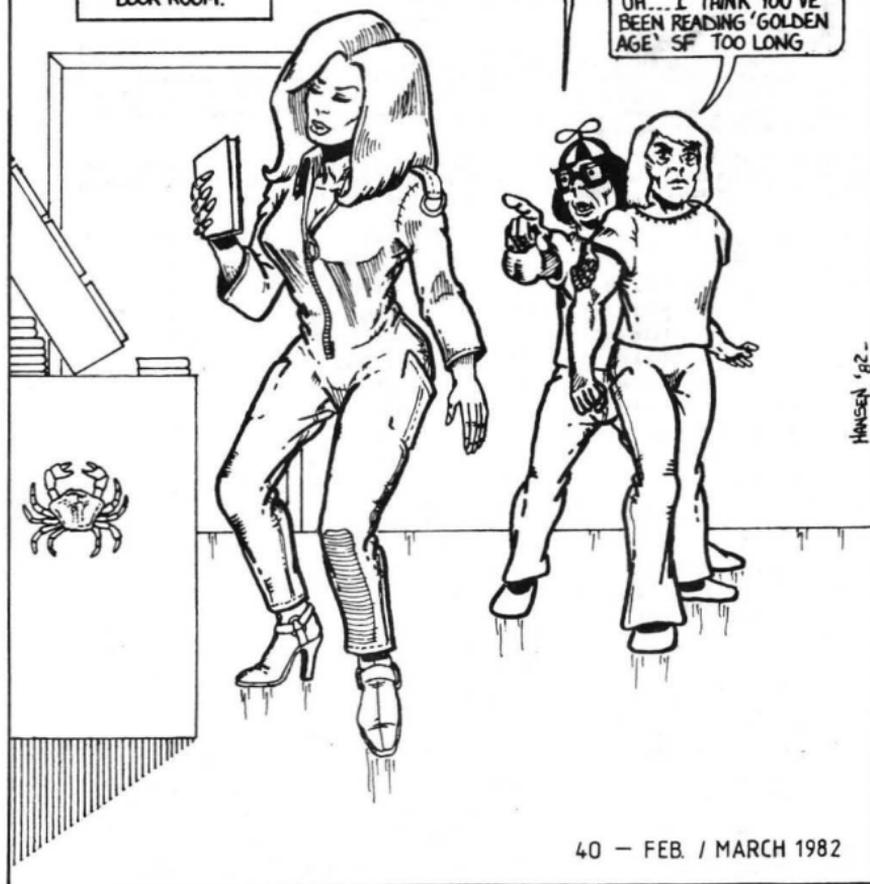


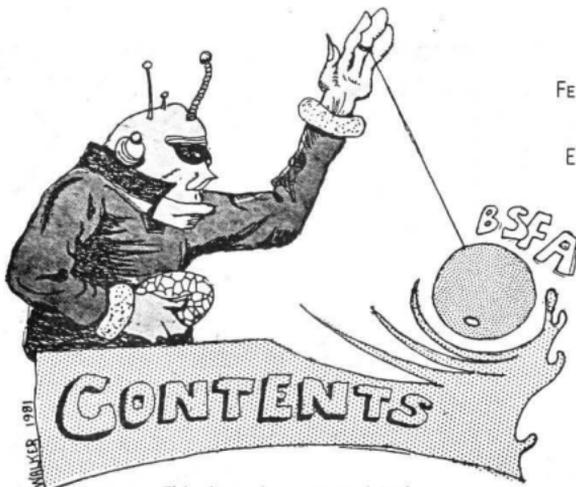
MATRIX

ITSACON
BOOK ROOM.

LOOK!! AN ALIEN!!

UH... I THINK YOU'VE
BEEN READING 'GOLDEN
AGE' SF TOO LONG





MATRIX 40
 FEBRUARY/MARCH 1982
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 & LINDA STRICKLER

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Chairperson of the BSFA is
 Alan Dorey who now resides
 at an address remarkably similar
 to: 12 Fearnville Terrace
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 wrong, in order to avoid legal repercussions. Having said that, this is your:*

TAKE AWAY MENU

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EDITORIAL

EXTRACTING THE WORLD OF SF

Q. "What are you doing - work?"

A. "No. It's a Magazine I edit."

Q. "What sort of Magazine?"

It's then that the defense mechanisms start to operate.

A. "Just a General Magazine."

So went the conversation when my Dentist emerged from his surgery to find me in his waiting room thumbing through letters, art work, etc., for this issue of MATRIX, rather than reading 5-year-old copies of Country Life. I mean, one has to pass the time somehow and block off the muffled groans from inside the surgery.

The Dentist questions further, as they are wont to do.

How does one explain MATRIX?

"A bit of SF" I say, rather defensively.

"SF!" he beams. And then proceeds to reel off a dozen authors and demonstrate that he's a fan, nay a Buff. Of course, by this time, with my timid approach, he's gained the upper hand and mentions of J G Ballard, INTERZONE, and the BSFA, stir him not.

It occurred to me, later, that myself, and many other fans, are illusive and defensive when it comes to mentioning (confessing) interest in SF to "Joe Public". I know that Dorothy Davies touched on this with her article "SF Weirdies" a short while ago, and Terry Hill makes a pertinent observation in his letter in this issue.

I suppose it is due to the fact that if you do mention SF in conversation, either you're thought of as a "loonie" or the person bores you stiff with conversation about "I wonce saw a UFA in Scunthorpe". True. But, more importantly, I think the hiding of one's interest owes something to the fact that, when embroiled in the network of fandom, many of one's social needs are met and conversations with "outsiders" can be, at best, a bore, and at worst, downright nauseating. It's OK if your dentist is into SF - but I guess that's a rarity.

The withdrawing from friends other than fans is something quite common in fandom. I know, also, that after I've returned from a 3-4 day convention it is very difficult, once more, to relate to the outside world.

Now, before someone writes in and accuses me of being "superior" to non-fans, let me say that I now, on occasions, feel quite alienated in company if there aren't any fans around. I can exclude from that, some close friends of long-standing, and family, but overall, the average group down the pub seems to me to be pretty lifeless and pre-occupied with conversation about navy-blue knickers or last night's T.V. So, I guess, my alienation is Alienation by Choice.

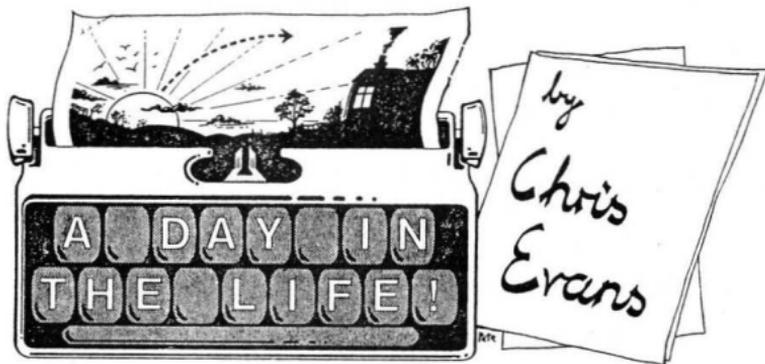
But, what they think of me, who knows?

Anyway, back to my Dentist. I did try just one more time to interest him in the BSFA when settling up for Dental Charges; he did seem a little more interested when I told him of the number of super magazines produced (good value for £6 he thought) but my offer of a year's subscription to the BSFA in exchange for waiving his fees fell on stony ground. It seems that the rigours of the DHSS Bureaucracy and the cost of filling ONE tooth (£9!) wouldn't permit the exchange.

However, unperturbed, I think I shall arrange (at personal cost) for said Dentist to be supplied with a sample mailing; seems a good plan to get new members and wouldn't do any harm to get on the right side of my practitioner, would it?

Just a final note, to emphasise that the BSFA Annual Meeting will be held at Channelcon - see Alan Dorey's column for details. If you've been sweating on a weighty matter these past 12 months, concerning the BSFA, why not drop either Alan or me a line if you've got a matter you think should be put on the Agenda. Provided it's not a request to oust yours truly, we'll consider it.

The point is, that many matters get discussed in these columns with heated debate from issue to issue and we do, in fact, reach something of a consensus on certain topics. However, the matter tends to get left there, lost for all time between these pages. I would like to see many more matters discussed at the AGM - after all, it beats going through the accounts item by item.



A free-lance writer's life tends to encourage sloth unless you're disciplined. I'm not. I get up in the mornings any time between eight and eleven o'clock, depending on what I was doing the night before. Unlike most people I know, I like to eat a reasonably hearty breakfast. The reason for this has little to do with appetite; it's chiefly to get my digestive system working and hence force my body to acknowledge that once again I'm conscious and must face the day ahead. The process of becoming fully awake after getting out of bed can take me anything from one to six hours.

After breakfast I read THE GUARDIAN, my regular print-fix. I start with the front page, then turn to the back and work my way through in reverse order to page 2. I've noticed that quite a few people read newspapers in this fashion. In my case it's because the football results, the crosswords the cartoon strips and the television page are all in the back pages of the paper, and these are of much more immediate interest to me than news of invasions, coups, strikes, what the Gang of Four did yesterday and the prospect of imminent nuclear holocaust. The novel I'm presently writing (but see later) has as its main character a man for whom all the complex moral, political and philosophical dilemmas facing modern man are as naught compared to the fortunes of Manchester United F.C. He's an extreme version of me.

When I've finished reading the newspaper and doing the quick crossword (this can take anything up to four hours), I'm finally ready to get down to some purposeful activity. You notice I do not say "work". For this particular free-lance writer the main challenge each day is finding things to do to defer the awful moment when I actually have to sit down at my desk and start work. On a good day I can spend a full sixteen hours or so busily not writing. I Hoover the carpet, wash shirts, re-organize my filing system, visit ironmongers' shops in my eternal quest for a two-inch bathplug. When these mundane activities fail me, I develop temporary hobbies, like my recent picture framing fad. At the end of last November I moved house, and this naturally opened up endless avenues for not writing: there were walls to be painted, furniture to be rearranged, a desk to be reconstructed after its savage dismemberment during removal from my old house. For the past month or so I've been busier than ever not writing.



This kind of syndrome is fairly common amongst writers, most of whom have a love-hate relationship with their work. I find writing both physically and mentally exhausting, and when I'm working on a novel there's hardly a waking hour that goes by without me thinking about some aspect of it. I write my first drafts with only a vague idea of what the story is about, and hence find myself constantly meditating on what I've already produced. Because it always seems so inadequate, I gradually become worn down by the amount of revision I'll have to do and finally grind to a halt. This is when I'm at my most miserable and when mindless domestic tasks become essential to fill up the day.

Writing is a solitary occupation and for me the telephone is an essential lifeline to the outside world. In between the last paragraph and this one I phoned Rob Holdstock, just to chat. Among other things, we usually complain to one another about the work we're not doing, and although the solution lies entirely in our own hands, it helps to swap frustrations and simply to hear the sound of another voice at the other end of the line. Living on my own, I suffer most from lack of contact with other people, a situation exacerbated by the fact that I don't earn much money and hence can't get out as often in the evenings as I'd like. This is not a complaint, since I've chosen this kind of life, merely a statement of fact. But the inherent danger in full-time writing is that you can gradually become isolated from the very basis of your work -- people.

Most days I usually finish not working around six o'clock. I select what television programmes I want to watch, and in between times I read. I'm a very slow reader, rarely getting through more than two books a week. On the other hand, I tend to buy three or four books a week. I'm sure this violates some fundamental principle of conservation, and probably only a ten-year jail sentence will enable me to catch up on my backlog of unread books. My reading tastes are pretty catholic, though in recent years I've grown disenchanted with most science fiction, a feeling I've tried to embody in a short passage from my novel-in-progress thus:

"Carpenter started to read the book but gave up after a few pages, unable to make sense of what was going on. As far as he could judge, the story was about a human colony on another world which had evolved an elaborate caste-system and a complicated code of ethics and propriety. What ultimately confounded him was the jargon which the author had invented for the various castes and customs: words like qwadut, cherkai, liafianth, pfui, pterk and even pfui-pterk. Had each of these terms been introduced gradually over several chapters, Carpenter might have had some success in comprehension. But when, only four pages into the book, he encountered the sentence 'L'llala, cherkai of liafianth, fourth-level qwadut, drew the vapours into her nostrils and entered the pfui-pterk mode', his mind went blank and he flung the book at the nearest wall."

The point about this passage is that it doesn't exactly represent my own feelings towards science fiction. I'm trying to write a funny book and the above paragraph is intended to have a satirical edge; it's thus a concentrated, exaggerated version of my own attitudes. Critics are always trying to wrinkle the writer out of his work but this is not always as easy as it might seem since the demands of fiction often make the writer modify or camouflage his own feelings through his characters. This is one of the main differences between the writer in print and the writer in person.

For the record, the books I'm reading at the moment include Barbara Tuchman's A Distant Mirror (a study of 14th century Europe), Anthony Burgess's Nothing Like the Sun (a novel about Shakespeare's life), Alan Richards's The Former Miss MerthyrTydfil and Other Stories (short stories set in South Wales), Gene Wolfe's The Shadow of the Torturer and Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus. The last-named book has the effect of making me feel like a mental pygmy since I recognize its quality but find that most of it passes right over my head. There's nothing more depressing than to encounter a writer who is far more intelligent and gifted than you are.

Some time after midnight I stumble off to bed, where I read until my eyelids droop. With any luck I fall asleep soon after switching off the light; if not, I worry about the work I haven't done that day. And as the days turn into weeks, my sense of guilt and anxiety mounts and finally I tell myself that I have to get back to work, if only to stave off abject poverty. About a week after I've reached this stage I may actually start writing again. I begin with letters or, better still, a fanzine article if someone's asked me for something. I find writing for fanzines very refreshing and liberating since you have a pretty good idea of your audience and you know that with luck the piece will appear in a matter of months and generate some feedback. Feedback is very important to most writers, and the long delays in professional publication tend to generate the feeling that you're working in a void. I try to put as much care and effort into a fannish article as a short story (this piece, which I regard as semi-fannish, will go through at least two drafts plus hand corrections before I'm satisfied with it) but find them easier to write because I'm less constrained by formal fictional considerations and can write more directly from my own experience. It's a good way of weaning myself back to work.

