the booklet appeared early in '59.

It was quite a hectic year, and not an unenjoyable one. Nevertheless, I wasn't sorry to relinquish office and return to being a fanarchist at the '59 Convention. Whether it was right to form the BSFA at that time, I don't really know... perhaps if we hadn't dounded the organisation there would have been a greater continuity of fannishness.... but somehow I rather doubt it!

GRADE - A
SECURITY 



 ** David **
 SPIRAL SCRATCHES IN VINYL.....
 ** Strahan **
 Obscure plastic platters heard by:

I just stick the aerial
 Into my skin.

The music is made up of repetitive synthesiser sound overlaid with robotic chanting, with interjections of garbled TV transmissions. It could be compared to Kraftwerk but it's infinitely less bland than that.

It is the song on the flip side which really shows up the influence: called "Warm Leatherette", it is in a similar style to "TVOD" but with words like -

A tear of petrol is in your eye
 The handbrake penetrates your thigh;
 quick, lets make love
 Before you die.

- It has just got to be inspired by J.G. BALLARD's Crash. The single comes in a picture sleeve which shows a photo of two mannequins in a seat-belt testing machine, further emphasising the Crash influence. It'll be interesting to see if this is just a one-off job or if The Normal will continue, and if so, how.

The next record is a 12-inch single (45rpm) from Pere Ubu (part of the New York New Wave) called "Data-panik in the year zero". It contains virtually all their material released on singles to date: "Heart of Darkness", "30 Seconds Over Tokyo", "Cloud 149", "Untitled" and "Happen". The cover of this one is in garish pink and sports the picture of the dashboard and steering wheel (with no-one driving) of a car at night, all the dials and meters lit up. Through the wind-screen we see the naked body of a young woman who has just been hit by the car. Apparently this is also Crash influenced.

The track which shows most SF-influence here is "30 Seconds Over Tokyo", which is about a nuclear attack hitting Tokyo. Key words and phrases extracted from Dave Thomas' deliberately garbled singing show this: "a million dead", "mushroom", and "...twisted cars on every side, no place to run and no place to hide". As you listen more closely more of the lyrics become clear and a horrific description of the city after a nuclear attack emerges. The music is ominous and gloom-ridden, with breaks into chaotic sound which have a curious order to them - very stark.

The last record in the pile is the Mick Farren & The Deviants EP called "Screwed Up". Apart from the title track, the songs are "Outragious/Contagious", "Shock Horror" and "Lets Loot The Supermarket Again Like We Did Last Summer". I think this is all old Deviants material rerecorded recently, although I don't know whether the band are reforming on any sort of permanent basis. The only song with any SF influence at all is "Lets Loot..."; the title sums it up, really. The whole EP is searing rock and roll - and well worth the listen - but it has another connection with SF. Mick Farren has written several SF books: "The Texts of Festival" (a review of which is in GANYMEDE 1, available from me) and a 'science fantasy' trilogy consisting of "The Quest of The DNA Cowboys",

All the records I'm going to deal with are SF influenced in one way or another, however tenuous the link. They are all records I bought for their musical content, not their SF content, which is incidental but which means I can legitimately write a piece about them in this mag.

The first record, called "Another Girl, another Planet", is the debut single from The Only Ones, a band who have been around some time but who have only recently come to the notice of the music press (they appeared on The Old Grey Whistle Test on 13th June). It is in fact a love song (but don't let that deceive you; it's very raunchy) which uses a naive form of SF as the idiom in which it expresses itself.

(chorus)

I think I'm on another world with you, with you
 I'm on another planet with you, with you,

(one of the verses)

Space travel's in my blood,
 There ain't nothing I can do about it,
 Long journeys wear me out,
 I know, I couldn't live without it.

The lyrics conjure up images of the fading covers of 1950's Amazing Stories or Astounding Science Fiction.

The incongruous mixture of anachronistic West Coast guitar playing, Lou Reed sound-alike vocals and SF influenced lyrics puts the song into a timeless dimension. For me it has the air of a classic. With the superlatives disposed of, suffice it to say that this is one of those songs which you can play over and over without tiring of it.

Despite the song's excellence and despite the critical acclaim the album (entitled "The Only Ones") from which it is taken received, if the single ever entered the charts, it very soon dropped out again. The result, I suspect, of very little promotion or airplay.

Although the rest of the album is not obviously SF influenced as, say, the music of Hawkwind is, Perret's writing shows tinges of the macabre, giving titles such as "City of Fun", "The Beast", and "Creatures of Doom".

I'm afraid that "Another Girl, Another Planet" is doomed to undeserved obscurity, unless The Only Ones become really big.....

From Astounding Science Fiction we move to a radically different influence. A group called "The Normal" (their inverted commas) have produced a single, "TVOD" (Television Overdose). It's all about taking radio aerials and sticking them into your arm. Letting the signals pulse through your veins:

I don't need no
 TV screen

Failing to review AsfA is a bit of a waste in a way, because I'd prepared all sorts of glib & witty, epigrammatic declamations, and I had a really snappy opening lined up, that went:

I approached this magazine expecting it to be shit.

I was wrong.

It isn't shit, it's Entertainment...

which seems to me a pretty fair assessment, because AsfA isn't actually a bad magazine (Harry Harrison's "The Stainless Steel Rat Wants You!" is genuinely funny, albeit intermittently, and one short story - by a newcomer, Jesse Peel - struck me as being sensitively written), it's just that it is so disposable.

AsfA is an inoffensively bland divertimento, and by the time that issue number two has hit the stands I doubt that very many people bar the bibliographers will remember that the contents of the first issue ever existed. Somehow, I wish that all the resources behind AsfA had been put into something a little less ephemeral.

Sincerely yours,

Cyril Simsa, 8th August 1978

STARLORD REQUIEM

STARLORD is no more. Perhaps the best SF comic for years, STARLORD has merged with IPC stablemate 2000 A.D. The reason: poor sales. A friend at IPC told me that STARLORD was thought to be too complicated for kids; whatever the reason, too few people were buying it, and so it joins the long list of publications which go down the drain due to lack of adequate support. The two best strips, RO-BUSTERS and STRONTIUM DOG live on in the pages of the newly retitled 2000A.D. & STARLORD, but are we to hope that the excellent artwork and witty imaginative scripts which characterised these strips will remain unadulterated when Tharg, 2000A.D.'s resident alien, has consolidated his grip? I hope so, but then again I cynically suspect that it was just these qualities which caused STARLORD to fail to make it. I shall probably buy the next few issues just to keep up with the adventures of my old mates Ro-jaws and Hammerstein; whether I'll continue depends how JUDGE DREDD keeps developing and what happens to the revolting FLESH, which appears to be designed to convert people to vegetarianism. Certainly, the physical quality (paper, design) of the 'new' comic is inferior to that of STARLORD.

But then, my opinion doesn't count, as Judge Dredd would no doubt say, a drokk. All I can do is fume impatiently and wonder why, given something which is junk and something which is at least several grades higher, people will invariably choose the junk.....

(Andy Sawyer) -12-

** POLL RESULTS..... Richard J. Smith. **
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** **

((Ed. note: The poll result arrived too late for full inclusion - as I type this it looks like MATRIX will be late - so I'm just putting down the winners in the major categories. To those who would like to see the full results (Top 50 books/authors etc. etc.), they may appear in a future MATRIX, but will also be available from the Vice-Chairman, Tom Jones. My apologies for not having enough space! Over to Richard...))

Well, here it is, what the SF world has been waiting for - not really but somebody besides me must be interested in the results! I'll virtually leave the results to speak for themselves, but I need to clear up one point first. FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON by Daniel Keyes received many votes for both its novel and short story versions. As the latter received the most I have added both amounts together and placed it in the short story section. I was particularly sad to see the poor support for FRED POHL, a great writer yet only 34th in the best writer section, and 17th in the best short story writer section. Also the very poor showing by Heinlein in the book section. I could go on in detail about number of replies received and the number of authors and books and stories in each section, but as I don't want to bore you any further here are the results.

Hopefully there will be a part 2 where I will go into detail about the poll, what I think of it, was it worthwhile, etc., and some of your better and wittier comments. Many thanks to every one who took the time and effort to send in a reply; thank you very much, it is as much your poll as mine.

- BEST SF BOOKS: 1) "Dune" (Frank Herbert); 2) "The Left Hand of Darkness" (Ursula K. LeGuin).
BEST SF WRITERS: 1) Arthur C. Clarke; 2) Robert A. Heinlein
SHORT STORIES: 1) "Nightfall" (Asimov); 2) "Flowers for Algernon" (Daniel Keyes)
SHORT STORY WRITERS: 1) Isaac Asimov; 2) Arthur C. Clarke
MOST CONTROVERSIAL NOVEL/ANTHOLOGY: "Dangerous Visions" (Harlan Ellison); "Again D.V." (Ellison)
MOST CONTROVERSIAL WRITER: 1) Harlan Ellison; 2) Heinlein.
BEST NEW WRITER: 1) Ian Watson; 2) Chris Priest
BEST SF HUMOURIST: 1) Harry Harrison; 2) Robert Sheckley.
BEST SF THEME: 1) Time Travel; 2) First Contact.
BEST FACTUAL BOOK ON SF: 1) Billion Year Spree (Aldiss)
2) Visual encyc. of SF (Ash)
BEST SF MAG: (a) Of all time - Astounding/analog; (b) today - Analog.
BEST MAG. EDITOR (same categories) a) Campbell; b) Bova.
BEST SF PERSONALITY: Bob Shaw.
WORST SF WRITER: Michael Moorcock. 2) E.S. Smith
WORST SF BOOK 1) Perry Rhodan series; 2) "Time of the Hawklords" (Moorcock & Butterworth)
BEST PRO SF ARTIST: 1) Foss; 2) Pennington.
BEST SF FILM: 1) 2001; 2) DARK STAR
BEST TVSF SERIES: 1) STAR TREK; 2) DR WHO.
SF COMIC STRIP: 1) Dan Dare; 2) Jeff Hawke.

Fandom Features

FANTASTIC FANTASY

by Dave Reeder

Science Fiction is the bastard son of fantasy and should be seen but not heard!

Okay, that got you all reading on, crying for my blood, frothing at the mouth and generally acting just a little bit rabid. I'm sorry. I take it back. I didn't mean it. What I meant was: Science Fiction is the bastard son of Fantasy and should be neither seen nor heard. Oops...

One of the oldest parlour-games around is this: fans sit around and discuss variants on these questions - what was the first SF novel? Is SF a part of Fantasy? Or vice-versa? Is it true that Harlan Ellison wears a wig? Are there any SF books not written by either Ken Bulmer or Bob Silverberg?

My answer is this: yes, of course, SF is a part of Fantasy. Both grew out of the same pattern of myths, legends, folklore and heroic tales and if you must make an arbitrary point where SF broke away then you might as well make it FRANKENSTEIN.

What is clear is that there are a large number of book/stories that we call Fantasy, an equally large number we call SF, and a whole lot more in the middle we can fight over. The main distinction is, I think, that SF supposes some sort of rational (or rational-appearing) basis to the story. Fantasy, as a general rule, does not. So perhaps SF is merely those Fantasy books that could, maybe, be true. The OED defines Fantasy - or Phantasy for those purists amongst us - as "The process or the result of things not actually present" and as "A supposition resting on no solid ground."

By now, you're probably saying one of three things:

1. I'm one of the 36 people who already belong to both the BSFA and BFS so I don't need this commercial.
2. I've tried Fantasy: I read LORD OF THE RINGS when I was 15 and hated it.
3. Wow! You mean there are stories about monsters and aliens and heros and all that kind of stuff that I can read and enjoy without having a degree in Astro-Physics or a C.S.E. in Nuclear Hand-Missiles?

Yes, number 3, there are. There are thousands of them and what is more they have life, colour, warmth. 13.

humour, imagination, brave heroes, dragons, wizards, helpless maidens, heroic female warriors and they are not (like so much of today's SF) dry, technical and about as exciting as a trip round a transistor factory.

So, what is Fantasy? Well, one of the best definitions I ever saw was Fred Cliphant's when he reviewed Andre Norton's WITCH WORLD books (yes, that's right, they're Fantasy) in VECTOR 58. He divided it into four main strands, like this:

1. HORROR. Well, we all know this. Everything from DRACULA to PSYCHO to H.P. Lovecraft to ROSEMARY'S BABY.
2. WHIMSY. This is really just a catch-all for things like ALICE IN WONDERLAND, WATERSHIP DOWN, Clark Ashton Smith, Lord Dunsany and, perhaps, some of Ray Bradbury's stories.
3. HEROIC FANTASY. This is what people normally think of when they talk of fantasy: call it sword-and-sorcery or sword-and-planet and you'll know we are talking about Robert E. Howard's CONAN, Burroughs' myriad creations and the endless other barbarian heroes of Moorcock, Leiber, Lin Carter, etc.
4. APOCALYPTIC or QUEST FANTASY. Obviously this overlaps a lot with Heroic but is quite a useful subdivision for things like LORD OF THE RINGS or C.S. Lewis' NARNIA books. Often there is a quest for something which will prevent the end of the world as we (or sundry other entities) know it.

Those who feel like it can add:

5. SCIENCE FICTION.

This has been of necessity a short look at Fantasy but if you have read and enjoyed books from one or more of the above categories, then it would possibly be worth your while to investigate the BRITISH FANRASY SOCIETY.

(Plug follows).