I lead a dull life. I make no apology for this, but only hope that the recounting of it above is not in itself too dull. Writers in general are meditative rather than active people, and the person who leads a very gregarious life is unlikely to have the inclination let alone the time to write. (There are exceptions, of course, but they are exceptions.) I tend to do my socialising in short hectic periods, typically at conventions. I write in the same fashion, building up to another stint at the typewriter after weeks of inactivity. The writing of this article is a hopeful sign that in a day or a week or so I'll finally be ready to get the scrawled, chaotic typescript of my novel out and resume work on it. The first draft is almost complete but I know that it's only the lump of clay from which I hope eventually to fashion some aesthetically pleasing shape. A daunting, fascinating prospect.

o o o o o o o o o o o

Chris Evans is probably well known to most members since he scripted some of the Captive Cartoons; he has also written a number of articles for fanzines, and at present is a full-time writer. His first novel Capella's Golden Eyes was published by Faber in 1980 and his second novel The Insider was published towards the end of last year and has received very good reviews.



Forthcoming Books	JOSEPH NICHOLAS
Film and TV News	SIMON BOSTOCK
Books, Magazines and Other News	EDITORS
Convention News	EDITORS

SOURCES: Starburst, Cinefantastique, Questar, Locus, Sandy Brown, Tom Shippey, David Pringle, The Mole, Overheard telephone conversations, Indiscrete letters - you name it

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

GRANADA: 11 March 1982 - Philip Jose Farmer: DARK IS THE SUN; Brian Aldiss: SPACE, TIME AND NATHAN-TEL 1 April 1982 - Greenberg, Waugh and Asimov (eds.): THE SCIENCE FICTIONAL SOLAR SYSTEM; Brian Aldiss: THE MALACIA TAPESTRY; Christopher Stasheff: THE WARLOCK IN SPITE OF HIMSELF. 22 April 1982 - Ursula LeGuin: THRESHOLD; Robert Huxley: THE GENIUS AND THE GODDESS and TIME MUST HAVE A STOP and who cares if it's not SF?; Aldous Stallman: THE CAPTIVE; Frederik Pohl: JEM.

PENGUIN: 28 January 1982 - Jack Chalker: MIDNIGHT AT THE WELL OF SOULS (£1.75), the first volume of his Well World saga; Maurice Gee: UNDER THE MOUNTAIN (95p), a fantasy novel by "one of New Zealand's foremost novelists"; Rosemary Harris: A QUEST FOR ORION (£1.50), "A future Europe over-run by Neo-Stalinists" (a future?); also rush-released is Elias Canetti's literary criticism: KAFKA'S OTHER TRIAL. 25 February 1982 - Michael Crichton (of ANDROMEDA STRAIN fame): CONGO (£1.75). The mind boggles at the scenario - "an explosive melange of suspense, excitement and electronics in the homocidal-hippo, crazed-cannibal, killer primate infested jungles of unexplored Africa..." Wowie - I can't wait. Also to be filmed by 20th Century Fox. Re-issued in King Penguin: Peake's GORMENGHAST (£2.50) D M Thomas's classic THE WHITE HOTEL. Also re-issued are Farmer's NIGHT OF LIGHT (£1.50) and Harry Harrison's MAKE ROOM, MAKE ROOM (£1.50).

FILM AND TV NEWS

In a recent issue of QUESTAR, various SF writers and editors were asked what television programmes they liked. Robert Bloch said he watched British imports, old movies (without Bogart) and chose "Barney Miller" as his favourite. Fritz Leiber preferred "Lou Grant", and naturally also liked the British stuff, including "Flambards" (ugh) and "I, Claudius". Richard Lupoff also chose the latter, plus the "Monty Python" reruns; he praised "Barney Miller" to the heights, admitting that his son had dragged him in initially to watch the series. Elizabeth Lynn said she liked "WKRP" (sensible), while Poul Anderson stated he tried to see all the "National Geographic and Jacques Cousteau specials", and Larry Niven divulged a liking for "Mash" and "Cosmos".

Battletruck is a new film set to be released in Spring 1982. It is an American-New Zealand co-production, with a screenplay by Peter McDougall, based upon the ideas of Harley Cokliss and John Beach. Set "in the not-too-distant future", director Cokliss is reluctant to say much about the film, but artist John Bolton is drawing the promotional material and the story-boards, and shooting will be in New Zealand.

The Academy of SF, Fantasy & Horror Films, based in America, recently announced its nominations for their very own 8th Annual Awards presentation. For Best SF Film were Altered Stars, Battle Beyond the Stars (gorblimey!), TESB, The Final Countdown and Flash Gordon (take that, Joel!). Other categories included Best Fantasy Film, Horror Film, Actor, Low Budget Film and Actress.

Poltergeist is a \$15 million film, directed by Tobe Hooper (who?) with Steven Spielberg as executive producer. Apparently the movie will be scary and humorous; special effects are to be organised by Lucasfilm's Industrial Light & Magic, and the stars include Jobeth Williams (of Kramer Vs Kramer) and Beatrice Straight.

Ray Bradbury's horror novel, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES, is all set to be made into a film. Bradbury himself has written the screenplay, and Walt Disney Productions are handling production, directed by Jack Clayton. Producer is Peter Douglas, Kirk's son. It has a budget of approximately \$10 million, and so far proposed actors are Peter O'Toole and Christopher Lee (likely to play "Mr Dark", the proprietor of a macabre freak show). Talking of Walt Disney, they have another fantasy-ish flick, entitled Dragonslayer. It's a typical fantasy/Sword & Sorcery offering, not my cup of tea but it may be yours. 108 minutes long, starring (as far as I know) newcomers, described by CINEFANTASTIQUE reviewer Dave Bartholomew as being "portentious only at the end".

Small Items: The next Bond movie is planned to be called Octopussy and to debut here in London, June 21st '83...Blade Runner has been filmed, for the Alan Ladd (Outland) Company, with a colossal \$25 million budget. Harrison Ford stars, and Ridley (Alien) Scott directs in this eagerly-awaited adaptation of Phil Dick's DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?....New films on the cards include

The Rats, Bloodsucking Freaks (warning: "This film contains scenes of a gross and disgusting nature and if you're not disgusted, then you should see a shrink!"), Tron (a robot), The Entity and The Thing (a remake of the black and white classic)

BOOK NEWS

Robert Silverberg has turned in his manuscript of the MAJIPOOR CHRONICLES and U.S. publication is expected this month; it is a companion volume to LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE and contains ten stories, seven of which either have or will have appeared in Asimov's, F&SF and Omni. Marrion Zimmer Bradley has finished a 500,000 word epic, MISTRESS OF MAGIC. Isaac Astral is nearing completion of the NEW FOUNDATION novel, expected to be 125,000 words. Dick fans may be interested in a Bibliography (158 pages); limited edition - write for details - from Tim Underwood, 662 25th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94121 (price is \$7.95). Donaldsons' WOUNDED LAND has, reputedly, sold over 600,000 copies in the U.S., although this is nothing compared to Heinlein's average of 1 million copies per book. Despite paperback problems in this country, Ian Watson's collaboration with Michael Bishop UNDER HEAVEN'S BRIDGE, comes out in April in the States. Speaking of which, Chris Priest reckons that this year will see a number of British SF authors facing financial difficulties. The U.S. market is all but closed to our authors (Chris was unable to sell paperback rights to his novel, THE AFFIRMATION, over there, and with shrinking markets here, advances and payments for work are pitifully small. Chris, along with Doris Lessing, was a finalist in a list of twelve with quite an SF flavour, in the Booker-McConnell Prize, with THE AFFIRMATION. Winner was Salman Rushdie's MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN; who has previously written GRIMUS, an SF novel. Salem Press is to produce a five-volume work, SURVEY OF MODERN FANTASY LITERATURE, which should be ready in early 1983. Edited by Keith Neilson, contributors include Tom Shippey and Mike Dickinson, former VECTOR editor. Coming out in Autumn 1982 is a new collection of short stories from J G Ballard, entitled MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE; this is the title story which will appear first in the second edition of INTERZONE.

MAGAZINE NEWS

In "insisting" that the parting is amicable, George Scithers has quit as editor of Astral's SF Magazine; the circulation has recently dropped but there have been "internal" problems. Scithers was accused of catering for fans instead of (would you believe) "General Readers". Ugh! The new editor, Kathleen Maloney, has never edited SF before, but she's "been reading it for years, though not from the fan's point of view." Draw your own conclusions, eh? FANTASY NEWSLETTER has re-appeared in the U.S. with new editor, Robert Collins but prospects for continued publication are not good. Two new magazines, SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS and SCIENCE FICTION BOOKLINE, previously announced in MATRIX, will not now be published because of problems between the editor and the publishers. Plans to resurrect GALAXY are proceeding; proposals for a "slick-paper magazine", half fiction and half non-fiction; Address is Galaxy, Box 1433, Boston MA 02205 USA. AMAZING STORIES will go quarterly this year, March being the last bi-monthly issue. Peter Nicholls, famous Encyclopedia editor, has been appointed dep.ed. of the new weekly OMNI-THE BOOK OF THE FUTURE. Some copies of the hardback of the Encyclopedia were recently on sale for £5, but I forget where - sorry! INTERZONE is progressing well, with material for the first issue now complete and with the printer; Moorcock, Sladec Angela Carter, M J Harrison and Keith Roberts appear in the first issue due out at the end of this month. Josephine Saxton, Rachel Pollack, J G Ballard and Alex Stewart are lined up for future issues. Subscriptions at £5 for four issues (£4 to BSFA members) are available from 28 Duckett Road, London N4. Any dealers, clubs or University Groups who can help with distribution should write to me at 12 Fearnville Terrace, Leeds LS8 3DU for details.

OTHER NEWS

Penguin have launched a new annual Literary Prize, called The Triple Award, for a full-length novel sponsored by The Bodley Head, Penguin and Book Club Associates. There is a guaranteed advance of £5000 and publication by those sponsors in Hard Back, Paperback and Book Club editions. Graham Greene is one of the "advisers". Any category of novel is eligible (including, specifically, science fiction). The 1981 competition closed on 31 December 1981, and the winner will be announced in Autumn 1982. Get writing now for 1982 - details from John Hitchin at Penguin (01-351-2393).

Also seeking manuscripts are CPW Industries, who have written, specifically, to Arthur C Clarke at the BoSFA. They are launching a new "prestige" Short Story Magazine later this year for the International Market. Categories are, once again, open-ended, but specifically include SF and Fantasy. Preferred length is 2500-5000 words. Usual rules for submissions apply; details Dr Dan Bartley, 597 Barkly Street, Footscray West, 3012, Victoria, Australia. You can even telephone (03) 68 3523!

For Space Freaks, The Astronomical Society of the Pacific is offering sets of prints and slides of Saturn Encounter photos taken by Voyager 2; details (enclose International Reply Coupon): Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 1290 - 24th Avenue, San Francisco CA 94122 USA. World SF, the organization of SF Professionals, held its Annual Conference in Rotterdam on August 26-28; our very own Gerald Bishop is Secretary. Sadly, Ken Chapman, the noted book dealer and long-time fan died in October last year of a brain tumour. He was one of the British fans who attended the first SF convention in this country at Leeds in 1937. Apparently choosing to defy Asimov's laws, the first ever human death caused by a Robot was recently reported in the press. The victim was a 37-year-old Japanese Factor Worker who stepped over a safety barrier to work; the robot pinned him against another machine. Blame was apportioned between the individual's carelessness and inadequate safety measures. Presumably the robot was acquitted. The accident provoked an historic quote from Asimov "...as the spiritual father of robots, I say the smarter they get, the less likely they are to make

mistakes..." Have faith, eh? There are ambitious plans for a major TV series in the U.S. based on short works of well-known science fiction authors. Le Guin and Algis Budrys are included and, possibly, Heinlein, Clarke, Varley and Zelazny. Fans of J G Ballard will be interested in "News from the Sun", a newsletter devoted to said author from Dave Pringle, 21 Village Street, Leeds LS24 2PR. Send SAE. Dave should have plenty of time for editing the newsletter since he has joined the list of Leeds Fans with Broken Bones. After the first day of his new job in Brighton, he slipped on the ice (before opening time) and broke his right leg in three places. He has now been ferried back to Leeds and would probably appreciate get-well letters and fanzines to steer him through. Chris and Paul Oldroyd join the increasing list of fans providing the new generation of fandom with an offspring expected towards the end of this year. That makes, in all, three out and two on the way in the last 18 months.

AWARDS

Gene Wolfewon the World Fantasy Award for Best Novel for THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER at the World Fantasy Con in California on November 1, 1981. A gem of a quote from a panel at that convention from Marion Zimmer Bradley "A woman would have too much brains to go on a heroic quest." A surprise guest at the convention (as indeed, he was, at Yorcon II) was Mike Moorcock.

CONVENTION NEWS

MEDIACON 3: March 20, 1982. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. Registration Attending £5.00, Supporting £2.50 Plus 3 9x4 SAEs for Progress Reports. Details Kathy Halsall, Star One, 45 Welby House, Haselville Rd., London N19. Still no details of Guests as yet, but events include Fancy Dress, Marvel Art feature. Proceeds from this con go to Charity.

CHANNELCON: The British Easter Science Fiction Convention, April 9-12, 1982. Venue is the Metropole Hotel, Brighton. Joint Guests of Honour are John Sladek and Angela Carter; Committee Chairperson, Eve Harvey. PR2 available. Have fun on the pier; go see the spot where noted critic David Pringle fell on the ice and broke his leg thrice; re-live the memories of Season 79. All this for only £7.00 (yes, I know it's gone up). See previous MATRIX for details of rates for dolphins and other endangered species. This con is essential for all new fans and some old ones as well. Details Pat Charnock, 4 Fletcher Road, Chiswick, London W4 5AY. Cheques should be made payable to "Channelcon". A Crêche may or may not be available - depends whether you want to Lock Up Your Daughter while you have all the fun.

LEXICON: Not a card game, but a convention to be held from 28-31 May 1982 at the Wigston Stage Hotel, Leicester. GoH, the omnipresent and very nice person, Bob Shaw. Details from Tony Cullen, 43 Station Road, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester LE9 9EL.

COLNECON 82: A one-day event (although overnight stay is probably needed) on 26 June 1982. GoH Gary Kilworth and Hitch Hiker's sounds fiend Tim Souster. Venue is Colchester's Arts Centre. Cheapo hotels available. Attending membership £2.50, write (SAE) to Alex Steward, 11A Beverley Road, Colchester, Essex.