The British Fantasy Society was formed six or so years ago by members of the BSFA who were tired of Fantasy being undervalued in the Society. After a debate on whether to set up a group within the BSFA they founded the separate BRITISH WEIRD FANTASY SOCIETY (the 'weird' was later dropped). Amidst occasional complaints that the BFS is still too horror-orientated it soldiers on reflecting the interests of its members and providing four main services for £3 a year (to me, Dave Reeder, 20 Sylvan Road, London E11):

1. A bi-monthly BULLETIN which gives news and reviews across the whole fantasy spectrum: recently we have reviewed/discussed Moorcock's GLORIANA, Stephen King, Brooks' SWORD OF SHANNARA, Tolkien and his in-

fluences, STAR WARS, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, etc. etc. (Personal plug: I'm the editor).

2. A bi-annual (or tri-annual) magazine DARK HORIZONS which, in its 46-odd pages, prints short stories by members and serious articles on fantasy. (The present issue has a long essay by Peter Valentine Timlett on imagination).

3. A fanzine library with many, many rare and common, old and new fanzines for members to borrow,

4. Fantasy pool: a system of critical comment for all aspiring writers in the Society.

We also have an annual Fantasycon and give the British Fantasy Award (this year's winner is Piers Anthony for A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON).

Okay, plug over. Just remember next time when you're tired of yet another trip to star system L-X76 via hyperspace or the mind's disintegration due to this strange new drug fed by the supermarket theocracy of AD 3008 to a poor hydroponic farm superintendant, that there is a whole world of daring heroics, magicks and dragons, and sheer unadulterated FANTASY. When you make it: WELCOME!

RE ALITY: PLUGS... Steven J. Green

When this column first appeared (over a year back, in the second issue of Galaxy - Z), I remember writing some banal "Hi-folks" - type introduction at the start. But although this is another debut in some ways, I think the column's purpose will become self-evident and doesn't require any further explanations, except to say that any fanzines for review should be sent to: "Ad Astra", 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ, UK.

And now to business: The latest issue of Rob Jackson's Maya is out now, 50p (£1.00US) from 71, King John Street, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5XR, UK. Maya's still one of this country's best fanzines, and my only real criticism is the long gaps between issues - Rob tries to publish once every four months, and only occasionally fails, but with excellent contributions by fans and pros of the ilk of Bob Shaw, Pete Weston, etc, even that's much too long.

New on the zine scene is Phil Greenaway's Magus, sporting a three-colour cover by Dougal. Phil seems unsure whether to go ahead with Magus as an SF fanzine, or to devote the contents to his other interest, comics. As a direct result of his indecision over which direction to take, Magus 1 is slightly schizoid - I just hope he's made his mind up by the time Magus 2 appears, some time this fall. Issue 1, anyhow, costs 25p from Phil at 38, 9th Avenue, Gaion Uchaf, Merthyr Tydfil Mid Glamorgan, South Wales.

The future of Randy Reichardt's zine Winding Numbers looks a little uncertain at present, with issue 6 delayed indefinitely. It'd be a great pity if it did die, since it's one of the more enjoyable publications produced in Canada, with a rare asset: humour. For the moment, though, WN fans will have to content themselves with issue 5.5, a single-sheet explanation being sent out by Randy to explain his reasons for delaying ish 6. Subtitled ONEpub 15, it's available from Randy at 58, Penrose Place, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 1S1, Canada - I'd assume return postage would suffice as payment.

ONE pub 16 is also out at present; another single-sheet fanzine, this time containing an imaginary discussion of Decadent Winnipeg Fandom, written by Randy and Michael Hall: brief, energetic and reading like one huge in-joke. Out from the same address (Beflatte Publications, 24-477 Wardlaw Avenue, Winnipeg, R3L 0L9) is Mike's own Laid 6, as personal and brief as the other two. Curious....

Skipping across the ocean to New Zealand, Noumenon's special 22/23 double issue is just out, it's size extensively increased by a massive 18-page feature on the many possible futures now facing mankind, alternately intriguing and irritating (some of the pieces included are just plain boring or too deep for my semi-scientific schooling - even the section on my pet subject - computing - is pretty uninteresting...) Thus, it's Noumenon's other contents - the letters, reviews and news - that prove the liveliest and most worthwhile. Anyway, editor Brian Thurogood's address is: Wilma Road, Waheke Island, Hauraki Gulf, NZ - it's well worth a check.

Forthcoming: Resistance Communique, the journal of the newly-formed "Sevensers" BLAKE'S SEVEN group run by Carole Fairman. The first two issues of her Spacefall are in the works as well at the moment, along with Delerium, a fantasy story -- the club membership fee is £1.00, with six s.a.e.s thrown in to pay for zine postage, and Carole's address is 200, Boundaries Road, Balham, London SW12 8HF, UK.

Talking of clubs, the Cidereal SF Society in Taunton, Somerset, recently published the fifth issue of their group fanzine, Cidereal Times; contents vary from articles on how people got into SF to reviews of THE BRAIN KINGS and BROTHERS OF THE HEAD, justifying the 15p price tag (30p by post from Allen Boyd-Newton at The Gatehouse, Combe Florey, Via Taunton, Somerset).

One new publication that benefits from excellent reproduction is Brainstorm Comix 6, a.k.a. Amazing Rock 'N' Roll Adventures, also going out as Graphixus Magazine Special 1 (sounds like a case of rampant schizophrenia...). The central 23-page "Ace Wimslow" strip is a tour-de-force piece by Bryan Talbot, possibly the best work he's done to date (and his Chester Hackenbush trilogy was pretty incredible). It's a mixture of 1950's style of adventure, 1940's style detective thrillers and contemporary Rock music -- a masterpiece in comix, and at 50p from better comic shops, damn cheap too.

and doing some back-up work to the L5 Project (High Frontier, as it's called, I think.)

Membership of ASTRA costs £4 pa, with Half-price for junior members, and the secretary is Bill Ramsey, 19 Estfield Ave, Cambuslang, Glasgow.

Once again, my thanks go to Duncan for providing reams of info on ASTRA from which this article has been culled (that's the only appropriate word).

But after all that I can only say, I don't know where they find the time! They must operate on a thirty-hour day in Scotland.

* THE FIRST TIME Tom A. Jones *

It is with wry amusement that I look back at the version of me standing on Sheffield Station waiting for the Manchester train. With sympathy and compassion, too, for the me who has started to break the shackles of his parents' home, while learning to survive in the alien world of a university and even taking the first few faltering steps down the road to learning to get on with people. That me is still within me.

It's 1967 and ThirdMan Con, a misnomer because it's being held in Buxton, The wonders of British Rail are such that to get to Buxton I have to go to Manchester and then retrace my steps, this due to a mix of electric and diesel trains. The trains are of the variety known as rail buses, having all the disadvantages of both types of transport with none of the advantages.

It was hot. Easter used to produce sun then as against the snow we've come to expect. The train acted as an effective hothouse and by the time I got to Buxton I had a splitting headache. The hotel was close to the station and was a fine building, built in an arc around a fountain. It had style, unlike the concrete cages we now use...

I didn't know the guy I was sharing a room with. "I'm not unpacking," he said, "You won't see me in here very much." He was right. Apart from a fleeting glimpse on the Sunday he used the room as a large left luggage locker.

I lay down on the bed for a few minutes to get rid of the headache. When I woke it was night. Cursing myself I rushed to the bar, there to meet those I knew so well from their fanzines and letters. It was a strange, stumbling experience for though you may have exchanged your innermost thoughts and feelings by letter, when you meet face to face you're strangers. Some people I recognised straight away, but others amazed me for they bore no resemblance to their written personae.

Come midnight we visited the film show. They were showing clips from terrible horror/SF films and then a spoof horror film. Nothing serious, just right for

heckling: great stuff.

Saturday is a series of incidents, flashing into my mind like the pieces in a kaleidoscope:

The auction where the keen ones had long lists and the guy in front of me kept saying "That's got a Cordwainer Smith story in." which meant no-one was going to outbid him.

Someone rushed up to me. "You're in an SF club, aren't you?" I admitted I'd been to the Birmingham Group meetings. (An aside: By the time I got to Birmingham University the well known B'ham Group had faded away and a new one was in the process of being started, based at Aston Univ. I'd been to one meeting!) With this wealth of experience behind me I found myself on the fan panel supposedly telling people how to start an SF club. Fortunately I don't remember what I said but unfortunately I do remember that I even thought it was terrible and with some amazement I found myself concluding that no sane person would try to set up a local group. I only remember being asked one question from the floor, probably out of kindness.

I wandered into a room party. A couple were necking on the bed. Someone said, "That's X, wonder if we'll all get a turn." Now that was fantasy.

Come the evening Ted Tubb opened his homemade wine. Shandies of 50/50 wine and lemonade were being drunk. Some time later I was drunk and crawling around the floor in someone's room party. There I bumped into an American, also crawling around. He told me he was about to join the Marvel Comics Co. as an artist and though my interest in comics had ceased about a year previously it suddenly waxed again. He gave me some latest US issues and we parted, crawling our separate ways.

I was in my room, the door locked, fans were running up and down the corridors screaming. Outside there were unheeded cries for mercy as fans threw each other into the fountain. I fell asleep.

Sunday; the debt collected. I wasn't well. After a while it dawned on me that I was probably suffering from alcohol poisoning and I might die, with any luck. Sometime during the evening I awoke and found I was well but I had a very quiet evening.

Monday; the end of the world is nigh. At breakfast I was told that some people had suffered from food poisoning and I'd probably had it also, but I wasn't convinced, either about them or me.

The last goodbyes, the last book purchases. Then the sudden realisation that I didn't have enough money for the train. I know anyone with sense would have bought a return ticket at the start but some strange imp had stolen my reason and I hadn't. Fortunately, the hotel told me where there was a bus to Sheffield, which I could afford. It was a beautiful ride with the bus wandering from village to village across the pennines, and the sun was still shining.

My luck was in because my money was sufficient to get from Sheffield to Doncaster and then home to Rossington.

Though it was over, it was still with me, an experience of pleasure and pain. The fact that so many of the memories are still with me after ten years shows the impression that first convention had on me. In those ten years both I and conventions have changed but they are still an experience that one should sample for the joys and sorrows of the first time.

(Why not try Nocacon this year or Eastercon in Leeds next year?)

NEWFOUND OF THE BSFA

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B O O K N E W S

First, some news from the HAMLYN book group, taken from a letter sent by Peter Pinto, who is currently working for Hamlyn as a freelance SF editor:

"News, etc. of Hamlyn SF.

Already published:

The Makeshift Rocket (Paul Anderson.)

Fury (Henry Kuttner)

Beyond the barrier (Damon Knight)

The Seed of Earth (Robert Silverberg)

The Florians (Daedalus *1) (Brian Stableford)

Grimm's World (Vernor Vinge)

From now till March 178 (later dates less certain):

October - The Silent Invaders (Robert Silverberg)

November - The Wifling (Vernor Vinge)

" A Touch of Strange (Theodore Sturgeon)

January 179 - The Lion Game (James H. Schmitz)

" The Other Log of Phineas Fog (Phillip Jose Farmer)

February - Critical Threshold (D*2) (Brian Stableford)

March - Mutant (Henry Kuttner)

and approximately twenty other fine titles (note sales pitch) bought but not yet scheduled.

We have cornered the writings of Henry Kuttner - I'm re-editing the collections to eliminate overlaps and collect series stories into the same vols. - and also to allow for

the ever upward trend in the minimum price paperbacks can be commercially published at. So, for example, "Chessboard Planet" (A.K.A "The Fairy Chessmen", a.k.a. "The Far Reality") is to have a couple of shorter SF pieces in with it.

Artwork. The lousy covers on the first Hamlyn SF paperbacks were the result of directives to use the Hamlyn Group art department - and were the second or even third attempts by them to produce covers reaching the dizzy heights of the mediocreatly atrocious. "A Touch of Strange" has the first really good cover - and from now on things should improve steadily.

Dennis Barker, Design editor Hamlyn paperbacks at Astronaut House, Hounslow Road, Feltham, Middx TW14 9AR, would be very glad to hear from any SF artist who can provide good examples of work suitable for mass-market SF - i.e. sufficiently close to current SF art to be unmistakably SF covers, while being distinctively the work of one particular artist. The going commercial rate is paid, artists are credited on the back cover, and artwork is returned.

I am currently looking for manuscripts, unuk-paperbacked, and previously u.k. paperbacked-but-unavailable-for-ages novels in the following areas - though if things outside them are too good to be rejected, that's OK too -

classics o/p in U.K. P/b for a few years or more (or never done here).

adventure SF - including series, but NOT series where individual titles are not complete in themselves.

New titles that could/should become classics.

"Serious" SF - making points political (in the broadest sense of the word) by telling a story.

But before a novel is anything else, it must be good entertainment.

Submissions are welcome, and should be sent to the Hamlyn pbks editorial address (Mercury House, 103 - 5 Waterloo Rd, London S.E. 1). If a full report on rejected MS is wanted, it should be asked for specifically. And may take a little longer. (i.e. if a new author wants some criticism, ask for it.)

PAPERBACKS DUE FOR RELEASE IN NOVEMBER

ARROW (Nov 20)

Eloise (E.C. Tubb) 70p
The Night Shapes (James Bligh) 80p

ABC PUBLISHERS (Nov 2)

We Who Are About To (Janna Russ) 75p

FONTANA (Oct 30)

Gloriana (Michael Moorcock) £1.
Our Lady of Darkness (Fritz Leiber) 85p
Walkers in the Sky (David Lake) 85p

FUTURA (Nov. 2)

Battlestar Galactica (G.A. Larson/R. Thuston) 95p
The Far Call (Gordon Dickson) £1.25
The Necromancer (Robert Holdstock) 95p
Sword of Shannara (Terry Brooks) £1.75 Reprint.
Lucifer's Hammer (Niven/Pourness) £1.50 Reprint.

GRANADA (Nov. 2)

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch. (P.K. Dick) 85p
Nova Express (William Burroughs) 85p
Destination Universe (A.E. Van Vogt) 75p
Fabulous Riverboat (P.J. Farmer) 85p
Earth is Room Enough (Isaac Asimov)
Tolkien's World (Randel Helms) 95p

PANTHER

The Penultimate Truth (P.K. Dick)
Moonbeast (A.E. Van Vogt) 85p
Long After Midnight (Ray Bradbury) 95p

HAMLIN (Nov 15)

The Wifling (Vernor Vinge)
A Touch of Stange (Theodore Sturgeon) 85p

CCRONET (Nov 6)

Seahorse in the Sky (Edmund Cooper) 75p
The Tenth Planet " " " "

NEL

The Cold Cash War (Robert Asprin)
Past Through Tomorrow (Robert Heinlein) £1.25
Thoughtworld (Terry Greenhough) 85p
The Wandering Worlds (Terry Greenhough) 85p
The Asylum World (John Wakes) 85p
Understanding Tolkien & Lord of the Rings (William Reedy)
Space Family Stone (Robert Heinlein)
Stranger in a Strange Land (Robert Heinlein) £1.25
The Worlds of Robert Heinlein. 75p

PAN (Nov 3)

A Dream of Wessex (Christopher Priest) 75p
Fugue for a Darkening Island (Priest) 75p

SPHERE

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Jack Finney) 85p
The Hab Theory (Allan W. Eckert) £1.50
A Circus of Hells (Poul Anderson) 95p

Pattermaster (Octavia E. Butler) 95p
The Possessors (John Christopher) 95p
Time Storm (Gordon Dickson) £1.25
Dangerous Visions *1, 2, 3, (Harlan Ellison) 95p each
Captive Universe (Harry Harrison)
Plahue From Space " " "
Syndic (G.M. Kornbluth)
Fool's Hill (Richard Lupoff) 95p
Sign of the Unicorn (Roger Zelazny) 95p

CORGI (Nov 34)

The Last Rose of Summer (Steve Gallagher) 85p

BANTAM

Star Trek Fotonovel 8. A piece of the Action
Star Trek Official Cooking Manual. (Mary Ann Pickard)
What Mad Universe (Frederick Brown) 95p

WYNDHAM

Lord Tedric. (E.E. Smith)

TARGET

Dr Who & The Android Invasion.

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GOLLANCZ' upcoming FANTASY & MACABRE titles included:
THE SHILLING SHOCKERS (ed Peter Haining); THE VAMPYRE
(ed. Christopher Frayling); MRS GASKELL'S TALES OF MYSTERY
& HORROR (ed. Michael Ashley); ON WINGS OF SONG (Thomas M
Dysch - due Jan.); GALATEA (Phillip Pullman); THE BAD SISTER
(Emma Tennant); THE BOOK OF SKULLS (Robert Silverberg)

James Corley's ORSINI GODBASE upcoming from Hale, ditto
Garry Killworth's THE NIGHT OF KADAR from Faber. Angela
Carter's THE PASSION OF NEVE EVE will appear sometime in
the future as an Arrow Paperback.

THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL LETTERS to be edited by George Hay.

STATESIDE NEWS

1978 Nebula Awards:

NOVEL: Gateway (Pohl)
In the Ocean of the Night (Gregory Benford)
Cirque (Terry Carr)

NOVELLA: Stardance (Spider & Jeanne Robinson)
Aztecs (Vonda McIntyre)

NOVELETTE: The Screwfly Solution (Raccoona Sheldon (James
Tiptree))

A Rite of Spring (Fritz Leiber)
Particle Theory (Ed Bryant)

SHORT STORY: Jeffty is Five (Harlan Ellison)
Air Eaid (John Varley)
The Hibakusha Gallery (Ed Bryant)

SPECIAL DRAMATIC PRESENTATION AWARD Star Wars.

Harlan Ellison picked up his Nebula in person causing something of a stir as he left the SFWA last year in protest over the dropping of the Nebula for Dramatic presentation. Ironically, SFWA decided to make a special Dramatic Presentation award to STAR WARS!

What was going to be called NOVA is now, it seems to be called OMNI. Editorial address is 909, Third Ave, New York, NY 10022. The mag is paying \$800 + \$1250 for short stories.

Meanwhile the new "Asimov's SF Adventure Magazine" (Editorial address Box 13116, Philadelphia PA 19107) will be aimed at "the audience, not all juvenile, that discovered the Literature of Ideas through movies, comics and television." Rates are 5¢ per word under 7500 words, 3¢/word over 12,500 (minimum) with a flat rate \$375 - \$450 in between. Max. length is 35,000 - 40,000 words.

"DESTINIES", The new mag from Ace (editor, Jim Baen, SF Dept, 'Destinies', Ace Books, 360 Park Ave South, New York, NY 10010) scheduled for Oct. '78. Looking for the very best type of story 'Galaxy' would have printed. Rates \$200 for stories up to 4,000 words or 8¢/word (whichever higher), 7¢/word for stories between 4000 & 7500 words, 6¢/word up to 10,000, 5¢/word up to 15,000 and 7¢ above 15,000.

Forthcoming U.S. Books:

Greg Bear "Beyond Heaven's River" (Dell 1979)
Notman Spinrad "The Mindgame" (Jove)
J. Pournelle "West of Honour") Pocket Books, orig-
" " "Birth of Fire") finally pub. by Laser
Stephen Goldin "The Eternity Brigade" (Fawcett)
" " "A World Called Solitude" (Doubleday)
A.E. Van Vogt "To Conquer Kisar" (DAW)
Jack L. Chalker "Dancers in the Afterglow" (Dell Raey)
Alfred Bester "Golem - 100" (Pocket Books)
John Verley "Titans" (to be serialised in ANALOG)

Samuel R. Delaney has had two collections of his literary criticism and essays, "The Jewel-Hinged Jaw" and "The American Shore" published by a small press in the U.S. Delaney will edit the Nebula Award Anthology for this year.

A.E. Van Vogt is novelising his New Worlds screenplay "Computerworld" and has been offered a contract by Limelight Productions, England to film his novel "The Voyage of the Space Beagle"

Catherine L. Moore received an Ann Radcliffe Award for Literary Excellence.

Ursula LeGuin was awarded an honorary degree Doctor of Literature from Bucknell University.

Jerry Pournelle is editing an anthology called "The High Frontier about colonies not on planets.

1978 LOCUS POLL RESULTS:

Best SF novel: G. TEWAY (Pohl)
Best Fantasy Novel: THE SILMARILLION (Tolkien)
Best Novella: STARDANCE (Spider & Jeanne Robinson)
Best Short Fiction: JEFTY IS FIVE (Harlan Ellison)
Best Publisher: Dell Rey Books
Best Magazine: F&SF edited by Ed Ferman.

Buck Rogers is resurrected in a three-part \$6,000,000 TV miniseries to be shown on NBC. Newcomer Gil Gerard plays buck.

The FBI were called in to investigate leaks concerning the script and special effects of the STAR TREK film. One detail which has been revealed is that Kirk has been promoted to Admiral! Studio filming is set to end in November, but the film will not be released until Christmas 1979 'because of the anticipated months of special effects work'

Dr Douglas L. Worf, professor of environmental studies at North Carolina State University, has suggested that certain parts of spacecraft and astronauts' equipment could be made of edible material so they can be used as food once their space functions have ended. ((The clipping from which this item was gleaned did not specify whether the good professor had recently perused Stanislaw Lem's STAR DIARIES))

** EVENTS **
** **

FANTASY FILM CONVENTION (Oct 28/29)
Bilmsbury Centre Hotel, Coram St., London.
Registration £5.50, Full details: 52 Roydens Rd, Plumstead London SE18.

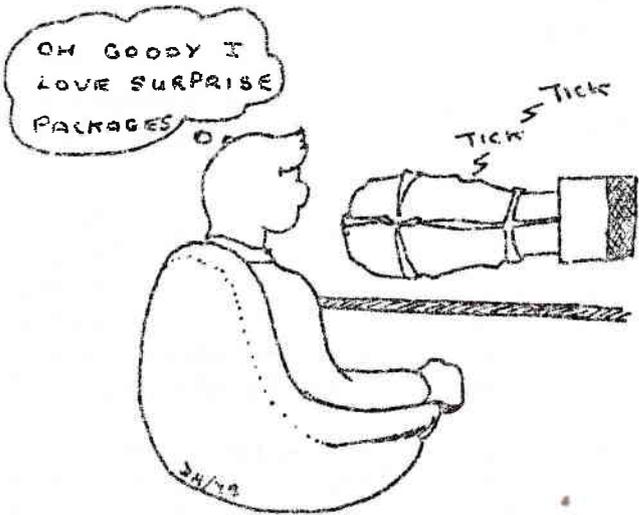
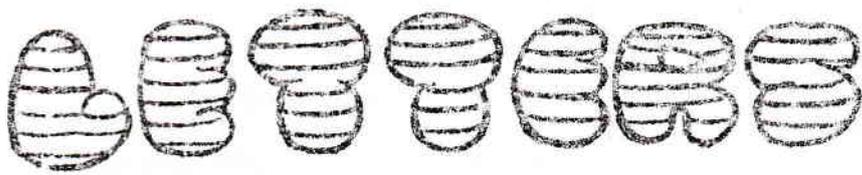
NOVACON 8 (3/5 Nov.)
Holiday Inn, Birmingham.
£3.50 attending, £1.50 supporting. Details: Dave Holmes, 1222 Warwick Rd, Acocks Green, Birmingham B26 6PL.

SEACON: the 37th World SF Convention, at Brighton 23/27 Aug.
£9 attending, £4.50 supporting until the end of the year.
Details, 14 Henrietta St, London WC2

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Opening October 19th is the animated film version of WATER-SHIP DOWN. There will also be a new Penguin edition of the book, a 'book of the film' called "The Watership Down Film Picture Book" containing more than 100 stills from the film with captions freshly written by Richard Adams, a calendar, an LP of the soundtrack, and a single, 'Bright Eyes' sung by Art Garfunkel. Watership Down puzzles will be available from Waddingtons and Royal Doulton are producing ceramic rabbits. Writer-director-producer Marti Rosen says "I'm not a believer in saturation marketing."

The £3,000 Gollancz/Pan/Picador/Guardian fantasy competition was won by D.M. Thomas with THE FLUTE PLAYER, a novel which mythologises the lives of a group of Russian poets including Osip Mandelstam and Boris Pasternak.



The experiments can be ascertained 'empirically' in the mind of each reader as to their validity etc. Thus fiction adds to fact!

It is quite difficult to distinguish many areas of SF from closely related genres (Noddy could be termed 'alien') so it is in the creation of an environment for the protagonists that the writer delivers the

category of a story. SF is generally concerned with human, humanoid or 'alien-human' societies, whose sociologies/psychologies have a distorted element somewhere. Tolkien's creations are too simple to be SF and are therefore fantasy. Horror stories are aimed at one emotion and are also too simple (as are my categories, probably, so tick me off). Noddy is aimed at young audiences and is thus juvenile, etc.

In all cases the author has a clear idea of his category.

SF can be the most experimental literary form and but it obviously overlaps with many other creative forms. It does seem unfortunate that there is so little SF poetry published because SF and poetry seem closely linked in that they condense areas of human thought but expand the reader's thinking process. Most SF art is fairly straightforward and technologically based and therefore not truly representative of the type of literature it purports to cover. Science fiction seems to have many affinities with the Theatre of the Absurd, but this avenue seems little explored, except for "Waiting For Godot"—substitutes that have appeared in New Worlds.

Anyway, the idea behind this letter is to get other peoples' grey sludge churning so that I may learn from them. I will finish on proposals of a category list of SF themes which is probably not useful in itself, but constructive criticism may yield something beneficial. I think it is important to define SF, especially in the light of Star Warsisms and Space Opera. If Space Opera comes to mean SF then perhaps we should reterm SF as holistic fiction as only SF seems capable of dealing with all the possibilities of the 20th/21st century interface.

SPACE OPERA: Fiction in a space setting which demands little effort from the reader/viewer and no scientific knowledge; cowboys in space etc.

ASTRO-NANTIC FICTION: Similar settings to Space Opera, but more demanding to readers - i.e. social effects of galactic empires beyond laser battles and automatic genocide.

CHRONATIC FICTION: Concerned with time travel, paradox, other dimensions etc. i.e. "By His Bootstraps"; "The Time Machine".

EXOSOCIAL FICTION: Alien cultures, biologies, mutations, religions (including stories like "dd John")

MICK JOHNSON, †, Perrin Road, Wembley, Middx. HA0 2NW.

I was prompted by Cyril Sims's letter in MATRIX 19 to try and give myself a useful definition of what SF is (as opposed to the normal case that people define what SF or anything isn't) and I find I need help. It touched on my notions of what reality is, and many other areas, which I have pruned down as much as possible. If this letter prompts other people to do the same then I think we shall have added another dimension to MATRIX beyond the "Dave Cobbledick is silly because etc. etc...."

Reality is a process, not a finite definition, therefore imaginary events can give keys to the truth of man's existence that even a scientific textbook cannot give. Imagination (the category into which Science Fiction most broadly fits) looks at the world in a new way.

SF opens a window into the spectrum of man's activity - the writer weaves threads and portrays a universe that has: extrapolations of the world of 'normality', with landscapes that may/may not exist (present, past or future) but the creator has a map and thus becomes our guide. However, we must make up our own minds about what we are shown. (We may see much that is not on the author's map, for instance.); actions that are fantastic and romantic (in a literary sense) which excite the imagination (frequently into drawing analogies) and create a chain reaction of creation, each mind (writer and reader) feeding upon the other.