FAIRCON 1982: Glasgow's sixth SF Convention over the weekend of July 23-26, 1982, in the Central Hotel. GoH is Harry Harrison. Usual programming including wargaming room to keep away all those horned D&D freaks. Supporting £3.00, Attending £8.00, increases by £1.00 after Eastercon. Hotel rates are single £17.00 with splash; £15 dry; twin £14.50 and £12.00 per person per night. Details from 1/r 39 Partickhill Road, Glasgow, G11 5B4.

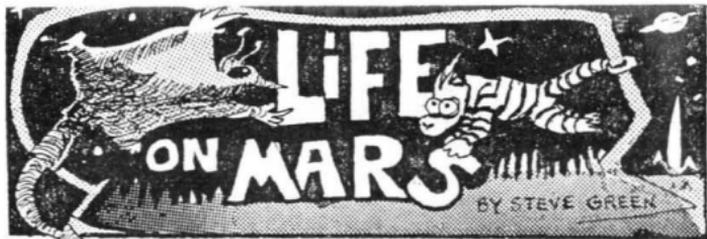
CHICON: Won't you please come to ... as the song goes - This year's World-Con; Sept 2-6 at Hyatt Regency, Chicago Illinois. GoH A Bertram Chandler. AGoH Kelly Freas. FGoH Lee Hoffman. Supporting Membership \$15; Attending is a mere \$50, or if you really want to be frivolous, it's higher at the door. Mingle with thousands of Americans, trying to find someone you might know; cover at the feet of famous authors (if they ever manage to stagger out of the hospitality suite) and thrill to the Hugo Ceremony and masquerade. Seen to be a well-organised bunch and you can get further info (suggest International Reply Coupon) from P.O. Box A3120, Chicago, Illinois 60690 USA.

GALILEOCON: 27/28 & 29 August 1982: Would you believe the 14th "official" British Star Trek Convention at Newcastle Upon Tyne. Brave holding it there on the Silicon weekend, eh? GoH include Theodore Sturgeon and Judy Blish. No further details, but you can write to Ms Tina Pole, 11F Priors Terrace, Tynemouth, North Shields Tyne and Wear NE30 4BE or boost British Telecom's profits by phoning 0632 596850

RACON: "Edinburgh's first Science Fiction Convention". GoH Harry Harrison (again) and FGoH, like-able semi-pro artist Pete Lyon. Looks to have good prospects of being a worthwhile con to attend, especially as it's planned for 4-6 February 1983. Attending membership at £7.00. Details (SAE) from Phil Dawson, 4/7 New John's Place, Edinburgh. Membership has reached around 200, so book now to avoid disappointment, or so Pete Lyon told me last night down the pub.

EASTERCON 1983: Still no news of any Leeds bid but full details available for METROCON with a proposed London venue - organised by a slick outfit of predominantly limpwristed fans with Dave Langford as Boss. Details (or presupporting memberships at £1.00) from Ian Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd., New Malden, Surrey, who will also send you a pretty badge so that you can Come Out in the open and declare your support. Glasgow are the main rivals and I now have details of their bid, courtesy of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Warning

There's an ancient fannish proverb that the less you remember of a party, the better it was; the logical extension of this argument is that the truly memorable parties are those most hazily recalled if at all.

Maybe that explains the sudden wall of silence which fell over the outposts of fandom during the Christmas festivities. That or the blizzards....

Still, even the snowstorms failed to cool the atmosphere at the Bolton Group's second annual yuletide binge; MATRIX mole Henry Broon reports:

"The party was held at the home of the lovely ((sic)) Tom Taylor and for the second year we managed to get ourselves an author along, this time Trevor Hoyle (who may well be attending meetings in the future -- that's if he wasn't put off by Bernard ((Earp)) "singing" the song from Fanthorpe's THE BLACK LION; I thought I'd listed all his faults in CRAZY EDDIE 2, but I'd forgotten he's tone deaf). In an attempt at bridging the gap between the mundane and the fan world we also had the chairman of the Bolton Astronomy Group, but he left fairly early in a state of utter bemusement.

"The snowball fight was great fun, though Tom did think that perhaps the kitchen wasn't the right place to hold it!

"Poor old Lawrence Dean (our membership sec.) had been saying for weeks that he wasn't going to get dragged into doing "The Three Viking Longships" yet again with Bernard, but in D&D terms he failed to save against willpower and was not only talked into that but into acting out "Nelson at Trafalgar" as well (if you're ever at a con room party when Bernard starts to do these...run). "Escape from the Convention" was played in many variations (with four sets together we call it "Escape from the Worldcon") ((you noting this all down, Jim?)) well into the early hours of the morning.

"Highlights: Roland Carpenter demonstration how to lay out an attacker with a rolled-up fanzine (painful if you're the attacker -- I was); Bernard, a strict carnivore, only eating the meat out of the sandwiches while the girl he'd invited, Jillina, a strict vegetaeran, ate the bread; my attempts at doing the Time Warp (frustrated by a low ceiling...ouch).

"If the photos Tom took all come out he'd have a year's supply of blackmail material if only we weren't all so shameless. Still, we managed to at least double last year's attendance; if this goes on we'll have to hire a hotel in a couple of years. One of our members did come up with the idea of a XmasCon and was asking about it at Novacon -- Naveed Khan; the prospect of being chairman of that Welsh thingy ((Cymrucon)) must have gone to his head..."

Nice thought, though; anyone interested can contact Naveed at Traherne Hall, Llwym-y-Grant Road, Penylan, Cardiff, CF3 7UX. Meanwhile, the Bad bunch continue to meet Tuesdays at the Old Three Crowns, Deansgate; details from Bernard at 21 Moorfield Grove, Tonge Moor, Bolton BL2 2LQ.

December 18 saw *origies* parties in both London (organised by the capable Rochelle Dorey for the BSFA) and Birmingham (organised by the equally capable but generally less attractive Brum Group committee); my presence required in Hammersmith, veteran Solihull Grouper Kev Clarke (50% of the attendance of the SSFG's own Christmas meeting on the previous Friday, thanks to the Arctic weather conditions outside the Red House) was sent undercover to seek suitably actionable gossip for this column.

Determinedly proving the aforementioned proverb, his scrambled phoned-in report missed out all the good stuff and instead rambles on about irrelevancies like the buffet ("frozen quiche lorraine"), the group's version of FAMILY FORTUNES with Rog Peyton as surrogate Bob Monkhouse (with a silly-hatted Kev kidnapped and forced to join one of the teams; the losing side, naturally), "pin the tail on the alien" with Dave (I'm Nearly Famous) Hardy unveiling his latest creation ("That was a sign that the party was beginning to fail...") before his memories of a "quite interesting but unassuming" evening sink into an alcohol-induced fog. "I remember less and less of the party and more and more of the barmaid Juliet," he mutters before the pips cut him off; typical.

Meanwhile, yours truly was propping up the bar at the Rutland Hotel, recovering from a cross-country run through the back streets of Hammersmith. Considering the amount of publicity given to the BSFA Christmas get-together in recent issues of MATRIX and the number of London members, the turn-out was pretty sick; even as attendance staggered into double figures, there was no way to pretend this was a suitable "thank you" to those who'd worked so bloody hard to make the damn thing a success.

Thanks to the Rutland's refusal to allow any outside drink to be served with the buffet, the BSFA punch resurfaced 24 hours later on the South Coast, as the outsiders' contribution to the South Hants Science Fiction Group's yuletide romp in Cosham (hic). Dawn found the revellers immersed in an SF charades challenge between the London contingent (Eve and John Harvey, Roy Macinski) and the Rest of the World (myself and various SHSFGers, allowing me the chance to perfect my mime for "Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroids"). Triffic stuff. Regular meetings are still held at the George & Dragon in Cosham High Street, of course; full details from Jeff Suter at 18 Norton Close, Southwick, Fareham, Hants.

Meanwhile....

The Ormskirk, Preston & Lancashire SF Media Society ("films, videos, quizzes and fun, fun, fun!") meets fortnightly at Edge Hill College for fans of various deceased series like STAR TREK, HITCH-

HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY and BLAKE's 7, not to mention deceased fantasy authors like Tolkien and Moorcock; details from Lesley Crowther (14 Lady Openshaw Hall, Edge Hill College, Ormskirk, Lancs) or John Croot (4 Blakewater Hall, Victoria Street, Breston, Lancs).

The Wandering Worlds SF Group ("free beer, coffee, floor and lectures") can be contacted via Ruth Wilder at 16 York Villas, Brighton (Brighton 721622) or at Vortex Books.

Gannetfandom is still alive and well and meeting Tuesdays at the Duke of Wellington, Newcastle (next to the Worswick Street bus station, 8.30 pm+). Writes veteran Ian Williams: "Founded 1970, mainly social but very active in all aspects of fandom, fanzines, conventions, writing for BSFA, etc." Which is more than can be said for the Second City's resident movement.

Speaking of which, the Brum Group's guest on February 19 will be author and co-president Brian Aldiss, with Marion Zimmer Bradley threatened in March or April; usual venue: the Ivy Bush, Hagley Road, Birmingham. Informal meets still held at the Old Royal, central Brimingham, first Tuesday of every month.

No response as yet to the proposed Rugby group; Steve Gooch is still interested in hearing from locals at 4 Pine Grove, Rugby.

The Solihull Group will have changed its venue by the time this sees print, probably to a Sunday evening; details from the usual address if you're interested; the newsletter OVERMATTER has been shelved for the near future.

The Munich Science Fiction Group meets on the first Friday of the month at the home of Gary Klöpfer, Römerstr 6, 8011 Aschheim (089 9034979); full gen from Gary.

The Danish SF Circle, organisers of the yearly Dancon and occasional smaller-scale cons as well as awarding an annual national SF prize, meets Tuesday nights at Absalensgade 48, DK-1652, Copenhagen: the Circle has published the magazine PROXIMA since its creation in 1974.

December brought a welcome bonus to members of the University of Warwick Science Fiction and Fantasy Society: the campus played host to the inspired Welsh production of HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY (stage incarnation), and jolly good fun it was, too.

STOP PRESS: Ex-Keele University fans to hold Unicorn 3, September 10-12, with guests Richard Cowper and (probably) Leroy Kettle. A dazed John Wilkes scribbles: "This has only confirmed my belief in the mass insanity which pervades the Keele SF mob." Book early to avoid disappointment.

Send mail to: 11 Fox Green Crescent, Birmingham B27 7SD, Telephone: 021 705 8215 (office hours).

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WANTED: Three copies each of the recent photo-novels of Crime and Punishment and War and Peace, plus three second-hand editions of The Beginners' Guide to 'The Communist Manifesto'. Write first, before sending, to The Red Army Choirboys, c/o Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire, G72 9NA.

WANTED: Two LPs: Trees--'The Garden of Jane Delawney'; the Fairport crowd--'Rock On'; any reasonable price paid. D Barrett, see letters.

PEN-PAL: Wanted by Bruce E. Tomlin of 195 Owosso Drive, Eugene, Oregon 97406 USA. Bruce is blind and is an avid reader of science fiction and fantasy. He writes and performs Country and Western and Gospel Music and plays lead and rhythm guitar.

OUT Now...
Supernova #3
18 GALLOWDS INN CLOSE, ILKESTON, DERBYS.

Letters & Articles by Steve Green, Harry Amruschak, Chuck Connor, Simon Baeck, Martyn Taylor, etc. Art by Alan Hunter...
Interview with D. Langford...
24 AS PAGES; THE USUAL j14p

CONVENTIONS CONTINUED:

Joy Hibbert, whom I first met at Breakfast at Novacon in 1978. What's that got to do with the Glasgow bid, you might well ask - well the proposed room rates for Albacon are: Single £20 with bathroom and £17 going dirty; Twins are £17.50 and £15.00 and, here's the connection, they include Breakfast, VAT and Service. That Breakfast at Novacon in 1978 was the only one I've ever managed to get up for. Albacon says that they will publish two bid sheets (which is two more than the number of Progress Reports I received for Albacon) but, no sour grapes, their bid details look competent. Further info and all presupports from the Faircon address.

CONSTELLATION: 1983 World Con, otherwise known as Baltimore '83 who won the bid from the Aussies. Good to see that GoH is our very own John Brunner of CND fame. September 1-5 at Baltimore, USA. Supporting Membership \$20 at the moment. Info from Worldcon 41, Box 1046, Baltimore MD 21203 USA.

THE RETURN OF THE CAPTIVE

...AND OUR FINAL CONTENDER FOR THE CONVENTION "MASTERMIND '82" TITLE IS NUMBER 1465.



I AM NOT A NUMBER, I AM A FREE MAN!

SCORED 23 POINTS WITH HIS SPECIALIST SUBJECT ESCAPING FROM THE CONVENTION... NEEDS ONLY SEVEN POINTS TO WIN THE TITLE! START THE CLOCK... WHO WERE THE BEST OF ROBERT HEINLEIN?



23

UMM... JOHN WAREY?

CORRECT! HOW MANY STORES IN "TWO TALES AND EIGHT TOMORROWS"?



24

TWELVE!

CORRECT! WHAT DOES THE ACRONYM "FRANCO" STAND FOR?

'FREEDOM IS A WORN-OUT LIFE-JACKET...'



25

CORRECT! WHO WAS THE PILOT OF THUNDERBIRD ONE?

OOH... EMM... WASN'T IT MARTIN LANDAU?



26

CORRECT! WHAT IS GORDON DICKSON'S MIDDLE INITIAL?

ERR...



27

CORRECT! HOW MANY QUESTIONS HAVE I ASKED SO FAR?

FIVE! NO... SIX!



28

CORRECT! WHY... MEETMEEMER?

I'VE STARTED SO I'LL FINISH! YOUR FINAL QUESTION, TO BECOME 'MASTERMIND', IS...



29

WHY DID YOU RESIGN FROM THE BSSFA, 1965?

PASS!



Fare's Fair

Despite the recent Law Lords' decision, you'll be gratified to know that the BSFA subscription rate isn't going up next month. After much hurried consultation with our Solicitors, we have come to the bold conclusion that continued membership of the BSFA at the current rate of £6 per annum is not illegal! So, whilst (regrettably) the citizens of Birmingham and London must contend with increased transport costs, the whole nation can rest secure that the BSFA remains an economically viable organisation.