Therefore SF is a branch of imaginary science wherein experiments are carried out in the mind, changing one (or several) variables and seeing what would happen with inventions/discoveries, planetary environment/location, passage of time, elements of the human psyche, a change either natural, supernatural, 'man-made' or alien in the Earth.

and "Sirius".)
closely linked with SURREALIST FICTION: Parallel w
worlds, alternative Earths, much of J.G Ballard,
etc.
TECHNI-FICTION. Computers, robots, mechanical in-
ventions and machine societies.

All these may be pompous, clumsy, or whatever
but they are only a start. Your help would be appre-
ciated!

GWYNFOR JONES, 34 Bryn Gwynt, Amlwch Port, Anglesey,
Gwynedd, North Wales.

"Cardboard cut-outs in a never-never land" could
sum up the achievements of Hollywood over the last,
oh, God knows how many years (I'm not a cinema his-
torian). In fact I'm sure that George Lucas would be
quite pleased with Jacqueline Comben's synopsis of SW
in M19's letter column... However, from reading var-
ious articles by people in the 'know' and also on
reading interviews with Lucas himself his intention
wasn't in fact to create the all time SF classic film
but purely to produce an updated version of the FLASH
GORDON/BUCK ROGERS type film. With a good visual ef-
fects team, good sets, good actors - and in this respect
I think he succeeded.

The original 1930's space operas were extremely un-
sophisticated from a special effects point of view
and were made cheaply and as quickly as possible us-
ing old sets and costumes. However, I suppose it didn't
matter so much in those days as the audience was
equally unsophisticated. Times have changed and when
I did watch the occasional episode of FG which the BBC
were showing in the summer of '77 it made me wince
to see how clumsy, shoddy and just plain laughable
the whole production appeared. Judging SW as a purely
visual adventure story it is in my opinion one of
the most brilliant films I have seen to date. And if
as I am constantly being told that from a science fic-
tion point of view it was a big let-down - well, I won-
der what the fans of the 1930's thought of Buster
Crabb's antics? If we are to believe George Lucas's
claim that his intention was to create a substantial
illusion in the tradition of earlier films then I
think he's made an extremely competent job.

I think that I prefer the latest version space
opera/pantomime/fantasy/escapism, call it what you
will rather than the early rubbish. Obviously Lucas
concentrated on a shallow space romp storyline rather
than the philosophical, message-packing intellectual
angle just as the originals which were the basis
for his film. I can't understand why so many people
are trying to crucify Lucas for making a visually
exciting and what was for me a highly entertaining
film. Fascist! Yes, I heard someone on Arena cinema
use that word too! What's wrong with good triumphing
over evil? No doubt that when LORD OF THE RINGS is
released someone will think that Tolkien was a fascist
or a never never man escaping from the responsibil-
ities of life through his fiction. Escapist! Christ,
what's reality, Coronation Street or Crossroads? If

that's a slice of reality then please give me a large
helping of well constructed escapism anytime!

BERNARD M. EARP, 21 Morfield Grove, Tonge Moor, Bolton,
Lancs.

"Don't Dream It, Be it" was an amusing report with a
timely typo warning. Was the bit in Greg Hills' "typing
is still bad" a Freudian slip or what? Get back the corr-
ecting fluid - your wife's words should have been not
"Andy doesn't need it" but "Andy doesn't use it." Still
they do say that love is blind. (Actually, "need it" ref-
erred to the previous words "nail varnish" - a substance
which, thanks to my non-existent fingernails (thanks to
MATRIX???) I am in no need of whatsoever....))

Picking one small point out of Langford's LoC, what
about a TANGENT receivers surcharge? (and Yes, I do get
it and would pay a little extra.)

ROB CARTER, 78, Bewick Court, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8EQ

Let me tell you, I'm getting just a teensy bit pissed
of by the sort of bitchy-bitchy backbiting that's going on
in the pages of MATRIX. I joined the BSFA because I was
interested in SF and not because I wanted to read pages of
crap about what's wrong with the BSFA and its organisation
and its publications and its officers.

Some people have just got to get their rocks off by
criticising and playing petty politics (and what could be
more petty, I ask you, than what's going on here?)

Moderate criticism has a place, sure, but let's not
forget that the main reason most people read MATRIX and VEC-
TOR is because they are strange as it may seem - actually
interested in SF, and the criticism of that field.

I agree with Phil Wain of Keele; we must preserve the
BSFA at least from the unpleasantness in which many, many
fannish types (though I must say, by no means all) revel.
The tone ought to be friendly, not all factions and feuds;
I'm quite sure that people generally, attracted by specula-
tive fiction and bored by the sort of Crossroads and Coron-
ation Street bitchfiction can quite do without it all.

So, more SF, more SF-appreciation, SF -discussion, SF
praise, SF-damnations, SF-what-you-will, and less of this b
boredom and bitterness.

Please?

((Two putdowns of Crossroads/Coronation ST. on one page!
Hmmm, must start watching them again to see what makes
people so cross... One man's 'bitchiness' is another's
'fandom in the raw, with a vengeance! (TANGENT 4). We turn
now to the author of those words, the man who gave MATRIX
a five-star rating - for which, much thanks, Greg; cash
or cheque.....?))

GREG HILLS, 331 Featherston St., Palmerston North, New
Zealand.

Now lemme see, what's in the box today.... NASF Pres
Frank Macskasy Jr. returning that copy of TANGENT
I tried to leave in Wellington.... obviously couldn't

stomach it any more than I... loc on 'Tanjent' 4 by Bruce Ferguson, plus my doorkey; bother, I could've saved the \$2 to buy the new one... IT'S HERE! WHEEEEE! (Feet pounding up drive; sound of door ripping from hinges) Now, lessee... hmmm, uh-huh, yes,,, did he? How very --- HE PRINTED IT! Wherzattper...

Yes okay, you made me sound a little more disorganised than I was... but at least you didn't rip the guts out like two Daves I know did... not that it worries me; but after all, a letter is an extension of ones mind, and ---

((But letters have to be edited, all the same. At the moment I have enough letter material to fill a complete issue and to allow everyone their say and still have articles, news, etc. I have to wield the editorial hatchet and apologise for any corpses I leave in my wake.))

Cover: fascinating scene, filled with action, too --- and oh yes the picture was also quite nice; must mention that, cos one mustn't confine oneself to the masthead... Anyway, getting back from the ramb-ling, you're still a little short on artwork --- pity I'm no artist or I'd send you some.

Jacqueline Comben: I wish people like you would just break down and try to appreciate something that does not set out to break taboos, horrify the Masses or make one vomit on the floor. May I cite that 'Star Trek' spawned a lot of Trekkies - an undesirable thing. But it also spawned a whole new generation of general SF fans, people who read widely, not just SF. And so, I suspect, it will be with 'Star Wars'. Hopefully it will spawn a new generation of fans who will look back to SF-as-entertainment/education, and not as the boring, ponderous drek spawned by the despair of the '60 - also known as 'New Wave', but better known as crud-from - the mainstream. For all of me, the sooner the new SF penetrates Britain, the better. Far too many UK fen are in that rut. While SF the world over has completely changed its aspect since the 'New Wave' frothed away, Britain still keeps putting out the same dreary old line.

MATRIX 19 shows no appreciable decline over 18 (but who is this guy with my name who lives at "331 Featherstone Street"? Ah well, comes the next package, they will have a chance to send it to 22a Polson Street, Wanganui, New Zealand - as that is where I'll be. I hope that whoever replaces you as editor can keep the contents up, and improve the looks.

DAVE V. BARRETT, 40 Beechtrees, Digoor, Skelmersdale, Lancs.

It's good to see reports on committee meetings; as most of us will probably never be on the committee for 1001 reasons (mostly our own fault) it's valuable to learn what's going on. Also appreciated your reply to Don West. Of course you had to make a serious reply to what was a very serious attack, and a vicious (and possibly libellous in places??) one. Has Don West ever been a member of any sort of committee? They DON'T, in my experience, run without

a hell of a lot of headaches, heartaches, misunderstandings and mistakes. After all, despite the theory of the whole being greater than the parts etc., committees are made up of people, who do have the disconcerting (to Don West) habit of being human and therefore (excepting perhaps the new supreme pontiff, and he's not told us if he is or is not yet) fallible.

KEITH ROBERTS INTERVIEW - Interesting, and quite well done by Paul Fraser. When you've read someone's books, you like to know more about what makes the author tick. Definitely a feature for your successor to keep running.

THE ULTIMATE CONTRACEPTIVE - Must show this to my wife when she gets back from stocking her branch of WHS with SF. Mary, I think you're a kindred soul to my Sue; she was none too pleased a 2 o'clock this morning when I crawled up to bed having kept her awake with bashing away at Chapter 7 of my magnum opus. But 'Alison Hutton seems too intelligent to be an SF fan'.... hmmm. I've never met said Alison, but surely (apart from being pleased at your compliment) she'll take issue with you over that. Or will she? I prefer to be known as 'an SF addict'; I dislike the word 'fan' - it smacks somewhat of screaming followers of the Bay City Rollers and other aperients (look it up; when you find out what it means you'll probably agree with the description). Anyway, Mary: an excellent little piece.

((I TOLD her people would like the article... but she insisted on writing it! And Fan Activity has a habit of becoming addictive... Rumour has it that My Dear Wife has received a genuine Fan Letter from the wife of an organiser of a recent Convention somewhere to the north of here.))

LETTERS - arguably the most important section of MATRIX, though this selection isn't up to the usual standard. Thankfully not the usual standard of vitriol, either, except for Paul Fraser and, of course, Don (BSFA is a load of crud but I'm going to stay in it because I enjoy telling everyone every issue of MATRIX what a load of crud it is) West. To both of you, if you don't like it, either do something positive instead of moaning about it, or get out. I'd imagine I speak for many of the members who don't write every issue because on the whole they're quite satisfied with what they're getting for their money.

((Well, much as Paul Fraser, at least, criticises BSFA, he has given me a great deal of help with MATRIX (Keith Roberts interview, News column, plus various suggestions for further articles, etc. which I hope my successor will take up) so I can't really let that go without comment.))

The Star Wars argument continues. The TVSF argument continues. The 'What is REAL SF?' argument continues. And they go round in circles. All arguments do if you let them carry on long enough.

Let's try this for effect. 'SCIENCE FICTION IS THE LITERARY GENRE OF COGNITIVE ESTRANGEMENT'. Prof. Darko Suvin said it in Foundation 2, in which he spends eleven pages explaining what he means. Which is, basically:

1. SF is as valid a literary genre as any other.
2. It is a thoughtful examination of life and extrapolation from present to possible-future reality.

3. It sets up an imaginary system which we are asked to accept for the purposes of the story; it allows us to recognise subjects while at the same time making them seem unfamiliar.

4. (And herein lies Suvin's genius, having persuaded us to accept his definition of SF:) 'Taking the kindred thesaurus concepts of science for cogitation, and fiction for estrangement, I believe there is a sound reason for calling this whole new genre Science Fiction.'

His paper is a brilliant piece of serious argument, well worth reading; the delightful twist at the end, when he more or less says 'Oh dammit, let's call it SF, it's a hell of a lot easier than arguing about it,' adds a nice touch of humour.

Any comments on the definition, which is actually the best I've ever come across?

I feel rather sorry for Ken Mann. True, there is a lot of 'unadulterated mediocrity' in SF, just as there is in any literary genre, but that's no reason to slate SF across the board. I might just as well sell my TV because I can't stand Crossroads, but if I don't want to watch Crossroads, I just press a little button that miraculously presents me with alternative viewing. Not all SF, by any means, is Gernsback'esque; I suggest he metaphorically presses the button for another channel, rather than flogging the set. Perhaps, in Ken Mann's opinion, the 'pulp' era is 'a millstone around SF's neck' but without it, would SF really have got off the ground? And I'm sure there are thousands who would disagree with his opinion of Gernsback. His second point, about SF writers being poorly paid, might hold water, but is it completely true? Figures, please, Mr Mann.

ANNA PRINCE, 190A Hednesford Rd, Heath Hayes, Staffordshire WS12 5DS.

I thought the SF vs mainstream (hereafter called ms) debate had long ago died a natural death. Since it seems to be alive and rather unwell in your letter column, let me introduce some facts. (sorry fellas.)

I work in a public library and did a count of one fairly average day's book issue, which I reproduce in percentage form below. It's important to remember that the library contains ten bays of ms for one of SF; and twenty-one non-fiction. (If you, after looking at the figures below, think those proportions are ludicrous, I can only agree with you.)

The count was done on 30.8.78, and produced the following:

Romances	33%	of the total adult issue
Adventure	17.1%	
Historical romance	12.7%	
Nonfiction	11.5%	
Crime	8%	

SF & Fantasy	7%
mainstream	3.6%
Westerns	2.8%
Catherine Cookson	2.7%
TV & Film tie-ins	1.2%
Classics	0.4%

Fans seem to think only SF covers a wide band: not so. Each category I've listed does so, including ms.

I suppose Catherine Cookson is an ms author, but she has such a disproportionate effect on the issue that I've counted her separately.

Mainstream may not be dead, but it's dying. Just the way it always has been. Doesn't SF look healthier to you? Do you really want to amalgamate with ms at the cost of more than halving the SF readership? Because that's what non-labelled packaging could do. Remember, TEN TIMES AS MUCH shelf space goes to ms as to SF, so the discrepancy is even worse than it looks.