Now, please don't get me wrong. I certainly don't intend to belittle the magnitude of the strife that the outlawing of rate subsidised fares will cause. If I may be allowed to intrude a rare personal opinion, I know that the widespread effect is going to be much more calamitous than would have been a few extra pounds on the rates, as many people will see. No, my main reason for pointing out the fact that we still only charge £6 per annum for BSFA membership is that this has now been the fee since September 1979. And, with this mailing we see the return of FOCUS, not merely as a substitute for VECTOR, but as an addition. I can't help feeling just a little proud that we've managed to improve the service provided without increasing costs. And this will continue to be our aim so long as is practicable. The BSFA really is becoming strong and vital.

Spreading our Wings

As I've mentioned several times in the past, the BSFA is going to be involved in putting together a bid to hold the 1984 Eurocon in England. After much 'behind-the-scenes' action (to coin a phrase), a steering committee has now been formed, a hotel selected and a Promotional Flyer produced. This flyer has been included with this mailing because it is of importance to all BSFA members: this flyer shows just the sort of thing that the BSFA should be doing, and is now beginning to do. Gone, I hope, are the days when we just existed from hand-to-mouth producing the two main magazines (VECTOR and MATRIX) on a roughly bi-monthly schedule. That is still the basic necessity, but now we have extra projects with which to concern ourselves as a further demonstration of what the BSFA should be doing. INTERZONE is another example, and I can assure you, we've got at least one potentially exciting project up our sleeves for later on in 1982.

Eurocon UK 84! deserves your support, and if there are any ways in which you, the members, feel you can assist, DO let me know. When I first suggested the idea of a British Eurocon in early 1980, 1984 seemed a long way off. Not so any more, so watch these columns for the latest information.

All the News That Fits

OK, so ROLLING STONE grabbed the title first, but these days, this column tends to be more of a News compendium, rather than a few words from the venerable BoSFA Chairman to let you all know that I still exist. That's the way it should be. My actual job, i.e., the work involved, is difficult to describe. I don't have to produce magazines, look after memberships, write editorials, do reviews, write adverts or handle cash. So what do I do? Well, my chief task is to find out what's going on around the BSFA, see how it affects us and then utilise it to our best benefit. Then I have to ensure that all the committee and officers are doing their tasks (and, thankfully, the present group of people are superb!), that the magazines are produced, that the mailings go out, that AGMs and Committee Meetings are held, that general enquiries are answered, that decisions are made and so on. It can be quite tedious, it's usually busy, but it's always been highly enjoyable. Now, if I got paid..

INTERZONE

INTERZONE will be appearing in early March, printers, GPO, BR and any other strike willing. Those members of the BSFA who have taken up subscriptions (over 300 of you!) will be sent the Spring Issue direct, and the Summer Issue will go out with the nearest mailing, unless the time-gap is too large. Generally, of the four issues a year, two will go out with the BSFA mailing and the other two will go out directly. For those members who haven't yet taken out subscriptions, they are still available at the specially reduced BSFA rate of £4 for four issues. Cheques, money, etc., should be sent to: INTERZONE, 28 Duckett Road, London, N4.

Do please tell everybody about INTERZONE, since the BSFA will have advertising in each issue, and every extra member we get helps us to maintain the £6 fee. Sandy Brown tells me that in 1981, we had slightly fewer new members than in the previous year, so we've got to increase our recruitment rate. Three of ARROW's latest paperbacks have full page BSFA adverts, including Gene Wolfe's best-selling SHADOW OF THE TORTURER. Now, obviously, this won't double our size overnight, but it will provide a steady influx of members. And just recently, in London, TIME OUT published an article by Roz Kaveney on Science Fiction fandom in which the BSFA got several mentions, and its main magazines were discussed. Unfortunately, no contact address was included, but I soon rectified that by writing to TIME OUT, and had nearly all my letter published. Oh, gosh, such is the price of fame!

The Magazines

As you know, this mailing sees the last issue of VECTOR edited by Kev Smith. We are still waiting for applicants to take over this important position. Fear not about future issues; these will be produced, even if I have to do it myself! Now, if you feel you can edit VECTOR and can work in conjunction with the current Features Editor (Paul Kincaid) and Reviews Editor (Joseph Nicholas), do please let me know NOW.

The Bob Shaw Bibliography, very ably produced by Geoff Rippington and Paul Kincaid has been out for a few months and is still available from Geoff. Their next booklet in the series features

Keith Roberts, and is currently under preparation. If the standards of the first are anything to go by, it will be an essential addition to your collection.

HAMMERSMITH MEETINGS

Despite the poor weather towards the end of last year, the BSFA Christmas Party went off rather well. Plenty of good food was available (largely through the auspices of Rochelle Dorey and Eve Harvey), music was heard and a reasonably good time was had. However, due to differences we have had with the Rutland Hotel (i.e., they are going up-market, do just about everything to upset our meetings and are generally uncooperative, to put it mildly), these meetings will be moved. Everybody knows where the One Tun is, right? Well, there's a pub nearby called the Ace of Hearts, and this will be the future venue effective from the February meeting. Not only is it more central than Hammersmith, it is also easier to find! Full details are provided on an info sheet in this mailing, so seek them out and inwardly digest. There are one or two things planned for the future, and what with the weather getting better (i.e., it's usually above freezing now), you've absolutely no excuse for not turning up, have you?

The Boring Bits

Those of you wondering whether that is a conclusion or an introduction to the next piece, leave the room now. As I mentioned in the last mailing, we no longer have a Business Manager. The role of the BM is chiefly to obtain advertising for our magazines, and place ads for the BSFA. This involves liaison with Publishers, Convention Committees and other local SF groups. Applications for this post would be very welcome, and because we are so near to the AGM, we might as well say that it is a post that has to be renewed at that time. Nominations, volunteers, etc., to me ASAP.

Mention of the AGM, brings me to a further exciting announcement. The 1982 AGM will be held at: The Metropole Hotel, BRIGHTON, at Channelcon on Friday, April 9th. Full details, including those members of the Council who come up for re-election, are included on a separate notice in this mailing. However, might I now please emphasise the fact that any items for inclusion on the agenda should be sent to me within the next few weeks. Obviously, there will be room at the AGM for Any Other Business, but the more notice we are given, the more opportunity for all concerned to prepare themselves, etc. It's your annual opportunity to make your feelings and thoughts known. Communicate

Mailing Slaves

Spoken in the terminology of Mailing Supremo, Keith Freeman, I hasten to add... Numbers have been fluctuating just a little bit on this front, so if you would like to help out at such sessions (usually held over the first weekend of the even numbered months) do please let Keith know in advance, just in case there are any late changes. Most of the committee regularly turn up, so come along and learn what they really think about the content of the mailings. Keith can be reached at: 269 Wykeham Road, Reading, Berks RG6 1PL. The actual sessions are held at Reading University, and usually start at about 11 am on the Saturday. It's hard work, but illuminating!

The mailing dates for the rest of 1982 (receipt of mailings should be about four or five days afterwards) are as follows (Provisionally): April 9th and 10th; June 4th and 5th; August 6th and 7th; October 8th and 9th; December 3rd and 4th.

And Finally Cyril.....

I've left this bit to the end simply to ensure that it becomes indelibly ingrained on your collective minds: I HAVE NOW CHANGED MY ADDRESS to: Alan Dorey, 12 Fearnville Terrace, Oakwood, LEEDS LS8 3DU.

This is also good for Rochelle, who will be producing our first child in mid-May. I tell you this so that you may excuse future columns from being broken up by the strains of an infant wailing. See you all next time!

REVIEWS

'FRAME OF DEFERENCE' BY ROD BEACHAM RADIO 4

REVIEWED BY JAMES PARKER

Rod Beacham is a name unknown to me, but if this radio play is typical of his work in the SF/Fantasy genre, then I fancy we shall be hearing a lot more of the talented Mr Beacham. On the surface his play is light, almost whimsical in mood, until, that is, the author chooses to shade in his quite serious theme. Basically the story centres around the all-American (to-win-is-all) protagonist Billy Service who finds himself, after the failure of the latest space-probe, a visitor on the planet Nede.

An odd kind of world, Nede does not exploit it's technology in any obvious kind of way; they - the Nedeans - have rejected the automobile because they had foreseen the carnage such an invention would cause; on the other hand they have developed an extremely sophisticated food-science based on pre-conditioning of the taste buds, so that the tasteless pulp they eat can taste like anything they want it to! Neat, yes?

The major highlight of life on Nede is the Great Quest wherein all the males aged between eighteen and twenty-eight take part in a grim excursion through stony wasteland, dense jungle, etc.,

finally to climb a mountain at the top of which is a cave reputed to be the home of a semi-legendary beast. The goal of the Quest is to bring back the droppings of this creature to be used as a beauty aid by Nede's women! The Quest symbolises the prevailing philosophy of Nedean life: to succeed is all, regardless of the value of the goal in question. There is, naturally, a non-believer. His name is Sebros, and he is rejected by Nedean society. He looks to Billy Service as an 'outsider' who may be able to give moral support to his renegade ideals. But Billy, born and conditioned by his parents and society to be 'an achiever', is soon drawn into the rituals of his new adopted home; there are also the charms of Libida, who is the mistress of Macho, the current champion of the Quest, to be taken into account. Billy soon succumbs - and enters the Quest himself. At the last moment, to everyone's amazement, Sebros-the-dissident also enters the deadly race. At the mountain-top, Sebros perishes when Billy, who is winning the race, ignores his cries for help. Billy returns triumphant with his foul 'gift'. Billy, in effect, has betrayed his humanity for a heap of dung.

The play finishes with an artifact being found back on Earth that celebrates Billy Service's great adventure. It is, of course, quite meaningless with its enigmatic references to the Great Quest, etc. A fulsome American commentator, full of windy rhetoric, pays tribute to Billy Service and his heroic style - with us, the listeners, knowing the whole story and immediately aware of the terrible irony involved. The parallel between the Nedean Quest and our futile probes into space with its tremendous risk to life and limb is beautifully underscored in Beacham's lightweight but finally quite deeply penetrating style.

A welcome antidote to the glossy deceits of 'Star-Trek' etc. Catch the repeat!

ANY COLOUR AS LONG AS ITS BLACK: 'KINVIG' AND 'ASTRONAUTS' BY MARTYN TAYLOR

A glance at the box in the corner on any day of the week shows television comedy to be a tricky business. Many, so it seems, hear the call but very, very few are chosen. The area of unbroken earth shrinks with every passing hour and the search for novel themes grows more and more frenetic. 1981 has seen the comedy machine turn to scuffy twice for new sit-coms - 'Kinvig' and 'Astronauts'. The antecedents of both shows are impressive. Nigel Kneale was responsible for possibly THE British television/film SF creation, Professor Quatermass. Graeme Garden and Bill Oddie were involved in a number of highly successful radio and television shows prior to 'The Goodies', while 'Astronauts' producers Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais have a track record stretching from the film of 'The Virgin Soldiers' to 'The Likely Lady' and beyond. Both series reeked of professionalism, yet it was that very professional competence that almost ensured their failure. That failure was relative - neither was unfunny - but both shows signally failed to fulfill their promise.

Why?

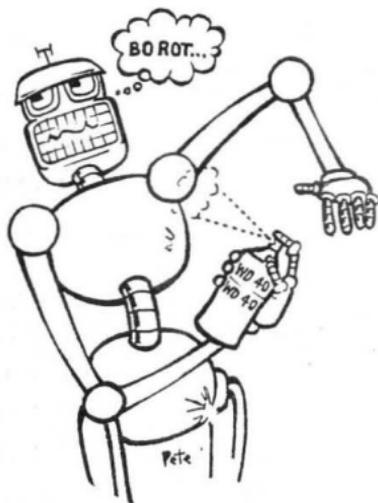
Both shows fell squarely into the formula for television comedy, tried and tested, but the fact that they were deliberate attempts to give extant vehicles a bright new respray intrinsically limited their scope for success. Being unambitious, they had no heights to reach.

'Kinvig' took essentially the 'Steptoe' milieu, brought it up to date (fractionally) and peopled it with cardboard cutouts played with panache by excellent actors. The spattering of sci-fi sparklers really did nothing to stir the mixture, but reinforced the conventional image of sci-fi fans as weird, really weird. Of course it was funny in places. There were one liners and sight gags to raise a laugh, as well as Prunella Gee to raise a few ... blood pressures ... but the novel comic potential of the situation was ignored. Alien contact CAN be funny. Hitchhiker proved that

beyond all question, but the very nature of the proposition requires a suspension of the conventional forms. The script and the production must step outside the familiar and explore different avenues.

'Kinvig' did not even think of doing that, and the suggestions that it might all have been nothing more than a wish fulfillment fantasy of a contemporary urban inadequate only served to accentuate the essential poverty of the conception and its realisation.

Even more familiar ground was occupied by 'Astronauts', which was essentially 'The Goodies' in space, without the Goodies. Their brand of not-quite-grown-up, nursery-sniggering, romanticism pervaded everything. The temper of the production was made apparent right at the beginning with the ship and earth control respectively named 'Piglet' and 'Pooh' (are you listening, NASA?). As ever the complexities of bodily functions featured prominently in most jokes, made all the more 'titillating' by the Tim Brooke Taylor part being played by a REAL woman. The locale might have been space but the world remained one of the Beano and puppy love, Cambridge gulf at social advantage, and the reassurance of the close-knit group against the amorphous, anonymous, unseen THEM. The whole package was, of course, wrapped up in the gaudy paper of a barrage of one liners and situationalist jokes, but the cold shadow of The Goodies lay over everything. Barrie Rutter was Bill Oddie in all but name, although lacking that edge of Oddie mania. Carmen du Soutoy got no chance to demonstrate any of the comedienne's skills she shows onstage with



the R.S.C., let alone her real dramatic abilities. The sentimentality that often came close to overwhelming The Goodies had none of the leavening of insane potential that Garden, Taylor and Oddie so adroitly exploited.

Neither show was bad, in itself. Both raised a smile, a laugh even. 'Astronauts' was more to my taste than 'Kinvig' - despite the presence of Tony Heygarth, one of our very best comedy actors (I found myself itching to switch channels to watch him in 'Fosie'). Neither show offended, but neither had any ambition or adventure. The very best comedy always has a cutting edge, a willingness to take risks, a dangerous tendency to hold an unflattering mirror up to nature. It is this that makes us able to continue returning to Feste and Candide and Chaplin's little tramp and go on laughing years after the topicality has gone. 'Kinvig' and 'Astronauts' were disposable comedies - inoffensive, competent, as reassuring as a cup of instant coffee and just as far away from the real thing - and will have been instantly disposed after use.

REVIEW OF "THE CHOSEN", WRITTEN BY GERRY KNIGHT, DIRECTED BY JEREMY MORTIMER
BBC RADIO 4, 19TH DECEMBER 1981 (REPEATED 22ND DECEMBER) BY P. NICHOLS

In the year 2412, the world is about to be overcome by a "mass neurosis", leading to unprecedented street rioting. The government, we are vaguely shown, is running something just short of a totalitarian police state. Similar circumstances exist throughout Europe, and, presumably, the rest of the world. The Vault Computer, monitored by one Dr Zacarias, issues for the first time a statement labeled "Status: Directive". It decrees that the only way of warding off the encroaching unrest is to have an "awakening". The computer selects the name of "The Chosen" - the lucky corpse who is to be thawed out after a years-long deep-freeze. Much to the astonishment of the Minister for Preservation (who wanted an important statesman revived), "The Chosen" turns out to be Susan Sheldon, a hypermarket checkout girl killed and frozen in 1986. Rather than allow the Minister to overrule the computer's decision, Zacarias reveals that the Vault Computer is the only computer in the world that can explain its own decisions, and he advises the Minister to question it on its selection.

Like many a BBC "Thirty Minute Theatre", there is little evidence of any characterisation in this production. The dialogue is used to convey not character, but information, in true pulp style, as Dr Zacarias lectures the Minister on the process of suspended animation, and on the workings of the Vault Computer.

And if that isn't bad enough, in the middle of the play we get, "And now we interrupt this programme to bring you a newflash...", and we are subjected to a lecture on the history of suspended animation as told by the customary expert to the clichéd reporter. As well as being a weak and tired dramatic device, it is a waste of time since it contains nothing of any necessity to the understanding of the plot that even the most dim-witted listener cannot have guessed at.

The acting is also typical of this sort of play; the actors not only make it glaringly obvious that they are reading their lines, but the two leading players speak as if they were part of some comic sketch, but with a humourless script their half-hearted efforts are wasted.

The portrayed 25th century is annoyingly vague. We are given a brief glimpse of the House of Commons (or its equivalent), where there seems to have been little progress in the preceding 430 years (even the HearHears are still predominantly male), and the same can be said of the Ministry for Preservation. The society is, in fact, identical to that of the present day, except for the presence of more and bigger computers. Even the betting-shops are run by computers which talk in the obligatory beeps, squeaks and electronicised human voices.

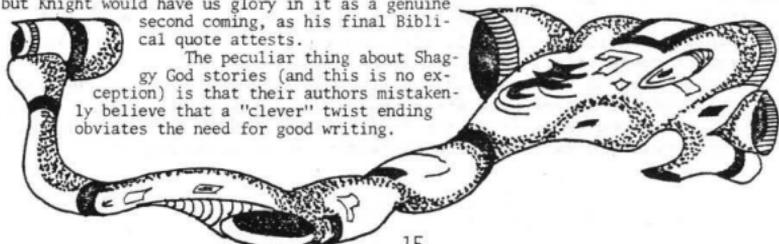
If you're still wondering why Susan Sheldon is "The Chosen", well, keep reading and all will be revealed (though I think you should have guessed by now, remembering that this play went out shortly before Christmas). The reason for the computer choosing her is also a part explanation for the lack of characterisation (though it is no excuse).

You see, the play is nothing more than an extended joke, a good old Shaggy God story, and like most bad jokes, the plot is all that matters to the joke's teller.

Toward the end of the story, the Vault Computer gives its explanation: when killed in 1986, Susan was - wait for it - two months pregnant, and seven months after her awakening there will be - wait for it again - "certain astronomical phenomena last witnessed 2412 years ago". The computer continues, advising that the birth take place "in humble surroundings, possibly some form of agricultural outbuilding", etc.....

Knigh seems to be hinting rather heavy-handedly that we (or at least his 25th century society) need a new Christ to solve our problems - not by any active involvement in government, you understand, but just by being there for us to adore. Whether He could solve our problems or not is a debatable point and an interesting question (after all, in the short term, and from a government's point of view, He seemed to cause more unrest than He cured, first time around), but either way, this is not a question Knight has asked; indeed, he has asked no questions. And this is where he has blundered: his "Chosen" will not give birth to a real Christ, but a false idol, one coolly created by a corrupt government to control a rebellious populace, and surely should be condemned as such - but Knight would have us glory in it as a genuine second coming, as his final Biblical quote attests.

The peculiar thing about Shaggy God stories (and this is no exception) is that their authors mistakenly believe that a "clever" twist ending obviates the need for good writing.



:: COMPETITION :: COMPETITION :: COMPETITION ::

Competition M37: 'The Cosmic Quiz'

Dave Langford reports, at last

Here we are at last: normal service is resumed after the vicissitudes of fire, flood, America, car accidents and rival competitions. All these upheavals seemed to distract the great competition-answering audience out there, but a detectable turnout was achieved. No points at all to Roz Kaveney and Malcolm Edwards, who told me how well they were doing but failed actually to provide a written entry. Here are the actual entrants, in ascending order of score: MICHAEL ASHLEY (who wisely called his a 'token effort'), HELEN McNABB, ALLAN LLOYD, MARY GENTLE, MARK HEWLETT, SANDY BROWN and (fanfares, alarums, hautboys, sound of BSFA Chairman's head banging against a wall) KEITH MARSLAND. The sumptuous book token is Keith's, and here is a quick summary of the quiz answers before we proceed to Competition M40...

The Answers (some may not make sense without The Questions)

- 1) Attel Malagate aka Malagate the Woe (STAR KING/Vance); [b] Frodo (LORD OF THE RINGS/Tolkien) and also Yevaud ('The Rule of Names'/Le Guin); [c] E.C.Tubb and also (we understand) John Brunner; [d] The Mule (FOUNDATION AND EMPIRE/Asimov).
- 2) [a] Vol Nonik (CITY OF A THOUSAND SUNS/Delany); [b] Roderick Usher ('The Fall of the House of Usher'/Poe); [c] Madrak (CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS/Zelazny); [d] Auberon Quin (THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL/Chesterton—cf VECTOR 100).
- 3) [a] DEMON; [b] LIGHTNING ROD; [c] THE CITADEL OF THE AUTARCH. (I awarded a half-point for those who gave the incorrect CITADEL OF THE OTTER as printed in MATRIX—this wasn't your excellent editors' fault, the mistake having been originated by the infallible sf newsletter LOCUS.)
- 4) [a] GOD BLESS YOU, MR ROSEWATER (Vonnegut); [b] JEM (Pohl); [c] THE PHOENIX AND THE MIRROR (Avram Davidson); [d] THE PUPPIES OF TERRA (Disch).
- 5) [a] Beechwood (THE GREY KING/Susan Cooper); [b] The Moon (THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH/Lewis); [c] Cold (THE LAST DAYS OF THE EDGE OF THE WORLD/Stableford); [d] An unresolved question (THE CIRCUS OF DR LAO/Charles G Finney).
- 6) [a] order of lines is reversed; [b] not authentic but parodies/pastiches written by the author; [c] chapter titles make up a connected piece of verse.
- 7) [a] Jack London; [b] Compton Mackenzie; [c] Carter Dickson (John Dickson Carr); [d] G.K.Chesterton (cf VECTOR 101); [e] Gerald Kersh; [f] Max Beerbohm parodying H.G.Wells.
- 8) [a] WHERE LATE THE SWEET BIRDS SANG (Wilhelm); [b] THE WANDERER (Leiber); [c] THE EMBEDDING (Watson).
- 9) [a] 'Good News from the Vatican' (Silverberg); [b] 'Palely Loitering' (Priest); [c] 'Aye, and Gomorrah' (Delany).
- 10) [a] both married Americans; [b] both shaved off their beards; [c] both—Watson and Langford—were guests of honour at Yorcon II, Eastercon 1981.

So much for the 'really difficult intellectual stuff'...

Competition M40: set by (ominous pause) Dave Langford! (Groans, boos, hisses.)

Inspired by dynamic Cherry Wilder, who sent a suggestion for a further competition, I now ask you to enter for the Competition of Competitions. Merely send in not less than one idea, and not more than three, for a possible future MATRIX competition. This doesn't mean that I want vast lists of anagrams for unravelling, or lists of questions for future quizzes—let's have original ideas for creative competitions. Something like 'Why not a competition for the most appallingly misleading imaginary blurb for some well-known sf book?' would stand a fair chance if this idea hadn't already been used in a recent competition (M36). As usual, filthy and loathsome suggestions will be read with enormous relish but are likely not to score well, or at all. The best submission will not only receive the usual magnificent though modestly appointed book token, but will also be used by lazy sod Langford as the basis of a subsequent competition.

Rush your entries to the usual address: 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW. The deadline is one week after the MATRIX 41 deadline given on the inside front cover. While you're at it, don't forget to send in a TAFF vote for Rog Peyton or Kev Smith should you have been around fandom since before May 1980! {ΔPA}

***** AN OPEN LETTER TO CHUCK CONNOR *****

BY IAN WATSON

In MATRIX 39 my eye was caught by a letter from Chuck Connor, referring in sardonic tones to the subject of the Creative Writing Fellowship sponsored by the Arts Council at NELP.

Shame on you, Chuck! Can you only think of stirring up trouble, when you ought to have been rejoicing to read the news in the previous MATRIX: "FOUNDATION SAVED!" ("...Fellow in Creative Writing...has been told that his post will be renewed...amount of support for his continuance and the complaints to the Polytechnic have proved successful...sincerest thanks for everyone who felt the need to write to the Poly following my appeal in the last issue...") You aren't surely suggesting, Chuck, that the readers of MATRIX have been taken for a ride?

"FOUNDATION SAVED," eh? Whoopee. Well, "What I tell you three times is true," wrote Lewis Car roll; so, on this principle, I think we should totally forget about the fact that the Science Fiction Foundation was almost totally destroyed by the appointment of the present (and future) incumbent.

Ooops. What's this? How so?

Ah well, this was merely because the SFF nearly went down the drain forever as a functioning entity -- along with the journal FOUNDATION (which would have been a pity, speaking -- myself -- as the longest serving member of the editorial trio) -- due to the threatened resignation en masse on November 15th 1980 of writer-members of the SFF Council in protest at the appointment. Oh, and a former Administrator was contemplating legal action against NELP. And there was a call for the appointment to be cancelled and re-advertised; and talk of spilling the beans to THE GUARDIAN or PRIVATE EYE, who adore Arts Council public money scandals. And so on.

But the SFF was saved. Because the majority of NELP-members of Council finally agreed to minute formally that "The Science Fiction Foundation deploras the way in which the appointment of the Creative Writing Fellowship was made," and Charles Barren volunteered in a most saintly way to come out of retirement to donate his services free once a week as Acting Administrator. Yes, Charles's generous offer probably saved the SFF -- plus the resolution condemning the appointment. (Just as well that it was a formal resolution written into the Minutes, by the way -- since, by gosh, the Minutes were laundered by NELP of any other hint of the massive dissent which nearly put paid to the SFF. However, more protests at a subsequent meeting revealed that a much fuller version of the Minutes did indeed exist as well... Perhaps the NELP-members of the SFF didn't want the Director of NELP -- to whom readers of MATRIX 37 were exhorted to direct their letters -- to scan the actual Minutes and discover that the SFF nearly went down the drain because of the appointment?)

But, ah, what's all this? MATRIX readers being exhorted to write to the Director of NELP supporting the appointment -- when the SFF nearly collapsed because of the SF-members of the Council protesting angrily at the same event?

Why on Earth would they do that?

Oh yes. Chuck mentions that the published advertisement for the post was worded for an "established writer" in the field of SF, and the job specification sheet reiterated that "the successful candidate will be an established writer in the field of Science Fiction." Well, there are different ways of defining the words "established" and "writer," as the Dean of Faculty at NELP was at pains to point out. (And I'm sure it's wholly coincidental that her initials are 'J.R.')

I must insist, having learnt this lesson from her, that Chuck shouldn't be too literal-minded about all this. "Established" doesn't mean that you've had a word of SF actually published, so long as you're writing promising stuff -- and apparently Brian Aldiss agrees that it's good stuff, even though numerous publishers have stubbornly given it the thumbs down. The Recession, no doubt! Or pig-headedness. What you really need is something like a new, innovative, crusading magazine to publish such stuff...something like INTERZONE, say. (After all, if the tax payer supports the writing, surely Convention members can pay the printer, without grumbling. But let's not open that can of worms here.) And good heavens, I yearn to be able to read such stuff -- I'm sure we all do -- and I deeply resent Gollancz Faber, Virgin Books, and all the trashy American magazines and anthologies such as F & SF or UNIVERS; or whatever for keeping it from us, thus far at least. But there's the sick commercial world for you. Actually, being published at all is a kind of indictment of the quality of one's work, don't you think?

And "Writer in the field of SF" doesn't really mean a writer of SF. It can mean a critic -- and presumably it could mean a fanzine contributor, for all I know. (Had the readers of MATRIX realised this at the time, NELP might have received many more applications for the Fellowship than they actually did receive! But, alas, people were put off by the wording. Do not be put off thus; an astute critic knows that words do not mean what they say.) The successful candidate managed to

'Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert
land enchanted--
On this home by horror haunted--tell me truly,
Is there -- is there balm in Gilead?--tell me --
tell me, I implore!'

Quoth the Raven.

'Nevermore.'



read between the lines -- though goodness knows what or who alerted him. Why, ex-SFF research assistant David Pringle only heard a few days before the interviews that the present incumbent had been invited to attend.

I also feel deep sympathy for Brian Aldiss, even though he may be at the extreme end of the political spectrum from myself, having his name taken in vain in all this, merely because he encouraged and supported an enthusiastic appreciator of his own work to research a doctoral thesis at Oxford on NEW WORLDS authors such as himself; and because he interviewed him for the appointment as

MIRROR MIRROR
ON THE WALL,
WHO IS THE
MOST NEEDY
UNEMPLOYED
LEFT WING
SF WRITER
OF THEM
ALL?