So please, let's have a little less whining about poor misunderstood SF. You'd do as well persuading all authors to call themselves Catherine Cookson.

Another bias in the figures is caused by the fact that the majority of public library users are women; most SF fans are men. This could have helped depress SF to its sixth position in the table.

Any other field of fiction, from romance to children's (possibly excepting porn, thrillers and blockbusters) could raise the same complaints that SF fans voice so noisily. They're all badly paid, stultifying, and filled with mediocre authors. Oddly, there seems to be plenty of interesting books about, for anyone who spends time looking.

((As a librarian myself, I find your comments and survey interesting. Inasmuch as it would be unwise to generalise too much from the issue figures of one day, and I don't know what kind of area your library is in, your figures tally with my own experience. SF may pull ahead of the mainstream, but it can't touch the Mills & Boon romances!))

DAVE LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks. RG2 7PW.

Sorry to find you leaving MATRIX so soon, just when all the membership had come to love you and think you indispensable. Best wishes for the new job, of course: I'll make this a quick letter in order to reduce the burden of your last MATRIX. (It would reduce the burden still more if I didn't write at all, but I was hoping you wouldn't spot that subtle flaw in my reasoning.) I'll spare you my comments on the committee response to D. West, except to say that the tone of direct address was perhaps ill-advised - a deadly politeness and impersonality can be so much more effective - and that fans everywhere will boggle at the assertion that Rob Jackson is the only editor to 'give away' a litho zine. I could think of half a dozen more off-hand.

You have a strange religious cartoon on page 17 (the hand holding a cross "key to the universe?"): surely to preserve ecumenical balance you must now continue with a series of hands respectively clutching a crescent, tau-

cross, rank, fylfot, yin-yang...

Mary's attitude to SF sounds like mine to football: I know nothing of the game but aren't the supporters off-putting! Except, of course, those strenuously literate supporters of whom one never hears, the Cyril Simsas of the Kop. I loathe all sport, as it happens, except for a few things like golf and croquet and snooker which, as I like them so much, can't possibly be sport, can they? Yeah.

CYRIL SIMSA, 18 Muswell Ave, London N10 2EG.

I suppose that your spouse's mention of my name precludes my declaring to all and sundry how much I enjoyed "The Ultimate Contraceptive"; a pity - "Most fans write EVEN WORSE THAN MOORCOCK! and ABOUT LESS!" is a beautifully snide jibe at Big Mike (whose name, incidentally, is to be found amongst the list of sponsors on page 4 of the LEGALISE CANNABIS CAMPAIGN's latest leaflet.) I also liked the line: "Is Heinlein a fascist?... And am I allowed to swear about 'it'?" Right on Mary. I mean, who bloody cares whether Heinlein is a fascist? I certainly haven't given the matter a thought since I was sixteen (an unfortunate age at which I wrote the article which sparked off the Heinlein debate in the first place). (Oh, the follies of one's youth!).

((All this praise directed Wifewards is gratifying to our respective egos (perhaps a review of the latest DOCTOR WHO series from our daughter next issue??) - But you unwittingly prod at a Fatal Flaw in our relationship. Dammit, I like Moorcock. So there. And I entertain People who are taking an increasingly long time fetching a takeaway Indian meal would read more than the worst of his early '60s material.....))

Yeah, well, MATRIX 19 wasn't bad. It wasn't particularly good, mind you, but it certainly wasn't bad.... (harrumph). In any case, it succeeded in keeping me away from the freelance audio-typing @ £2 p.h. which I was supposed to be doing to earn my Southern-Comfort money for the day (but then, why worry about Southern Comfort when you've got Don West to choke over?) I was going to ignore the fulsome D., but Dave Langford suggests that this might indicate my support for him, so: on the whole I am satisfied with the way the BSFA is run (of course I have my niggles, but I do not expect a 600 strong organisation to be run exactly the way I'd like it to be, as D. apparently does). I'll grant that Mr West raised allegations which required a reply, but - to my mind at least - the bulk of these have been quite adequately answered: the only point that still causes involuntary twitching as I lay awake at night twixt bedsheets cold and clammy with the sweat of Doubt, is our belated memories of last year's VECTOR Fowl-up.

Yech!

Still, no irreparable damage has been done, and

I doubt it'll occur again (we all learn from mistakes - I dare say it's even happened to the oracl of the Astral League). And now that I've been complacent for a bit, let me pass to more interesting matters.

It seems that the lettercol is getting back to its perennial favourite, the realism v. escapism debate, with both sides uttering Self Evident Truths the other side cannot see. For example, Dave Cobbledick (an Escapist) appears to conceive of non-Escapist SF as an attempt to "portray the problems of the real world in a didactic and preaching manner." That, admittedly, sounds like a daunting recipe for producing the sort of Social Realism that gets churned out by apparatchik hacks in East Europe (a genre which I tend to find a little less than fascinating). What leaves me breathless about Dave's statement is his assumption that the alternative to Escapism is Didacticism.

Meanwhile, Paul Fraser (another escapist) tells me that I read in order to get as far away from life as I can. Well, maybe that's why you read, Paul; personally, I read to share the experiences/insights/knowledge/or whatever of another person, and I write to share mine (not that I claim my own insights at the grand old age of 18 years and 7 months to be extravagantly valuable). I think what attracts me to SF is the way in which it achieves a synthesis of the mundane into something unique and wonderful, which nonetheless reflects the world from which it has been moulded/extrapolated/etc. (It is in this transformation that I consider it different from conventional "realism" which merely glorifies the mundane). Escapist SF, on the other hand, does not achieve this synthesis: instead, it sheds streams of pretty technicolour baubles which divert and entertain, but otherwise impart nothing. The difference between "realist" SF and escapism, I feel, is similar to the distinction that Chris Priest draws between editing and censorship in VECTOR 88: one increases understanding, whilst the other obfuscates it.

I should perhaps finish by noting that SF is not by any means the only branch of literature that can perform this synthesis: there are a number of writers working in the fantasy field, or in the more out of the way niches provided by the "mainstream", who succeed in this much more consistently than many a "science fiction" writer.

((I agree with most of your points there. Much of my own reading is, purely and simply, for escape, or distraction, if you will. But if demanding escape, one necessarily demands something positive to escape to. Switching off for a couple of hours is all very well, but there are easier ways of doing so than reading books. I hold to what is probably the traditional and mundane view that any work of art should be capable of appealing to many levels of experience and should be capable also of more than a cursory flick-through to discover "Oh, that's nice" if you're willing to go a bit deeper into it. What I find depressing about much of the material which gets labelled as "not 'deep', or 'realistic', or 'intellectual' - just sheer entertainment" is that most of the time it just doesn't entertain me!))

ALLAN LLOYD, Quebb Cottage, Eardisley, Hereford.

I was interested in the discussions in MATRIX 19 on SF in films and on TV. The main point that comes over, I think, is the incredible range of standards of judgement. One of your correspondants raves over "The Incredible Hulk" while someone else dismisses "Dark Star" as crap. As long as we have this much disagreement as to what makes good visual SF within the BSFA, how can we expect TV and Film producers to be able to satisfy us?

My personal view is that I always find something lacking in the visual treatment of most SF subjects. It could be, as the child said when asked why he preferred radio to TV, because the pictures are better. When I read a book, I find my own interpretations of alien landscapes, alien beings, or the voids of space, far more convincing than the pictures on a TV screen, for example, all those stars sweeping past the viewer screens on the USS Enterprise.

Your answer to Don West's letter was a very effective put-down, but you do have organisation problems at the BSFA. I am a new member; it is now three months since I joined and I still have no idea where to get in touch with the BSFA Library despite letters of complaint to the membership secretary. Is there an introductory leaflet or have I just been unlucky and missed it?

((There is a booklet giving details of the BSFA's services but it is currently being revised; so there will be a list of contact addresses elsewhere in MATRIX. Several new members have made similar enquiries: I hope I have replied to you all and that the contact list will prove useful to those who may need it but who haven't got in touch with me.))
NIC HOWARD, 5 Grays Lane, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks

Is it my imagination, or am I the only one who thinks Hugo Gernsback did any good for SF? Gernsback cannot be blamed for the stigma of the 'pulp' era. What about all those magazine covers showing scantily-clad young ladies battling furiously with a bug-eyed menace from space? What about the boastful magazine titles? Or what about people's inflexible attitude to any 'new form' as SF was then and is now?

No, Gernsback is not to blame.

However, I agree fully with point (2) of Ken Mann's letter.

In my view, SF came of age back in the 1940's. It is the general opinion of SF that needs to come of age.

I have not given up reading SF - I read several magazines a month, as well as paperbacks and back issue magazines - and I enjoy it. Maybe I like mediocre SF.

I hope not.

PETER PINTO, 42 Breakspear Rd, Brockley, London SE 4 1UL

Lettuce Shreds:

1/ There was a fuck-up over VECTOR.

2/ The editor of VECTOR, the Treasurer, and the Committee as a whole are responsible for the running of VECTOR/the BSFA.

3/ Any Committee member unwilling to accept collect-

ive responsibility should not be on the Committee.

4/ Steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence of the situation.

5/ Any member who considers the past is more important than the future is probably under the mistaken impression that this is the British Alternate History Association.

6/ Mistakes (hopefully of a different nature from those already discovered and corrected) are bound to occur from time to time.

7/ The advantage of limited liability is that liability is limited to the share capital and assets owned by the society, except in the case of proven malpractice by any officer(s), when the individual(s) concerned are then also liable for criminal action - i.e. the limiting of liability acts to remove unnecessary worry of personal liability for actions taken by officers on behalf of the society.

8/ The requirements that must be fulfilled to retain limited liability are basically to provide annual returns to the relevant office, to keep full minutes and a record of members.

9/ Annual returns are annual accounts - and annual accounts are prepared anyway.

10/ A record of membership is kept anyway.

11/ Full minutes are kept anyway.

So I see no reason why the BSFA Ltd would gain from de-registering, and no reason to continue arguing over the VECTOR mess. If anyone doesn't believe the Committee has acted adequately in taking steps to avoid a further, similar fuck-up - there is an established procedure for either censuring or sacking the Committee/members of the Committee. If you can convince enough other members of your arguments' validity.

The main function of the BSFA that I am aware of is the production and distribution of the bimonthly mailout of VECTOR and MATRIX - and assorted other bumph.

The main function of this function (....der....) is keeping fans aware of each other, and of what's going on.

It does not, therefore, make good sense to propose a zero-growth policy for the BSFA without suggesting what it should be once the ideal situation is reached; I can't see that it'd be any great risk to continue to expand - unless members cost the Association money (in which case the ideal number would be -ve) or unless limited liability is abandoned.

The BSFA could be the normal way for SF readers to become fans - and to discover smaller, limited size local groups, and..... and to promote SF in this country; I believe I have heard rumours that it is in fact supposed to do something along these lines anyway - and, above all else, to be fun. Else, why bother?

The Carnell. The BSFA Award.

Carnell winner. BSFA Award winner.

I know which means SOMETHING to SF readers - New Worlds, Science Fantasy, SF Adventures, New Writings in SF, Lambda 1, and which doesn't.

I know which has a chance of fitting into a corner

flash on mass-market paperbacks, and which doesn't.

I know what we agreed to at the meeting, dammit - to be told it is purely a shorthand, a nickname is NOT what was proposed.

Rightly or wrongly, the BSFA ~~WHAARD's~~ name is THE CARNELL - at least until this decision by the general meeting is changed.

STEEV HIGGINS, 18 St Austell Ave, Tyldesley, Greater Manchester, M29 7FY.

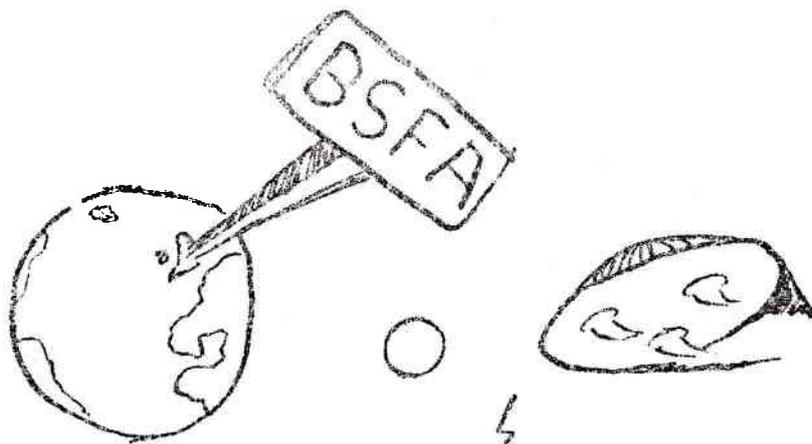
It's a pity, the very issue in which things begin to look good is the one in which you announce your retirement. Damn it! I hope your successor can make a good job of it without losing your good ideas. ((Awww... shucks!))

The first couple of LoCs in M19 raised a significant point - the attitudes to fanzines. Poldney states that "writing a chatty, personal diatribe ... (is) ... not so effective in a magazine."

But MATRIX isn't a magazine, it's a fanzine, and if you all stop screaming I'll tell you what the difference is. However friendly and chatty the style of a proper magazine, it is impersonal and the reader and writer are separated. But a fanzine is personal. What's contained in it comes about as a direct communication between writer and receiver. So a fanzine's Loccol is more of a conversation in print than a formal letters page.

This is most evident in fannish fanzines in which people write LoCs which their friends will be reading. MATRIX is slightly different, being a BSFA zine run for a widely spread organisation, but for that very reason MATRIX, as an informal zine, should be an antidote to the formality suggested by "organisation", and the Loccol is the only point of contact for the members. That's why we have to have such a long Loccol.