OH SHIT
-- ARTHUR C CLARKE?
-- H.G. WELLS?
THIS IS ANOTHER ONE
OF THOSE DAMNFOL
TRICK QUESTIONS

Arts Council nominee at NELP, the only SF writer advising thereon. (NELP had neglected to appoint an SF-writer adviser from the SFF itself.) Brian Aldiss did scrupulously declare his personal interest in the candidate, and repeatedly told NELP on behalf of the Arts Council that the successful applicant mustn't do any SFF administrative work -- something with which the SFF Council heartily concurred. So this must all be rather tiresome to him.

Oh, and it also irked some people that Arts Council money (or rather, people's tax money) wasn't being used to enable practising full-time writers who were on the dole, or up to their eyes in debt or moonlighting as farm labourers, to survive and continue to practice their art, but was given to someone already in employment. But good grief -- after a mere day or two's delay, during which the successful candidate apparently approached his employers to see whether they would let him hold down both jobs, or hike his salary in view of the NELP offer, or whatever -- he boldly sacrificed his other job for an insecure one-year-stand at NELP sharing his professional expertise with others. We should rejoice, Chuck, that this sacrifice has been rewarded by an extension of tenure, should we not?

What we need to do now is rally round. The way I see it, it's rather like investing public money in a potential world-beater, like Concorde. So far, going on for £9000 in public money has been ploughed into this venture...and soon, a work of fiction may appear in actual print -- heroic fantasy, anything, I don't care. (Gives the 3 million plus people in the dole queue something to look forward to.) And I was sorry to read in the last ANSIBLE an apparent quashing of the rumour that a short story might actually appear in INTERZONE, the "quarterly of sci-fi...first such in this country," started by the Fellow -- according to THE SUNDAY TIMES, who also printed leaked information about the dire state of the SFF, hit by spending cut-backs, which one hopes were instrumental in persuading NELP's financiers to cough up their widow's mite to scoop the second batch of Arts Council gold.

Chuck, try to visualize the SFF business as akin to the present state of the Labour Party. We don't need Peter Tatchells or Tony Benns who rabbit on boringly about what conferences actually decided, or what the facts were, or what words actually mean, or what the truth is. What we want is success.

And Dr Goebbels to report on it.

£ £ £ £ £ AT A LOSS TO UNDERSTAND - CONVENTION FINANCING £ £ £ £ £

EXAMINED BY D WEST

The nature of recent comments on the use made of the surplus from Yorcon II suggests that it might be as well to clear the air generally on the subject of convention finances.

In the first place, it should be recognised that convention organisers have no obligation whatsoever to give a public account of the way in which they have spent convention money. Provided the organisers give the attendees more or less what was promised (or what can reasonably be expected) then what happens to any surplus is nobody's business. If the organisers of an Eastercon decide to divide up any profits among themselves, they may be liable for various taxes but there is otherwise nothing to stop them doing what they want. It may be desirable for conventions to publish accounts (both as a general reference aid for future organisers and a measure of the ability of people who continue to be involved in running conventions) but every Eastercon is in fact a self-contained and independent event, and such accountability is purely voluntary.

Secondly, any reasonably well-run convention will inevitably produce a surplus -- probably of several hundred pounds, given the rise in attendance figures of the last few years. The surplus is inevitably because it represents a safety margin. Virtually the whole of a convention's budget has to be decided upon at a time when the final income can only be guessed at. Many people register in the last few weeks and a substantial (but very variable) number may only register at the convention itself. By the time the programme book goes to the printers (three or four weeks before Easter) 90% of the income is irrevocably committed -- 90% of the estimated income, that is. In addition, there will be expenses incurred immediately before and at the convention itself, unforeseen costs and damages, bad debts. (Some dealers and advertisers have in the past been very slow to pay up -- one reason why convention accounts are sometimes not finalised till nearly a year later.) All of this means that any idea of matching income and expenditure precisely is extremely foolhardy. Albacon

(1980) declared a surplus of £192. Since registration at the door cost £8 this means that if only 25 fewer people had turned up on the day the convention would have finished in the red. In the circumstances, the fact that this particular convention broke even at all owes less to good financial planning than sheer dumb luck. (In case anyone thinks I am conducting a vendetta against the Albacoon organisers I should point out that a couple of years ago I criticised the 1978 Skycon for exactly the same thing.) No less than seven self-congratulatory notes to the (somewhat unorthodox) Albacoon 'accounts' indicate that many expenses which should have been borne by convention funds were actually paid for by committee members. The parade of self-sacrifice is presumably intended to distract attention from the folly of such items as the £600 hotel bill for two Guests of Honour, the £800 for a skimpy programme book, and the £1000 or so paid out to the hotel. (An Eastercon is worth about £25,000 in business to a hotel. Not surprisingly, some conventions manage to pay nothing for function rooms and services. Anybody who asks to pay £1000 is not negotiating very effectively or has picked the wrong site.) It seems quite likely that Albacoon committee members paid their own expenses in the uncomfortable knowledge that otherwise they would suffer the humiliation of showing a loss on the convention. Bearing this in mind, their £192 surplus is very definitely a profit on paper only. With a little less luck Albacoon could quite easily have gone smash.

All of this is intended to make the point that conventions must budget with something like a minimum of 10% allowance for error. That means 10% under what they think they might get on a fairly cautious prediction. Convention organisers who fail to do this, who are financially incompetent but make a tremendous virtue out of paying for their own rooms, are simply talking sanctimonious twaddle. Free rooms for the people who do the work is an entirely legitimate expense, and if there really isn't enough money to pay for it then it's most probably because the people concerned have not been doing their job properly. Nobody is being done any favours when convention organisers live dangerously close to running into deficit. If any one convention goes broke then all future conventions are likely to be regarded as bad credit risks and to suffer accordingly.

So what's to be done with the money? Well, to start with, fans could stop all this nauseating holier-than-thou (or more-scared-of-what-the-neighbours-think) nonsense and make sure that all expenses incurred for a convention are paid by a convention. Even so, on a turnover of £4000-£5000 several hundred pounds could be left over. If this is passed from one convention to the next, it will simply accumulate until some group more feckless or reckless than the rest blows it all in, to nobody's particular advantage. Though I have various doubts about INTERZONE in the practical sphere I approve of it in theory -- but there can hardly be a new SF magazine every year. One reason that there's controversy over the fate of convention funds is, in fact, that there isn't really any place to dispose of them that seems particularly appropriate -- or if there is (such as INTERZONE) it's seen as too close to serving purely individual interest.

In a spirit of pure altruism (since I don't intend to have anything to do with it myself) I therefore propose the setting up of an independent fund to which if they wish conventions could donate any surpluses, the money then being redistributed in the form of a prize or prizes for 'Best British SF Novel' (or whatever), the winners being chosen (for the preceding year) by vote of convention members. The merits of this idea are that it has (or can be given, when the details are worked out) a clearly defined and limited purpose, that it would be straightforward to administer, and that it would impose no constraints on anyone. (In other words, if people didn't like it they could just ignore the whole deal and no harm would be done. Any attempt to impose permanent rules on conventions is just a recipe for disaster.) The function of the administrators would be to set the level of prize money from year to year (within certain guidelines), to count the votes (and a postal ballot is preferable to avoid any organised lobbying) and to rule on any questions of eligibility. With suitably exhaustive rules it should be possible to make the whole business proof against any accusation of partiality. (And if SF fans don't see it as reasonable that any surplus should go to SF writers, where the hell do they want it to go?)

Whether or not people want such a prize I don't know -- but I should think many people would prefer something definite to happen to their money, rather than for it just to drop into some sort of limbo. Maybe the organisers of Channelcon (and the Albacoon and Metrocon groups preparing to bid for 1983) would like to comment on the notion. If they don't like the idea, perhaps they would care to say exactly what they are going to do with any surplus income.

Personally, I'd sooner go to a convention run by an efficient crook than by a virtuous numbskull -- but everybody to their own taste. Those who worry about such things should just remember to ask their questions before rather than after the event -- not only if they want anybody to pay any attention to their complaints but also if they want to find out the sort of people they're dealing with. That way we'd all be spared a fair amount of tedious bickering.

□ □ □ □ □ ART NEEDS NO REWARD: FANNISH POLLS □ □ □ □ □

EXAMINED BY MICHAEL ASHLEY

Probably the idea of holding a fan poll in MATRIX has been discussed in the past. It's worth looking into it again though as things have obviously changed recently, particularly in the relationship between the BSFA and what's usually termed fannish fandom: in days gone by the two were separate and usually hostile groups (witness Chris Fowler's attack on fandom in VECTOR 82 in the summer of 1977 for example: "It's this kind of thing ((a humorous comment by D West on Chris Fowler's poor state of health)) that makes one realise just how sick the science fiction 'fannish' scene is. Normally, however, one can take refuge in the belief that, no matter how childish, stupid and totally disgusting most 'fannish' SF fans are, the serious critics and writers are free from this taint") while now a large chunk of these childish, stupid and totally disgusting fannish fans are from this -- indeed mostly an active part -- of the BSFA. So to cement this amicable situation why not hold a fan poll?

On the plus side there's the usual idealistic reasons of giving reward to those who deserve it and providing a goal to strive towards for newer fans. Also it could perhaps give a prod to the two existing fan polls of any reputation -- no bad thing as both the NOVA and CHECKPOINT/ANSIBLE fan polls go by year in, year out without any questioning of their validity (odd, considering that these are much nearer home than the HUGOS or NEBULAS, awards which have been subjected to a lot of critical attention) and because of this I thought I'd take a quick look at them to see if a MATRIX fan poll would have any advantages that they lack.

Not attending Novacon, I'm unfamiliar with the ins and outs of the NOVA so I can't really comment on its worth; however, the only comment I've ever heard on it from anyone else is the recent one from Kev Smith in DOT 11 which is, simply, "Waste of time." The CHECKPOINT/ANSIBLE fan poll suffers from its tiny number of voters so the resulting statistics are rather arbitrary (for example, a few votes coming in too late for inclusion could radically alter the results). I only know the sample for six rather scattered years, but for those years (ranging from 1962-3 when the poll was conducted in Ron Bennetts' SKYRACK to 1980-1) the number of voters was 25, 24, 26, 23, 26, and 38, which gives a mean of 27. Given the number of people reading, producing and writing for fanzines, this figure is too small to make the results anything more than a piece of fun (although it's worth noting that the largest number of voters I know of -- 38 -- was for the last poll -- 1980-1 -- so perhaps the poll may be becoming rather more representative of fans' views). Something else rather curious in these results is the frequent occurrence of the poll-runner's name, even stretching back to 1962 when the poll was run by Ron Bennet in SKYRACK it's interesting to note that winner of the best fanzine award was SKYRACK itself; for 1971-2 and 1972-3, the best fanzine in the CHECKPOINT fan poll was EGG edited by Peter Roberts, who was also, of course, editor of CHECKPOINT; finally for the years 1979-80 and 1980-1, best fanzine and fan writer in the ANSIBLE fan poll was TWLL-DDU and Dave Langford respectively -- Dave again being poll co-ordinator (voting for the actual fanzine in which the poll appears has not been allowed since the days of SKYRACK but given that ANSIBLE was a runner-up to the last NOVA award and came in second in a recent (admittedly not very serious) poll conducted during Silicon to find the fanzine that first came to mind, then it's fair to say that the current poll zine of the day would be placed in the poll).

That EGG, TWLL-DDU, and Dave Langford were or are popular is not open to question, but what is questionable is the amount of bias which occurs due to the poll being conducted amongst a relatively small and select group of British fandom. This would be fine if it wasn't for the fact that the poll is never stressed to be a superfannish one, but is always described as applying to the whole of British fandom. That this is suspect is indicated by the overwhelming success of straight fannish material -- one aspect of which is the success of the actual co-ordinators who are presumably already popular with those who receive a copy of the voting form.

Someone queried a few of these things in ANSIBLE 19 and received the following reply from Dave Langford: "This is supposed to be an informal poll, not a meticulous and infallible system as used for the (coff coff) Hugos." This seems a pretty unsatisfactory shrug of shoulders. Does the fact that this poll is informal mean that it can be conducted in any way the editor sees fit? Does the fact that the poll can never be totally meticulous or infallible mean that it might as well be wholly unmeticulous and fallible? Does the fact that it's run better than the coff coff Hugos mean that it's run at all well? and so on. Our consolation from Dave is: "At least ANSIBLE's ineligible" which is a fair indication of what Dave believes (although even here TWLL-DDU sits interregnum as it were).

One of the initial reasons for people taking a long look at the HUGOS and NEBULAS was the consistently lousy product and hacks that dominated its results. Similarly, one of the reasons why the CHECKPOINT/ANSIBLE fan poll (and perhaps the NOVA) has gone unchallenged is that by established artistic criteria those winning in the various categories have not been at all bad -- in some cases excellent. Given that excellence in fanzines usually goes ignored or misunderstood, then it's hardly surprising that a poll which has valued true merit is talked of as laudable. I disagree. The amount of satisfaction that anybody but an egotist could gain from winning a poll circulated amongst a limited number of fans only a few of whom actually bother to vote is fairly minimal. True merit gets its victory, but in such circumstances as to make it a meaningless one.

The two main problems of the CHECKPOINT/ANSIBLE fan poll -- its low sample and its unspoken bias against many of the things collected under the umbrella term 'SF fandom' -- would appear not to apply to a fan poll conducted in the BSFA. The voting form would be going out to a much larger number of people whose tastes covered the whole spectrum of British fandom. If you were unduly idealistic you could push ahead with a poll; unfortunately I feel the results obtained would be a little odd. For one thing, would the number of voters be dramatically increased? In absolute numbers yes, but proportional to the number of forms distributed probably no. The vast majority of BSFA members do not take part in fanzine fandom other than by reading a few SF fanzines. They probably belong to the BSFA because they are interested in science fiction, and view these odd fannish doings as something irrelevant and outside their main interest. But still, there's more people voting overall, so will we not have a more accurate picture of what people like? Again the answer's no. Just as the HUGO awards, both professional and fan, are dominated by the same very famous names every year, so would the BSFA fan awards go, not to the best work, but to the most widely distributed. VECTOR, say, would be better placed than TAPPEN because VECTOR goes to every person having a vote while TAPPEN has a restricted distribution. Asking people not to vote if they feel they don't know enough of the relevant material would either lead to the small sample problems of ANSIBLE or the situation of the fan HUGOS -- where Bob Shaw wins because people have vaguely heard of Bob Shaw.

I can say this with some confidence as a fan poll was conducted in MATRIX in 1978 by Richard J Smith. The actual details of voting (e.g., how many voted in each category) appeared in an issue of MATRIX which I no longer have, however I've still got the separate results sheet that was published and interesting reading it is, too. Most noticeable is the success of wide circulation sercon fanzines. Second best fanzine of all time is SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW; best current fanzine is MAYA with SFR and VECTOR following behind (and remember this was VECTOR under the editorship of

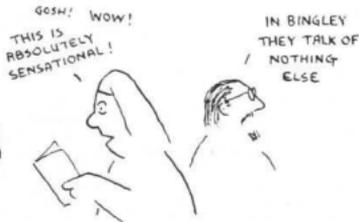
David Wingrove); best fanzine editor of all time sees Dick Geis and Peter Weston tying; best current editor is again a tie, this time between Geis and Rob Jackson. With no disrespect to the winners intended, I wonder how much of this is deserved and how much is due to MAYA, SFR, and particularly VECTOR having a much wider circulation amongst BSFA fans than the average fanzine. Quantity, of course, does not equate with quality. Most interesting thing of all, though, was how few people actually did vote (despite, as I recall, several pleas in consecutive issues of MATRIX and an offer of a few SF books to some randomly selected voters). This led to the bizarre result of GET FOKT becoming best fanzine of all time, which Richard Smith explained as follows: "This section was so popular supported that a handful of replies from the Glasgow group was enough to make this the most popular fanzine."

As I said at the start of this letter, times have changed. The editors of the three main BSFA publications are all definite fanzine fans, as is the chairman, and a considerable number of fans are BSFA members, so I think it's fair to say that GET FOKT would have a fight on its hand to remain the best fanzine of all time. However, I still stick to my other comments: there will be a low turn-out and, of those votes that are elicited, the most widely distributed fanzines and their editors and contributors will come off best -- regardless of whether they deserve it or not. Just as HUGO voters consistently make -- for want of a better phrase -- the wrong choices because they're unaware of enough relevant material, so, I'm afraid, would BSFA members. As there is an increasing demand for the HUGOS and NEBULAS to be scrapped, I don't really think that a BSFA fan award, that's open to similar criticisms, is a particularly great idea.

Gloom and doom. What's to be done? Well, why do anything? Though I'm cynical about the idea of awards, I get all idealistic over the idea of Art Needs No Reward. Greatness is greatness and you don't need a tin badge to prove it. Indeed, in fandom, where awards are plentiful for every category under the sun and meaningful for none of them, it's necessary to be wary of them and to be your own judge. Are they a spur or merely a nudge towards complacency? And anyway what counts more: people remembering your name long enough to write it in a box, or taking the effort to write (and re-write) a substantial letter of comment? If I were an editor I know which I'd take as a sign that people actually cared.

This time a slightly different approach to the Letters column in that three of the subjects touched on in the last issue provoked three "article-length" responses and hence Arts Councils, Convention funds and Fannish Polls all receive articles in their own right. Meanwhile, "Who Nukes Who" becomes topical and "Who Becomes President" turns into "Who Presides Over What" - Obscure? Maybe - read on and all will be revealed:

letters



TERRY HILL
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I have been a member of the BSFA for some three years now, and having spent that time standing on the side-lines viewing the whole performance dispassionately, I feel that it is now time to chuck in my two pen'orth.

The subject of the Presidency seems to have aroused passions, both pro and con. I agree with John Bark, in that a position of 'Patron' should be created, to be filled by whichever Big Name Pro is currently thought to be the biggest draw. Therefore I disagree with Iain Byers. How and why members are attracted is immaterial; the main point is to attract them. It is then up to the rest of us to interest and educate them in all areas of SF. A.C.C.'s name did not attract me, I joined merely because the BSFA was the only national organisation concerned with SF. If you'd been offering free lapel badges as pretty as Uncle Hugo's 'Science Fiction League', I might have joined years earlier.

The topic of attracting and retaining members is one to which I feel more attention should be paid. Having declared that I don't give a mis-matched pair of rancid lizard testicles how you recruit new members, I do feel that more care could be taken to keep them interested once they've joined. Personally, I felt rather alienated, almost immediately I joined, by the predominant views in MATRIX. Don't give me that 'views expressed ... not necessarily' etc. The general slant of material was suggestive that anything written more than fifteen years ago is absolute dross. It wasn't until I realised that it was the same vociferous minority that expressed these views, that I stopped thinking myself a freak for enjoying some of the works of Asimov, Heinlein and Smith. Having been considered a freak for several years just for reading SF it was quite a blow to find -- on joining the organisation to meet and fraternize with those also afflicted -- that I was a member of a sub-group of freaks within freakdom! Could you therefore explain to your contributors that not all of the membership want to read 'deep philosophical and sociological SF' nor, for that matter do we want to read 'deep philosophical reviews of SF' either. Some of us read SF for enjoyment.

The mention of reviews draws my attention to Joseph Nicholas. How somebody with his self-confessed dislike of magazines can then proceed to review them, I can't understand. I don't advocate that we develop an Oedipus complex over the old 'zines but I do think we should acknowledge that, without them, SF would not be 'as we know it'. I agree with Joseph's point that the magazines these days are in a sad state, but I dislike them in the main for the very things that he points to as saving graces.

More from Terry later; NIK MORTON adds that he agrees with John Bark's suggestion about a Patron and a President, the latter being "an active writer in the U.K."; however, if we search for an "active" writer it would appear that their very "activities" would prevent them from taking the post.

JOHN BRUNNER
THE SQUARE HOUSE
PALMER STREET
SOUTH PETHERTON
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Just spotted that remark by Roger Waddington in MATRIX 39 -- shows you how far behind I am with my reading, doesn't it? -- concerning presidency of BSFA. He invokes my name... Please, no! I served a three-year term as chairman of BSFA and (I think and hope) pulled my weight, but now I'm lumbered with the co-presidency of Eurocon and I am NOT, repeat NOT in the running!

But, in any case, maybe Half at Sea Clarke does, indeed, give support to the BSFA through his name:

HUSSAIN R. MOHAMMED
WEST LA PALMA
ANAHEIM, LOS ANGELES
USA

Can I stick in a brief thought on the Arthur Clarke for Prez controversy? Iain Byers likely speaks for more than himself when he says ACC's name did not attract him - but how honest are we in saying that it has no affect at all on decisions to join the BSFA for the "elite" as well as the "peasants"? I would love to say that I joined for pure and noble reasons unconnected with Big Name Authors, but, I have the nagging suspicion that maybe I did just pause longer than I would otherwise -- because of that name. And looking at it all another way, does it actually do any damage in any case? Does the world in general (and who says we don't care what they think?) consider us insignificant because himself is President? It needs a lot of very careful thought before proscribed lists are posted.

The most valid point on the matter is raised by Ian Abrahams:

IAN ABRAHAMS
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John Bark talks about making 'patrons' to replace the role of President. Good idea. But sacking them if they go against the aims of the BSFA? Er, apart from 'promoting SF', which seems pretty meaningless to me, what are the aims? They appear to lack definition, don't they?

Quite. Do we elect or nominate a President because he/she is a well-known SF personality or do we choose on the basis of the likely candidate's views on whatever subjects happen to be topical at the time? And then if there's a shift of opinion amongst members, presumably we have to get rid of the titular Head of our beloved organisation and replace him/her with someone MORE representative. Gets complicated, and tortuous, doesn't it? And, as I said, the more pertinent question concerns the format and purpose of the BSFA. It seems to me that, with 100 issues of VECTOR and 40 issue of MATRIX behind us, it's high time to re-examine how our magazines are comprised, and what they should contain. I say this, in particular, because of some of the comments in the letters below, and because the Committee has been examining a suggestion put forward by Martyn Taylor for a "Media News and Review" Magazine. We have also touched on the subject before of the possible overlap in some areas between MATRIX and VECTOR and the role of fiction in BSFA Magazines. Over to you for your thoughts:

DAVE V BARRETT
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HARROGATE N YORKS

I recently considered resigning because of the totally unnecessarily vicious and bitter attacks on one member by another. Friendly slanging matches are fine. So are intellectual duels. Yes, and let the vitriol flow like rivers of blood -- so long as all of us (including the protagonists) are mature enough to realise that it's only a game we're playing, and that, like wrestlers or football players (or even more: like politicians), we'll happily prop each other up in the bar afterwards.

This didn't seem the case in the attack on Chris Smith by Steve Green in MS8, which nearly ended up in the courtroom. I've never met either of these guys; I know nothing of the Birmingham Science Fiction Film Society; the only bit of Birmingham I'm prepared to go anywhere near is New St. -- preferably without stopping. So I confess my total ignorance of the whole matter. Now, I'm not one of those people who believe everything they read in the newspapers; still less am I likely to believe everything I read in MATRIX (meaning no offense to the editors!). But 'Life on Mars' is, I believe, supposed to be a more or less factual column, so my credulity quotient was higher than usual when I read it. This wasn't the first character assassination to besmirch the pages of MATRIX and I somehow doubt that it will be the last. The individual contributors (in this particular case, Steve Green) must shoulder most of the guilt, but some blame must inevitably attach to the editor(s) of the day, and if a case ever did get as far as court, I believe that the editor(s) are held responsible for the contents of the publication. The bottom line is: be careful what you include in MATRIX.

JIM DARROGH
21 CURSLET ROAD
CURRIE, MIDLOTHIAN
SCOTLAND EH14 5LZ

MATRIX cannot just serve as an introduction to fandom -- at the moment as a genre it works well, keep it going. I particularly enjoyed the local -- some good controversial stuff.

Steve Green is trying his best, but is obviously suffering from a lack of "hot news" -- well, try this: The Edinburgh group may well have to move yet again (the 4th time, really) because, apart from an incredibly loud juke box, the owners have installed a video camera security system! I think you will realise that us SF fans are not too chuffed about this. Are we the first SF group to be under surveillance like this?

The thing that annoys me about Joe Nicholas and his reply to detractors of INFERNO is that Ian Garbutt seemed to lose the editorship of TANGENT for just such reasons. But Garbutt was not one of the "establishment". Actually, I think that some of the INFERNO criticisms are justified in

that the reviews just cannot be too dogmatic one way or the other -- it is not Joe's fanzine, but the BSFA's.

GLEN WARMINGER
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SPROWSTON NORWICH
NORFOLK

Has Chuck's brain finally atrophied? Does he really think that redundancy means vast sums paid out to the poor unfortunate so that he/she can live life as they did before?

I was made redundant just before Yorcon II, it was already paid for so I went but I haven't been to a con since (except Anglicon, which I helped to organise), something I was starting to enjoy. All my interest in fandom was effectively shattered by that one act, all my social life (what little there was) was effectively stopped.

If he had had enough sense to think over what he writes down on paper and sends to entertain the members of the BSFA, maybe then his comments would be sensible.

How effective will your Christmas be if you cannot afford to buy drinks for friends, can't afford Christmas presents. If Chuck thinks that Life in the Dole Queue is all fun and money for fuck-all, just see how well he would exist on £22.50 per week.

It also seems to me that examples of fannish writing must be included in MATRIX, which will have wino's, rhino's and Sercon freaks complaining that it's not got anything to do with SF. Personally I would love to see more 'fannish' contents in MATRIX because that would be more and varied contents, but I fear that your letterbox would have to be enlarged to take the sudden rush of irate letters from 'head-in-the-sand' fandom.

Has Chuck's Brain finally atrophied? Well it may do after he reads this issue.

BRIAN W ALDIS
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Re MATRIX 39. I would advise your correspondent Chuck Connor to keep his trap shut about matters of which he knows nothing. I have zero connections with Colin Greenland's first novel; I have never seen it or read it. I have certainly never written any 'covering letter' concerning it; nor was I ever asked to do so; nor would I have done so if I had been asked.

Chuck also "dares" me in his latest fanzine, "to not publish his letter to MATRIX". OK, Chuck, I'm dared. I don't think (on this occasion) it merits publication, particularly since it doesn't deal with the points I asked you to cover. Print it in IDOMO if you wish.

TERRY JEEVES
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One thing in the letter column which comes through though is the general me v you tone of the letters. Steven Green is even threatened with legal action according to his letter. Fandom should be a meeting place for friends, not enemies. It should be for fun, not feuds. Oh, I

know fans are human, and such tiffs will occur...but they should be in the minority. I disagree with John Brunner over disarmament...but that doesn't mean I have to say nasty or unpleasant things about him. I feel that if Steve Green had been more temperate in his original comments, an apology would not have been asked for. This applies to so much fanac nowadays...too much of "if you're not for my views, then you're a steaming idiot". Pity, I thought we all supported SF.

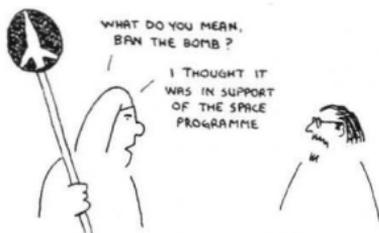
I like the idea of PAPERBACK INFERNO...but deplore the fact that almost every title is castigated for some fault or other. Personally, I like to form my own opinion on whether or not a book is 'good'. All I want from a review is an outline of its contents so that I know whether or not I may be interested...some reviewers rave about P K Dick, yet I can't stand his writings. Their comment on his books of 'great' means zilch to me I'm afraid.

For many years I have been one of those slothful people who get just what they deserve from the BSFA because I just haven't got around to writing in letters of comment. I say letters, because to do a proper job, this is what is required -- one to MATRIX, one to VECTOR, possibly one to INFERNO and at this time of year, one to Keith Freeman holding my renewal cheque for £6. I tend to be too lazy to get down to all that, so like so many others, I get what I deserve.

So, what has roused me from my sloth? No less than TWO letters (one in VECTOR and one in MATRIX) from John Brunner wherein he mounts the soapbox to coax us all to support his views on disarmament. Point 1: I personally do not feel the publications of a Science Fiction Society are the right place for such platforms...accept them, and why not accept views on the EEC, Trade Unions and the like? From the media I am bombarded with publicity on such themes; can we not keep our little SF ghetto free from the taint. IF John and others wish to plug leaving the arms race, let them do so in more relevant places -- newspapers, TV, political parties and public speeches (Hyde Park soap box corner still operates, I believe??).