A more active membership is a must in order to get things done. People should be queuing up for Council seats. In the whole of the last three issues just 42 people have actually written. 42 - less than one-tenth of the membership (a hell of a lot less). Is that the active core of the BSFA? With 500 active people we could DO THINGS, so why isn't there some sort of requirement? 2 or 3 Locs a year, of which one must be of interest (more than the "like it, thank you" dross) isn't much, but should get rid of many of the people interested enough to join should they happen to find it, but too bloody apathetic to actually do anything. Of course, I won't get, because the only people likely to object are those who wouldn't be allowed to renew their membership, and who couldn't be got to write by a bomb.



BUT I THOUGHT
THERE WAS NO
INTELLIGENT LIFE

Maybe we should have real elections, present Council members and would-be's all producing manifestos in MATRIX and us all getting a crack of the whip. That's a serious suggestion.

((While we all want an active membership, having an 'activity requirement' is in my opinion a non-starter. For one thing, letters in MATRIX are no guide to 'activity', for another, I don't think that it's altogether unreasonable that people join the BSFA for the news, reviews and articles in our magazines and not to 'take part' in club activities - though I do feel that more people would have more fun and standards would rise if there was more participation from more people. The question of elections is one at which I could ramble greatly; quite frankly, my gut reaction is to be in favour; but see Rich Philpott's comment below. Manifestos and voting can obscure as well as opening up democracy.))

I'm bloody pissed off by the reaction to James Parker. The poor sod said something interesting and original, and had the guts to come out with it. And all that happened was that a few more people than usual reacted and everyone said "Oh dear, no, you're going too far." Why didn't someone tell him he was wrong (which he was) but agree that his basis was damn right? (I know I'm one of the culprits). And above all, why did no one understand him? Dave Cobbledick can rant all he likes about 'pure' entertainment, but attitudes are something everyone has. In a serious novel the writer makes a point and argues for it, and if he can do that entertainingly it's a good novel. But whenever you tell a story, you have attitudes. He's a goodie, he's a baddie, freedom's right, and your portrayal of the story differs because of it. Precisely because you don't think "But mightn't the Empire have other reasons than sheer lust for power

and downright wickedness?" and, "Isn't Uncle Owen right to protect Luke and accept his responsibility?" that anyone watching it will be dangerously susceptible to views and attitudes inherent but unconscious in the film.

"Star Wars" was written and directed by a man who apparently sees good and bad in terms of black and white. The same can be seen in "THX 1138". But in real life there are no goodies and baddies. "State of Emergency", a trilogy of plays about freedom fighters/terrorists in a future fascist Britain demonstrated that. Skywalker, Leia, et al are one and the same with the Baader-Meinhof and IRA lunatics. And we sat through two hours cheering for them! Christ!

((Again, I could ramble greatly. I agree with you up to that last paragraph, where your argument goes haywire. I haven't the space to go into a full-scale analysis of SW, and in any case, I suspect many readers are getting a bit jaded with the subject, but to relate the SW 'goodies' to the IRA is feasible only if you are a complete pacifist or accept the sort of logic that goes "The IRA think they are on the side of 'good'. The IRA are lunatics. Therefore anyone who thinks they are on the side of 'good' is a lunatic." You are TECHNICALLY quite right; but you condemn a great deal of the world's art if you set up a piece of popular culture aiming to point out little more than the victory of the underdog over impersonal totalitarian systems as a piece of insidious propaganda representing a model to follow.))

Afterthoughts: I haven't written a LoC as vitriolic as that. There were three reasons why I was jolted into using such strong(?) tones. First (I'll admit it) I was jolted by the reactions of other people. Secondly, with my renewal due I've been examining whether it's worth it, and have come to the conclusion that the mailing isn't as exciting to me as it was a scant year ago. Thirdly, I was pissed off by the miserable reaction to D. West's letter. If there isn't some significant improvement D's suggestion could result in then there's something very wrong somewhere.

If any new members feel offended by my above comments, let me say I was (and still am?) one of the worst culprits, and my first LoC was worse than most.

RICH PHILPOTT, 12 Glenbrook South, Enfield, Middx, EN2 7HQ.

I have been reading SF solidly now since 1963, and I used to belong to the old BSFA. I rejoined when I saw the advert in the "Slaves of Heaven" book.

I have now received three mailings, and find myself disgusted by the contents of some of the letters in the letter column.

I was always of the opinion that the BSFA was to be about SF, not backstabbing other fans and/or the Committee. It seems to me that those people who complain the loudest probably contribute the least.

The question of "democracy" in the running of the Association is raised by some LoCs. The answer to this of course is, if you don't like it try and influence it by becoming more involved, instead of ranting and raving from the sidelines.

The average person has got neither the time nor the inclination to participate in democratic systems. I KNOW this from experience as a Union representative. Our democratic system is the Branch meeting which is usually attended by 10 - 12 people (out of 250), and it's normally the same 10/12. I personally wish the committee good luck in carrying out a thankless and time-consuming task, and of course the collators and the editors and anybody else involved in getting out the issues.

I do enjoy VECTOR's book reviews, even of the older books; I have re-read a couple on the strength of them and have found new insight and, I think, more enjoyment than first time around.

Anybody out there like to correspond with me? I am 32, married with three children and I am interested in just about everything (except UFO's and allied subjects) ((Drop a line here, if you like; and that (I might as well say it here) goes for any MATRIX reader who wants to keep in touch, send fanzines to be dissected in detail, etc.))

JOHN A. CONNOR, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wisset Nr Halesworth, Suffolk IP1 9GPF

Bill J Fraser what are you talking about? If it wasn't for writers like J.G. Ballard and Philip K. Dick, SF would still be the bland and virtually unchanging "hack" of the '30s and '40s. Their so-called "pliss-elegant novels", especially Dick's, have changed SF from the spaceship and bug-eyed monster syndrome and put it closer to home. Human relationships, conflicts and emotions have been an integral part of their novels and so raised them to a point where you can understand each character and situation FROM ALL ANGLES.

And as for "The Note In God's Eye"?? Well, to tell you the truth, I found it to be the most over-rated crap artistry that has yet graced by bookshelves FULL STOP. ((But Bill sticks to his point unto the end...))

But enough of this bitching, I have a point to this letter. That of "Reissues under a different title from the original". The reason for this is as follows. I am a great fan of Ellison so I was pleased to get my grubby little mitts on ELLISON WONDERLAND. So imagine my horror at buying EARTHMAN, GO HOME! Yes, you guessed it, it's a reprint of "Wonderland". Here are a few more I found.

M. MOGROCK: THE TWILIGHT MAN/SHORES OF DEATH.

G.R. DICKSON: NECROMANCER/NR ROOM FOR MAN

E. COOPER: KR NK (This is put in as I spent quite a few quid on the hardback SON OF KRONK)

And there must be others. SO STOP ALL THIS CRAP ABOUT SW AND CE. ARE WE BEING CONNED? In the words of an advert, "May the SWIZZ be with you".

Speaking of swizz, how many people bought "The SF event of the year"? I'm talking about DEUS IRAE. If you read page 86 to 88 of this paperback and then pick up THE PRESERVING MACHINE AND OTHER STORIES and you

read the title story, you may, just may, notice a connection. (Only the places and names have been changed to protect the wallet.)

((I agree, this is something which can catch out the unwary. Most books have a publication history inside where a previous publication under a different title should be noted, but if you buy mail order this is little help. Perhaps it should be more clearly emphasised that a book has been published before under a different title and is not a new work?))

BILL J. FRASER, 36 Campbell St, NEWMILNS, Ayresshire KA16 9DT.

Since I've mailed off to the BSFA's Membership Secretary today a letter requesting the immediate cancellation of my membership, and the refunding of what remains of my membership fees, I think it would be only fair to answer a couple of points raised by my last letter:

J.G. Ballard/Phillip K. Dick. Mediocre?

Yes, by a long way, though of their work in general TRITE would be a more exact description.

Hard Core (Alex Pillai) wasn't a reference to such work as Hal Clements MISSION OF GRAVITY or the like, which uses hard science fact, but to a certain type of monotonous monologues that drive SF's avant-garde minority into gibbering ecstasy.. In other words, piss-elegant crap for SF snobs.

My reason for ending my membership of the BSFA is that I like Science Fiction.

To me SF means on average, entertaining escapism, and thought-provoking fiction at best. And at worst, adulterated "SF" which though as dated as jazz music is probably the most pretentious "fiction" ever to hitch a ride on the SF label. The avant-garde hard core call such infantile crap "new wave".

SF is a mixture of entertaining-escapism, but above all is for those who in adult years have retained their sense of wonder. Wonder is what SF is all about, though the avant-garde seem to have forgotten the meaning of the word.

As I stated, my prime reason for leaving the BSFA is that I like science-fiction. Though I've read it for near twenty years (got hooked on it at the age of four listening to Dan Dare on the radio in the early '50s), and will be continuing to read it (the last few novels I've read have all been Andre Norton's), I've never in that time read or seen anything as bad as VECTOR. And I've got through a thousand-odd SF novels and more in that time.... and I'll continue not to recommend the BSFA, as I've done a couple of times over the last few weeks, to anyone interested in SF.

JAMES PARKER, 18 King William St., Old Town, Swindon, Wilts, SN1 3LB.

I'm gratified to see that my diatribe against STAR WARS elicited a good response. It's very important that there should be long and serious debates

about the implications of George Lucas's movies for Science Fiction. The tremendous commercial success of STAR WARS tells us quite a bit about present day audience needs; further, it tells us much about that audience's values and how, perhaps, those values are being changed. However we look at it, whether from within the ranks of fandom or as just individuals concerned about various media trends, STAR WARS is a significant EVENT. It mirrors, arguably, present-day American thinking, especially among the youth of that nation. For these reasons alone, STAR WARS is worthy of debate.

STAR WARS is a phenomenon, both within and outside of SF itself. Critical reaction within SF has been wide and varied, from "Well, it's just a fun-movie, don't take it too seriously and you'll enjoy it" through to Harlan Ellison's unequivocal "Junk food for the mind" attack (STARLIG Magazine, Sept. issue). There's no doubt that STAR WARS is generating a certain degree of controversy within the SF world itself. The movie's arrival and success hasn't been wholly welcomed. There are those who see the movie as a massive step backward as regards SF's aspirations towards some kind of 'respectability'. Furthermore, they see the movie as nothing more than a reactionary piece of Right-wing political propaganda. Doubtless George Lucas would deny the latter charge utterly. Question: Could we believe him?

Lucas goes to great lengths emphasising that he was merely making a lightweight adventure movie containing many of the elements present in his own childhood's celluloid escapism: Buck Rogers, Tarzan, the Lone Ranger, etc. All of them harmless fun, right? G.L. is most concerned that we understand this.... STAR WARS is fun! Darth Vader is nothing more than a dramatic creation; a histrionic figure of evil. Bull! I cannot accept that Lucas is that naive. If he's just affecting an air of naivete, or indulging a feeling of innocent nostalgia in his movie then that would be acceptable.... perhaps. But what we witness in STAR WARS is a very contrived, very cynical, very high-powered appeal being made to our more primitive instincts. There's nothing naive about the mind that conceived STAR WARS. Lucas is selling us a totally political vision. There is, in fact, more subliminal political content in STAR WARS than there is SF content. It is a movie that perpetuates the legend of a moral universe; the lie that, ultimately, there is good and there is Evil. And that right always belongs to the victor in any conflict. No attempt is ever made to examine the seeds of the conflict in STAR WARS. It just is. It is simply a tale of cowboys and indians transposed to another glamorous (but fake) background. The scenery changes but Hollywood's acceptance of the inevitability of bitter conflict in the affairs of men (and aliens, so it seems) never changes.... So much more scope to portray spectacular scenes of death and destruction, of course. Just what the people want, right?

"But" - I hear certain MATRIX readers cry - "that's what STAR WARS is all about: it is an escape from the moral complexities of the real world". Hmm, strange as it may appear to some, I found STAR WARS remarkably secondrate as a piece of imaginative escapism. If one of the many claims made for SF - and there are many,

God knows - is that it is primarily an exercising of the imagination at its purest and most powerfully dramatic - and most SF fans would concur with this, right? - then I can only say that, for me, STAR WARS was a dismal failure on this very level. Lucas' movie is not a monument to the power of the unbridled imagination. It's publicity machine attempts to put over this very lie - that STAR WARS is a superby imaginative experience. A movie that is created from all the wretched cliches of a bankrupt and totally reactionary tradition - the American pulp zines and their Hollywood equivalents etc. - will, itself, simply be a part of, and a continuation of, that very wretchedness regardless of how many millions of dollars are poured into the thing to make it look glossy and 'contemporary'. In the end, it is the attitudes behind the product that gives (or does not give, in the case of STAR WARS), its lasting value artistically.

Bearing the above comments in mind, I find it difficult to understand the likes of Simon R. Green when he claims that (SW) "was realistic; i.e. true to its world and ours". My Gog... what world do you live in, Simon? It doesn't sound much like the one I live in... Also, Simon, it's not a case of you being a -to use your phrase - 'Idealist Romantic Escapist', it's more a case of why put such a high value on being 'escapist' in the first place? Experiencing the joys and - you ain't going to escape 'em, friend - pains of this merry little bastard of a world are of far more value to you as an individual than any amount of empty pre-packaged escapism.

To D.T. Rowley: Sorry about sounding 'dictatorial' - put it down to having strongly held opinions and a great urgency for the need to communicate with others of a similar outlook. Otherwise, I agree in essence with your comments.

Greg Hills: ("what the hell is James Parker getting at?") - That 'SF' is not a specific thing. It is the one genre that is patently mislabelled as such. It is, increasingly, the final (last?) potent form that most other literary and dramatic traditions are flowing into. SF - because its range of play is universal - must therefore, by its very nature, encompass all other possibilities of medium, content and style. By this definition, 'SF' - the appellation itself - will become a meaningless anachronism. I'm not denying SF a specific role, it's just that the way I see it, SF has transcended its allotted role and must now perish in a harsher, less idealistic climate or adapt and shake off its crippling past if it's to mean anything in the nineteen seventies or eighties. Its real role in the future will be as a kind of cosmic satire... that's my vision of it, anyway. Doubtless there will be millions of new visions propagated by our writers, artists, dramatists and musicians etc. Each will be equally valid, however elevated or sick the mind that conceived them. The need to express is the key.

I find Dave Cobbedick's words, "I care not for any political, ethical, scientific, technological theories that the author cares to throw in (!)" extraordinary. Dave is proud of the fact that he rates 'entertainment'

in his favourite literature above all these things. Good grief... Forget literature, movies etc., Dave. Watch wrestling instead - that's got none of those nasty things in it you apparently so despise.

Steev Higgins' thoughts on violence and its portrayal by the media (with reference to STAR WARS) were very interesting and I have much respect for them. Regarding violent revolution, though, Steev, I think you must agree that for people like ourselves it is very easy to moralise about violence 'cause we're not suffering starvation, social repression and economic exploitation etc. (Our masters are more into manipulation of minds than outright physical suppression). If we were in some other less fortunate part of the world then, perhaps, we would not be so well-placed to intellectualise our dilemmas and their possible cures. We would be much more likely to take up arms, our minds burning with revolutionary ideals. Simplistic, yes, but violence springs from such desperation when words no longer work. I agree that violence seldom solves an injustice, but it is an essential part of a rapidly changing international scene, and it is important for us in the more privileged areas of the world to recognise this fact. Our leisurely moralising is a luxurious indulgence. We've got full bellies and know a few big, impressive sounding words. Only in the universe of STAR WARS and STAR TREK (that grossly over-rated series) can such problems be so easily resolved. Everything is political, even our 'entertainment' which strives to be so neutral. Neutrality indicates lack of passion, lack of humanity. SF must be pro-human, pro-human passion and man's everlasting need for liberating change. SF, therefore must be politically aware. Anything else is a prevaricating denial of reality.

Thanks, Paul Fraser. 'Idealistic crap' is always a good laugh, yes.

Paul: Entertainment, escapism - how about calling it 'burying one's head in the sand', eh? - is not the first priority of any creative medium. I would put stimulation of the mind and heart above entertainment any time. We're currently suffering from an overdose of entertainment and escapism via the electronic media; a sure sign of a civilization that is afraid of the future and wants to lose itself in dreams and fantasies. As the power of the media grows ever more omnipotent, the distortions of reality and the sterile dreams it spews out ever more numerous and deceitful, our grasp of world realities recedes. We are becoming lost in an electronic ganglia of sensation and effect. Our heads - our imaginations - are becoming like candy floss, full of the stuff of media onslaught; we hardly have time to digest the implications, the damage has already been done to our minds, subliminally, through the sheer repetition of the process.

Against such a background, any kind of idealism is a miracle of human resilience.... Listen, Paul, 'idealistic crap' is all we've got left in a crazy world... glad it provided you with a good laugh.

Ia though to Jacqueline Y Comben, Alex Pillai, Ken Mann, Cyril Simsa and Alison Hutton for the support in this struggle to get through the message that STAR WARS is just another media exploitation of the mass-mind

the entity - it would so dearly love to engineer and control from Los Angeles to Calcutta.

In answer to Alison Hutton's question about my reaction to CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND; yes, I found this movie a lot 'healthier' than the frankly excesses of STAR WARS. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS at least had 'something to say'. It was/is an 'intelligent' movie and revived that old 'sense of wonder' in a particularly powerful and elemental fashion. Although the final scenes came dangerously near to being too mystical, I felt. The last thing we need is surrogate Gods descending from the blue. 2001 almost blew its credibility on that score as well. Hollywood loves treacly 'religious' finales. I guess it's a substitute for genuine profundity.

There's only been one really successful SF movie and that's the truly mesmerising SOLARIS, a movie that carried the real message of our time: the universe is an enigma; reality a veil; only our need of human warmth is a reality. The final tableau in Tarkovsky's movie conveyed all this in one mind-bending revelation. It's the only SF movie that brought tears to my eyes... I will not deny it.

Such is the power of SF - when it speaks to us as human beings and not as mental morons or hate-machines. We don't want Gods either, 'cause they lack warmth and humour. (Listening, Spielberg?)

So remember all you SF freaks out there: don't let the Machine' with all its pretty coloured lights steal your soul away...

((Briefly: it is one of the functions of popular culture to express complex issues in a simplified and accessible form. This is not necessarily a bad thing. The main clichés of SW are the young man who longs for excitement; the struggle against conspiracies of the powerful who torture, cheat and murder to achieve domination, the contest of comradeship and idealism as set against authoritarianism and power, the small 'us' against the domineering 'them' - are all clichés which would gain acceptance just about everywhere in the world and have little to do with Wall Street cultural imperialism. (See how the North Vietnamese see themselves.) My own objection to the film lies in the way the clichés are rested upon and never used (the greater amount of initiative and ability given to the Princess being an exception), and in the use of such terms as 'Empire', Princess Leia, and the like, which really add nothing to the plot but whose 'loaded' nature seems to suggest that this is the natural order of things. And, of course, if we think about it, we realise that Luke Skywalker would rather kill people than grow things.... Call this a reactionary political attitude, call it bad writing (I happen to believe it's probably both), we need to set it against other things such as the aesthetic impact of the sets, and the clear

indication of which attitudes are evil. One can quite clearly find Facism in Darth Vader and the Stormtroopers - note the name: note the resemblance of their armour & masks to the American 'pig cop' image. Of course SW is simplistic, of course it appeals to our base emotions. But sometimes the moral choices we have to make in life are simplistic. Are you for or against racism? There are NO maybes. Good and Evil may be many things to many people, but they are not lies. I enjoyed SW because it mirrored for me the conflict between what I consider to be good and what I consider to be evil - never mind what the author intended. I only wish it had been a better film!))

NEIL TALBOT, 42a Hobson Road, Leicester LE4 2AQ

The next paragraph is a plea for mercy.

For God's sake, when are people going to shut up about STAR WARS. I'm sick to the teeth of hearing about it! It's driving me mad that so much lettercol space is wasted on futile arguments on S...aargh! I can't bear to say it. The director was hardly concerned with SF as more than escapist entertainment for the L.C.D., so why all the fuss about it? It is best forgotten as an ignominious moment in SF movie history. I would rather see letters about films like THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH which I thought was brilliant. (But is it SF? I hear a small voice ask.... That leads me on to the next part of this letter.)

Despite the fact that the lettercol brings me out in a rash every time I look at it, it's nice to find kindred spirits like Ken Mann & Cyril Simsa who think as I do about SF. The vast bulk of SF printed today is admittedly puerile stuff - the only validity it has is as an ambrosia to feed the imagination of the masses - a drug that still remains legal. At times I am ashamed to admit I read SF mainly because of the preconditioning the general public has had over the years from the media. But I know that SF can produce good stuff even though I am constantly trying to re-define what SF means in the light of what I read and experience. Every Science Fiction reader must recognise the discovery and subsequent odyssey through the genre as a largely personal thing, their tastes conditioned by what they read in childhood and adolescence, and despite continual disillusionment, they never give up the private country they found, like the boy in LE GRAND MEULNES; they still hope to have an occasional glimpse of the marvellous.

That is why I still love the genre, even though most SF is 'junk food' and never likely to be taken seriously as a literary form. Any SF with serious literary pretensions (such as the recent work of Brian Aldiss) is immediately cut at the umbilical cord by the Book Critics in the 'heavies' (This is good. It can't be SF) - Anthony Burgess reviewing Brian's ENEMIES OF THE SYSTEM in the 'Observer':

"It is too short a tale to say what has to be said, but it contrives to be rich, allusive, full of real people and unfailingly interesting. It is not, then, real SF." That's the establishment for you. Closed minds. They might as well close the book. Yet Brian Aldiss is one of the few writers able to make SF a respectable literary medium. It's all useless blows against the empire.

((Though Anthony Burgess has written his share of great sf: whether he calls it sf I don't know, but he's written it.))

((***STAR LETTERS***: the following two letters are so rated because, in one case, they show a practical way in which BSFA members can 'spread the word' and in the other, information/opinion of interest to members which is not directly related to the contents of last issue's lettercol - you don't have to follow the longstanding discussions, you know!))

T.H. DEATON c/o 18, Gommersal Close, Retford, Notts DN22 7SQ.

My local bookshop allowed me to put up a BSFA poster in the window - at the same time they bemoaned the fact that they did not know enough about SF to really order what they really wanted and asked for help - so I gave them a long list which they ordered for stock and within 2 weeks it has all (100 to 150 books) been sold.

I had always thought this area a dead loss SF-wise but apparently not, and the bookshop will let me put our bookmark in their stock and also have offered to keep a supply in the shop for future use.

Also they are quite prepared when the results of the questionnaire are known to put all 10 books on a special section with a heading such as "BSFA Top Ten Books".

((It seems there are some co-operative bookshops about - this is a thing worth doing. It shows, I think, that the market for SF is still untapped! The bookmarks are being reprinted/redesigned at the moment, but some should be on the way to you when they are ready.))

PATRICK W. RICHARDS, London W9.

In an age when MATRIX abounds with criticism over the space allocated to letters (such criticism itself taking up a not inconsiderable proportion) I wonder whether I could squeeze an observation which, at least I, feel should not go unmentioned.

Armed with the various caveats revealed by the recent review I ploughed my way through Ash's VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA to finally reach one of the concluding chapters titled "Science Fiction Art". Perhaps because of its frustratingly concise approach I was surprised to note that a well known name was missing: Karel Thole. To bridge that gap perhaps I could tell some readers something about him.

He's Dutch and believed to be in his sixties. He began as a cover artist in Holland and then tried his luck in the wider markets of France, England and South America, illustrating, originally, paperback editions of 'spy' stories. He eventually settled in Italy and was introduced to the Mondadori publishing house who needed a cover artist for their weekly URANIA series (invariably a translation from the Anglo-Saxon SF field). He has been working for them since 1958 and has repeatedly won the national award for best illustrator of SF.

His work is colourful and meticulously clear,

his characters are humane and his 'monsters' anything but horrendous. Scenes are often abstract and very imaginative: rarely is a spaceship shown. He works in the silence of the night and bases his images on thousands of photos hoarded in a wardrobe. Nor are his results limited to the Italian field; on average he produces fifteen or so covers for American, English, German and Dutch publishers.

If MATRIX readers haven't come across him and would like some illustrations printed then I would be happy to provide the editor with some decent copies.

((I don't know about you, Gentle Readers, but I've learnt something today...))

WILLIAM BAINS, Crowland Lodge, 100 Galley Lane, Arkley, Barnet EN5 4AL.

Yes, I suppose it is rather unfair to compare Oxford's miserable few dozen colleges with a similar area of, say, suburban London containing a couple of dozen schools, several technical colleges, a few teaching branches of hospitals, countless public libraries, hordes of youth/recreation centres to name only the physical structures. Come to think of it, BSFA was not overpowering in its presence at the Oxford 'societies' bazaar'. Nor does it swamp all those university noticeboards you mentioned. The Association used to have a liaison officer whose job, I believe, was to contact other interested groups and tell them of the existence and aims of the BSFA so that they could pass on the word in their own area. Does he still exist, or is this task to be left to prayer and hope? I note David Symes has also seen the light and is actually doing something about said publicity lack.

Dave Cobbledick on violence was interesting: I recall one loving, maternal woman threatening to rip my arms off if I called her a member of the gentle sex. As you (Andy) say, men and women are very similar in their desire to witness violence at close quarters, although becoming involved is not so popular if you get hurt. Thus films/TV is an ideal medium to satiate the violent drive. Well, almost ideal but bull-fighting and throwing Christians to lions are out of fashion in Britain. Be thankful that violent sports, films and books abound, as otherwise our nice peaceful society would come up with something else to fill the violence gap like a war. And it is not as if 'Dirty Harry' or Saturday afternoon wrestling were compulsory viewing...

DAVE COBBLEDICK, 245, Rosalind Street, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9AZ.

Sheesh! nine letters into the Loccol and no-one has slammed me, called me nasty names, misread my statements; *gasp* can it be true? Ahh, William Bains asks a question! No, William, I haven't yet written to the Radio/TV Times as regards my campaign for better TVSF: Why? Well, for the simple fact that I haven't yet compiled the census questionnaire. I'll be compiling the census when I've got TIGFART 3 out of the way (still room for another half dozen folks on my mailing list; anyone interested?) Of course, now that someone is going to DO something positive a wave of apathy descends and all the critics have gone silent; wonder why?

So, I again repeat my request for volunteers to step forth who will be willing to relinquish a few hours of their time to distribute the 'single sheet' flyer to libraries, zine readers, etc. etc. Any takers?

As regards STAR WARS - which seems to be the sore point in SF at this particular moment - we must remember that it is a FAMILY film, and when we hear that prefix we must assume that it is intended to reach all ages; i.e. and point of fact, C*H*I*L*D*R*E*N! If it were meant to be other than that, then Lucas could have made it 'hard-core', very gory and sexy.... in fact an 'X' film. So, Alex Pillai and all the other who criticise SW should first think.... What majority made up SW audiences? I'd like to bet that more kids have seen it than adults! So, the DOC SMITH syndrome that was mentioned has applied most appropriately; why? Because the kids that have seen SW will probably have a tendency to develop an acquired taste for SF in later years; so, SW was a good entertaining, harmless, encouraging FAMILY film.

((Don't faint, Dave - but I actually half agree with you there! I don't think that just because something is aimed at children, it should fudge issues and assume that using the mind is definitely out, (it's become a bit of a cliché that good children's literature or whatever will appeal to adults too) but undoubtedly SW was aimed at kids and a certain amount of simplification is justified.))

Yes, I agree with you Andy, that MAN has the capability of other less violent reactions but, you must agree that the violent tendencies have far outweighed the others throughout our history! And I'd like to make a point to Alison Hutton; whilst I admit that my statement regarding Boys- violence: Girls = Love was very vague, it applied to Children and NCT adults. Admitted, there are exceptions... Puffs and Tomboys and the like, but nature intended that Men would be violent (dominant if you wish - and don't bore me with women's lib or sex discrimination) and Women maternal. If it were not so, why do girls' and boys' comics exist SEPERATELY? Why do women, rather than Men, read love stories and murder mysteries?

((Well, that last sentence is what you wrote - and I can't see what murder mysteries have to do with being maternal. Sex discrimination may be boring but it is a fact. And separate comics expounding separate values is part of that fact.))

Not having a great deal of time to digest MATRIX, I'll give a quick run-down of my opinions of this last issue: Cover; could I sing anything but praise for anything that Shep turns out, I ask you? Liked the total layout, a bit patchy at the beginning, but later on it develops into something which I think you've been striving for. Also like the way you've broken MATRIX up into segments; i.e. *FANDOM FEATURES* which kind of belittles all of the fannish grumbings that we ignore them. Letters were well edited too and had

a greater impact than the waffle (of which I must admit I'm guilty of contributing to) that often propounded in previous ish(s. Yep, it's definitely one of the best MATRIXes I've seen to date.

PHILIP MULDOONEY, 28 Moorlan View, Derriford, Plymouth

MATRIX this issue was par for the course. A lot of meat, and even something if you are a vegetarian. I think you have caught the micro-elite disease, though. In that, being able to put more words on the printed page, you tend to be somewhat verbose. For instance your editorial must be knocking on for 3000 words - fair enough if you had a definite theme to thump, but you seemed to be mostly meandering gently. If you accuse the letters of a tendency to creep, then your editorial fits into the same pigeon-hole.

Perhaps the BSFA should apply to the government for a paper clip grant. One staple for a thick MATRIX is just plain nonsense. I object to having to restaple it after 15 minutes of reading. Similarly as regards information. I have been in the BSFA four months now, and still have only the haziest idea as to what services are offered and where they are to be found. No one told me you had to write for TANGENT, I have no idea how the library functions, and what the hell is the magazine chain. If all new members are as much in the dark as myself, then I suspect there will be a swift exent right when renewal of membership comes. Why cannot MATRIX carry reports of the various services available????

((see back...))

I think at the moment the committee is somewhat overwhelmed by its own success. In that, the BSFA has had a very large membership increase in the past several months. The committee (is there not a better term that one can use? THE COMMITTEE sounds like some sort of Russian menace) has been organised by philosophy and practice to a rather low level, low budget organisation. What with 600 plus and going up, that is £3000 to 5000 a year income, which ain't peanuts. Trouble is, the new membership probably expects more than is available within the BSFA at the moment. VECTOR and MATRIX - judging from the last two mailings - for all their interesting qualities, look shoddy and amateurish. So, if the BSFA is going to keep its new members, it has to offer something more.

I for the life of me, cannot understand the choice of another three award categories for the Carnell. BEST MEDIA PRODUCTION presumably means radio, films, TV records adverts, calendars. Could anybody tell me how you can do a comparison between such diverse media? What does BEST COLLECTION/ANTHOLOGY mean? Magazine? Original stories or reprints, single author or multi-author? Because a collection of the best of, say Alfred Bester or Fritz Leiber is a totally different animal from NEW WRITINGS or ANDROMEDA. Sloppy thinking is evident here.

The letter column still need editing. The idea of a FORUM for the readership is valid. However, that would take an entirely new magazine. Say like the NSF's

TIGHTB AM. If, as you seem to want, MATRIX is to be a cohesive fanzine, then the letter column needs some massive surgery. To read the same opinions poorly expressed is no good. Good letter columns are invaluable. They encourage interaction and participation, and can be the best things in many fanzines. They are created, however, by skillful editing. For instance, there seems little else in the letter column but the BSFA, which is in itself boring in the end.

SIMON R. GREEN, 37, St Laurence Rd, Bradford on Avon, Wilts.

In re your comment on the Saint zine, I've been trying to find copies of it for years, but have never come across ANY. Worth looking for (apart from the fact that I'm a Leslie Charteris addict) because they did use the odd SF story as well as SF&F themes and names; Ellison had quite a few in this zine, (i.e. "All the Sounds of Fear" and also, there were a series of stories about Simon Ark, by Edmund Hoch. There were two selections of these stories from Berkley, The Judges of Hades and City of Brass, and they were superb.

A few annoyed words on cheapie TVSF. I've no doubt most of you noticed that one HULK episode featured shots from Spielberg's movie DUEL, but did any of you catch the 2 parter WONDER WOMAN that ended its run? First, it used scenes stolen from the film THIS ISLAND EARTH (without crediting it), second, the wheezing robot that WW fought bore a striking resemblance to Darth Vader, third, the shape-changing aliens were called Skrells (obviously no relation to Marvel Comics' shape-changing alien Skrulls), and the plot was a rip-off of BRAIN-STEALERS FROM OUTER SPACE and INVASION OF THE BODY-SNATCHERS.

I feel cheated. Admittedly I only watch WW because I fancy Lynda Carter and because I'm still trying to work out how she fills that costume without appearing deformed or at least very lucky, but even so surely we can expect better than this? I mean, I know most American series have all the charm and subtlety of a mule's fart, but this is even more unbearable because it's shafting two potentially quite good series.

LESTER HANNINGTON, 44 St Andrews Rd, Cambridge.

I would like to reply to Steev Higgins' letter in which he thought I might have been drinking on the nights of the showings of RED SHIFT and STARGAZY ON ZUMMER-DOWN. I wasn't. I saw them both, interesting in their different ways - STARGAZY because it had Roy Dotrice in it, was a funnyish romp. Whether it ought to be considered as SF is irrelevant - I enjoyed it. RED SHIFT was a different affair - cloggy, and creaking from the sheer weight of its idea, it looked a little like one of those teenage tele-dramas you find in Children's hour. It was not a particularly successful item, I think, since you required an adequate 1) sus-

pension of disbelief 2) connectivity between time periods. Perhaps the latter DID point the way towards adult televised drama, possibly more than the other half-assed stuff we are fed upon, but I wouldn't bank on it!

NOTA BENE - this staple is not good enough. DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

Dave Cobbedick shows more and more of his worst side as he goes on. Fiction satisfies a need - 1) in the publishers to make money to live, to continue printing, to be able to expand their ranges etc. 2) in the audience, the crowd, who are looking for something to read. This is commercial truth (he can, and probably will, disagree with me). As a reader of fiction, I can say that people read for different reasons - some for something to pass the time away, some for other reasons, for example, to be stimulated by what they read - although many, and here SF fans are an example, read only what presents them with what they consider to be a suitable view of the world, and, within fiction, what they consider as a suitable FORM of fiction.

An author is restricted, obviously, in terms of what he CAN write about, and HOW he can write about it. No doubt an author in South Africa, say, wouldn't find it very easy to get a book published condemning apartheid or the white minority government. In the same way, most writers are not writers at all, but panderers to mass public whim, since they provide a black-on-white means to self-sustaining points of view - he doesn't write anything challenging, therefore, to peoples basic conceptions if he wants to write a best-seller. What he does provide is something full of emotional or plot hocks, constructed just right to appeal to the maximum amount of members of the public who do not require anything adventurous in content or style by which they can attain 'relaxation.'

Evidently Dave is dunderhead enough to believe that fiction should be a totally empty thing - devoid of ideas, feeling, prediction, or any semblance of reality - in other words, TOTALLY ESCAPIST, a total cop-out. I'm not saying that the opposite restriction should apply, but anybody who actively promotes such a vast emptiness in contemporary fiction is promoting an emptiness in everybody's lives, even if second hand and by the means of fiction.

Personally, I agree in principle with Ken Mann - why this organisation should even exist astounds me - as well as hearing the 'closed wall' attitude of a couple of hard core fans at EasterCon. But I hope that SF finally WILL come of age; only then can it stand with any real pride, close to the great wealth of fiction which does not bear the ludicrous label of SF, and be counted as something generally worthwhile.

Let's get it straight fans. Don West has thrown nothing that wasn't needed, and if that seemed like insults then that may be because the actions of the committee warranted as strong a response as possible to awaken the mass of the membership. This committee, running to Don's prediction, hides behind solidarity and has more to answer to yet. I'm talking of the state of relations with both fandom, the public (hard to gauge) and members. I for one have been dealt with in an insulting, arrogant

ans summary manner, by both Jones and Wingrove, the latter being a foolish editor indeed to so openly go for a very elite audience of like thinkers.

Great play in the 'Committee' statement was made of reference to increased 'DEMOCRACY' with a capital D - so why the hassle? Don's comments were valid, your bitchy reply was most unbecoming - and don't you think I don't know what an extremely dictatorial hand you collectively have in affairs? I don't want the award to be called anything but the BSFA Award - I REFUSE to have it called under my name as member anything else - and by that I mean no offence to the merits plentiful of Carnell, but am reminding the Committee of the fact of democracy.

Are we, the membership, to suffer the indignity of such magazines as VECTOR and MATRIX, these ill-stapled and poorly constructed affairs, as well as a miserably unhelpful and unreceptive Committee?

Why in VECTOR 88 (not unlike other issues) does Wingrove get his editorial plus two other articles? I thought there was now no shortage of materials, so why shackle us with more teachings of Chair an Wingrove? If reviews and articles etc. are still needed I'll submit some of my stuff, but I'm very choosy who I give it to... I would give a review of 'Future Rock', note Dave Wingrove.

The whole system under which PAPERBACK PARLOUR is allowed to be thrown in as an extra and something we are supposed to be grateful for, is absurd. The cost to the members I'm sure would be reduced if so much of the rubbish were excluded. Let's remember - a democracy is a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people collectively, and is administered by the or by officers appointed by them. The Committee and all the membership must take note, since they are the two hands of this affair - some sort of resolution MUST come, and the membership must choose what they want the future BSFA to look like. At the moment, I think a considerable amount of doubt exists as to the quality of the present Committee, and the fate of Doreen Rogers and Rog Gilbert at Wingrove's hands may give some indication as to the state of the committee's minds. It may be your turn next. Be warned.

BEN BURR, 7, Egerton Drive, Greenwich London SE10 8JS

In MATRIX 18, James T. Parker correctly made the connection between escapist entertainment and Vietnam. In West Germany today (and in many other places) a successful military campaign, in coalition with the media (full of escapist rubbish) and official institutions, has persuaded half the young people aged between 18 and 24 that they'd like to be in the armed forces, and many have a mixed naive admiration for the command structure of a modern army (Guardian 8.9.78)! This is really horrific.

Escapist entertainment only confirms accepted social values and strengthens reactionary aspects of life.

One function of fiction is to entertain, but it can do this without being purely escapist. Look at any 'great'

work and you will see that it entertains on several levels, and thus it appeals to a wide (but not necessarily mass) audience. Dave Cobblestick states that he can't see anyone relating fiction to reality and thus any dangers arising from the so-called gullibility of people are ill-founded. Fiction is quite often related to reality. Look at the attitudes of an average person. What came first, did the attitudes induce the fiction, or did the fiction create and maintain the attitudes? As there are many different cultures around the world and in the past, each with very different sets of attitudes, it can be seen that the different forms of entertainment tend towards the preservation, and not the reevaluation, of those attitudes.

Fiction doesn't have to present the problems of the world in a didactic and preaching manner, but it doesn't have to ignore these problems altogether, or pretend that you can't do anything about them; Fiction quite often solves enormous problems which don't appear related to our existence, but which are perhaps allegories to our problems. This isn't usually didactic, or preaching, or boring, though of course it could be. I expect that most people read fiction for entertainment, but this is entirely a subjective matter. It may be entertaining for one person, but totally dull for another. It depends on what one wants. All I'm asking for is an improvement in fiction, take out the escapist element that only induces apathy and non-action, an excuse for doing nothing and accepting what you're told, and replacing it with something interesting, something vital and alive, real emotional and intellectual, something that entertains more than gut emotions, something that loves non-conformity and differences, something that could make life more worth living.

Enjoy anything you like, but recognise what is dangerous!

FINAL SAY..... lastminute additions.

Almost missed it: EASTERCON (13 - 16 April 1979) at Dragonara Hotel, Leeds. Contact Alan Dorey c/o 20 Hermitage Woods Cres., St Johns, Woking, Surrey.

Ben Burr's BENZINE (address to the left) available for s.a.e. Includes further accounts of Cyril Simsa's Canadian visit.

Friends of Kilgore Trout Magazine 3 (Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre G72 9NA). James White's Faircon GoH speech and other delicacies. A definite reason against devolution! ((Is that better, lads?))

FORBIDDEN PLANET: a new SF & comic shop at 23 Denmark St, London WC2.

LSP Books will now distribute previously unavailable ACE, DAW and BERKLEY sf titles.