Point 2: Assuming that we are to have such propaganda in VECTOR and MATRIX, may I assume that the other side will also be allowed to have equal coverage in support of their views, or is it a case of editors A and B support John's views, so will use the BSFA to further them? If this is not the case, then we move to point 3.

Point 3: My own humble views on 'disarmament' which are considerably opposed to those of Mr Brunner. First off, in the years 1930-38, this country followed a policy of massive disarmament, and signed numerous treaties with Germany to prevent war. Most of today's 'disarmers' (including Mr Brunner, I believe) were too young, or not even born, and so missed the shattering war which nearly saw Britain wiped off the map when Germany broke her treaties and began annexing various bits of Europe. Disarmament got us that. (Even the unnamed Americans were



brought in by a totally unprovoked attack.) Back in the time of the Danes, the English King avoided arming by paying the Danes and Vikings 'danegeld' to stay away. The inevitable result was they jumped on us for even more and eventually we had the St Brice's Day massacre. Shortly after WW2, Britain and the USA tried to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. Now that more and more countries have them, disarmers think that by throwing away our weapons and hiding our heads in the sand, the enemy/ bully will go away. Don't you believe it. Afghanistan had no nukes or large-scale military weapons, nor did Poland, nor did Czechoslovakia.....this blissful state of unreadiness did not help any of them against Russia did it?

Throughout history, the bully has always trampled all over the pacifist and I can't see that changing now. I'm all in favour of peace as against war; I had 5 1/2 years in the RAF, plus time in the A.R.P. and Home Guard, and I have no illusions about its horrors, but until we get an effective international police force, a real United Nations, then each country needs to be able to protect itself just as in our towns the police protect us against yobbos, thieves and other criminals. Are we to believe that if we dispense with police, unlock our doors and pull a bag over our heads, that all crime will cease??? I think not.

BOB ARDLER
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Does James Parker want politics or rhetoric? Or does he only sound like you and me, who are left or right without intervention of brain -- purely by dictate of our political gland, which has the IQ of a testicle and the response-versatility of a laboratory dog salivating at a bell?

There is a glandular politics among fans, whose Right espouses every piece of planet-raping hardware as long as it's big or shiny; and whose left mutters darkly (man was not meant to....) about white-coated hubris, inevitable doom.

Yet SF has just the scalpel for excising the gland -- reductio ad extremum. SF enlarges the mind in worlds where extremes and simplicities prevail. Russ's feminist, Le Quin's communist and capitalist, Reynolds's welfare worlds are recent examples of constructive work.

I am glad the civilised topic of megadeath is back in fashion (though Conquistadores killed 1 1/2m Indians and Thugs strangled 2m, million-killing is mostly the work of civilised souls). In WW1 the Eurokill was 10m soldiers. Of the 60m in WW2, 20-25m are down to Hitler, about the same to Stalin, adding in his purges. A pity you don't get extra points for civilians or women/children: the British and American fire raids, though snuffing more innocents than the two nukes, don't reach 7 figures, I'm afraid.

Since WW2, good old Pol Pot has bagged 8m and the philosopher and poet Mao has signed off 20-30m -- relatively few among so many chinks: worth killing 1 in 30 to speed the education of the other 29. These two amateurs at least understood that peasants make the easiest victims. The modern professional is the Lethal Grey Suit, whose discreet art began with the first peasant to lend a basket of grain for double back next harvest. Today a profit-maximising boardroom decision sends waves down the pyramid, a rich government falls, a poor one is destabilised, multinationals merge or founder, corner shops yield to supermarkets, farm mortgages foreclose. Of the 500m now in "absolute poverty", some millions are almost dead, awaiting a gentle push. When the wave reaches them, that's it.

To the tune, now, of 4 megadeaths a year, unimportant people far away die without pain (to the conscience in the grey suit). This time it is only wogs, but this is economic war, all (despite expedient alliances) against all. The war is for power, the means of power draw on 'defence', minerals, energy and food. You can't opt out except under protection, and the problem is how to replace war with cooperation.

Facts such as these are horrendous and probably known to many of us; we all think we do our bit, whether it is buying a wicker basket in an Oxfam shop, sending your Christmas cards with "Save the Children" on them, or by not eating animal products; but many of these things are symbolic only and allow one to be 'holier than thou' at the Office Dinner Party. But, me, I'm all for cooperation and I will even allow Pat Charnock a free plug, so as she can Point Out:

PAT CHARNOCK
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May I point out, for the benefit of your MATRIX readers, that Charnock membership rates went up on 1st December 1981. Attending membership now costs £7, supporting membership is still £3, and conversion costs £4. This was revealed in PR2, but I guess you were too busy chortling about dogs and cots to notice it!

I think the great Yorcon II profits debate is going to go on forever. Perhaps someone should remind David Pringle that the BSFA does not yet run the Eastercon. The profits were collected from convention members, not BSFA members. Surely it would be far more relevant to offer a discount on INTERZONE subscriptions to Eastercon members rather than BSFA members? May I also suggest that, if every convention followed the precedents of its predecessors without deviation, we might fall short on innovation.

Pat's second points was echoed by JIM DARROCH and, in retrospect it is very valid. We took the decision to grant BSFA members the discount (as opposed to Yorcon members) because (a) of the additional cost of contacting all Yorcon members; (b) by offering it through the BSFA we would, in any case, get the information to most convention members, many of whom are BSFA members. (c) Moreover, the discount of £1 is partly achieved by the cooperation with the BSFA and is a benefit to the BSFA members and fandom as a whole. Anyway, the matter is dealt with, in greater depth, by D West's article. Some thoughts of other members on the fannish polls:

DAVE LANGFORD
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READING BERKS RG2 7PW

I wasn't wild about the BSFA poll idea for fanzines -- the NOVA award seems to be one reason for the ANSIBLE poll's low turnout and vice-versa these days. Too many polls breed apathy. Is the BSFA membership any more representative of the people who read fanzines (i.e., enough

fanzines to make a choice from a decent selection rather than merely voting for everything they happen to have read) than the ANSIBLE mailing list or the Novacon membership? I doubt it; like the vast mass of people who vote for the HUGOs, it's just bigger! But what is my opinion amid the vast wave of contrary opinions which will doubtless slosh through your letterbox? Next question: do you or don't you make BSFA zines eligible for this poll...?

SIMON BOSTOCK
18 GALLOWNS INN CLOSE
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One part about M59 really bugged me, and I want to clear my good name before any blood is spilt. I refer, of course, to the Loccol and my "ill-thought-out sexist attack", as you put it.

I've been feeling very guilty about this of late. I do not consider myself "sexist", though perhaps my bit was "ill-thought-out", as I usually type straight out onto paper very quickly, so may have phrased it wrongly in the first place. I can't remember doing so, however. All I can remember is writing that it was odd that, as soon as Rochelle married Alan, or perhaps before, she quick-as-a-flash gained the honour of organising BoSFA meetings. As far as I know, she hasn't even contributed to British fandom before; someone less fortunate as not being "in" with the

crowd but who perhaps has been hanging around in fandom for a few years most likely wouldn't be elected so readily. (I do not refer to myself.) I may be getting all this twisted and distorted, and nobody else offered themselves (I can definitely believe that, leading directly from apathy), but it's also pretty blood curdling to find that Malcolm Edwards won the NOVA Award for Fan Activity with his fanzine TAPPEN; the award is for the year, and I can't remember it half a year ago. He may have deserved it, but another year (i.e., the next) wouldn't have been long to wait. And Chris Atkinson also. Suddenly she's being heralded as the greatest fanwriter this year. Silly, really, all of the literature I've read by her has

been about herself, her escapades etc. I would have thought that to be dubbed "Best Fanwriter" you'd need to write as diversely as possible, a bit on SF, a bit about yourself, and so on. The only two people who spring to mind as conforming to this are Joe Nicholas and Dave Langford.

So I again emphasise, I'm not sexist. Rochelle can, I have no doubt, run the meetings as well as anybody else. The reason I wrote "Alan Dorey's wife" (only once, I recall) was as a change from using "Rochelle" in every nook and cranny. And only as that.

Actually, I didn't label you a "sexist" because you referred to Alan Dorey's "wife". It was because your letter seemed to imply that Rochelle was given the post just "because she was his wife". She was elected in her own right. In fact, it was at the BSFA meeting at Vorcon II that Alan was proposed to organize the meetings, when a counter proposal (by yours truly) to elect Rochelle was made. Rochelle out-voted Alan, much to the amusement of all concerned. Anyway, I wonder how many times do you refer to Alan as "Rochelle Dorey's husband"? Still, I believe you, Simon - you ain't a sexist; mind you, your namesake thinks you're "something else".

SIMON OUNSLLEY
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HEADINGLY
LEEDS LS6 3AE

Simon Bostock and Keith Walker fail to convince me with their letters in support of apazines. Simon, in particular, seems more concerned with telling me what I can put in my pipe than with any kind of reasoned discussion. Such arguments as they do put forward (suggesting that most apa material goes out to non-members in any case) seem to be truer in

theory than in practice. I remember when I was first getting into fandom back in 1978. An APA called FEAPA was set up. Most of the people I considered to be prominent in fanzine publishing at the time were asked to be members (it was invitation only) and Graham James (you've probably heard of this guy) and I, being only neos at the time and with only one fanzine to our credit, were not invited to join. Our exclusion no doubt seemed perfectly reasonable to the organisers (to be honest, they most likely didn't even notice), but I can assure, it pissed me off no end at the time.

Anyway, only a very few of the members sent out their FEAPA material to those who were left out of this jolly circle. I later received Paul Kincaid's contribution (after I specifically asked him for it); some of Joseph Nicholas's material (though not the best of it, I'm told) later emerged as NAPALM I; while Eve Harvey later published her stuff as part of WALLBANGER 5 (she had to produce two editions, one without the FEAPA material for members, and one with it for the benefit of the others): all of which is hardly a vast proportion of a substantial mailing. From the point of view of a newcomer who was interested in fanzines and would rather have liked to see more (there wasn't exactly a glut around, even at that time), all this was rather discouraging.

I shall now be accused, no doubt, of being anti-apa because I still harbour a grudge about being left out of FEAPA. Well, maybe that's so. But I still think the facts speak for themselves. As far as I can see, the only advantage of an apa is that it's a convenient way of getting material sent out. But if fans are going to mail out their apa stuff to non-members in any case, surely much of that convenience is lost. Consider the case of Eve Harvey: producing two editions of WALLBANGER and making sure that the right people got the right copies must have involved a fair share of hassle. How many people can actually be bothered to check through the apa list and send off their stuff to outsiders?

TO HELL
WITH THAT
ROTTEN
STUCK-UP
SNOW WHITE
ANYHOW



DIAMONDS
ARE A
DWARF'S
BEST
FRIEND

Simon's apa isn't as insidiously elitist as FEAPA was, but it hardly strikes me as a Good Thing. In SUPERNOVA 3, Simon includes a tantalising list of all the people who have contributed to his first apa mailing: Dave Langford, Rob Hansen, Martyn Taylor, and the Pickersgills are included. Now, I know we're enjoying something of a fanzine renaissance at the moment, but there's hardly so much good stuff around that it doesn't seem a shame when such talented writers as these are expending their energies on material which has been circulated only amongst a membership of ten. "Also a list of nine 'possibilities'....should in due course be receiving spare copies" says Simon. Big deal. That makes a grand total of nineteen readers. If we are to believe Simon and Keith, then the members will be sending out their stuff to people in the great wide world outside as well. But I've recently received other fanzines from a fair proportion of the people on the list, and there's no sign of any apa material yet....

I'm willing to keep an open mind about apas, but I'd like to hear some reasoned argument in the face of all this. Maybe that's expecting too much, however, from someone who doesn't even seem to understand what "review" means. "If Ounsley likes to comment on the zines himself," says Simon, "and not just type a synopsis of the contents, then he should loc the appropriate fanmag." But DEEP CUTS is supposed to be a review column. What Simon is talking about are listings. Admittedly, such pallid substitutes attempt to masquerade as reviews in far too many fanzines, but reviews are supposed to include the comments of reviewer. That's what they're about.

What else can I say in response to such a cretinous comment?

JON WALLACE
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First, I'd like to take this (belated) opportunity to congratulate you on your survival of what seemed to be a particularly spectacular feat of low-level aerobatics. Does your life really flash before your eyes? Still, congrats and may your good luck never change.

My target for tonight is Deep Cuts. On the whole, I feel that if Simon manages to conquer his (natural) urge to make himself look good at the expense of the reviews, then I don't think he'll make that bad a job of it. But I'm going to have to use him as an example of something that I have noticed on a significant number of occasions. He reviews his own personal-zine in MATRIX 39. Well, that's OK because after all, the column is there to tell you just what is available on the zine-scene. Except, STILL IT MOVES isn't available. Simon admits that he didn't get enough printed. What earthly use is a review of something you can't get a hold of? Surely the reason for sending a zine to Simon for review is so that people will read the review and maybe send for a copy. People who've got one will be minimally interested in such a review, those who don't have one won't be very chuffed if they write or send a trade zine and get nothing in return. It is up to the faneds involved, they know who they are, to make sure that they have a few copies available for when the review does appear, which could be long enough, I admit, but the obligation is there, I feel.

To stick with Deep Cuts a moment longer, I must disagree with Nik Morton's comments on it's helpfulness to aspiring writers. (OK, this is going to sound like sour grapes.) The comments on HINEMOST 2 referred to were designed to make Simon look clever, not fair comment on the zine. The quote Simon used was taken out of context, always a good way to make something look silly!

Let thou be warned, Mr Ounsley. Now, back to Terry Hill's letter in which he offers a pretty sound and laudible idea for Fan Funds: (address as before)

Should SF support causes? Yes, unless they are political. I don't see that our way is any better than theirs, just different, and nobody is right. Causes such as mental health and cancer research I would agree with. Which leads me nicely into the subject of handicapped fans. We have TAFF and DJFF designed to get fans from here to there, but do we have a fund to enable Joe average to make it to Eastercon in a wheel-chair? Do we have any disabled fans? We must have, but does anyone know who they are? Do we care enough to chip in and help them join in at our social gatherings?

I would really like to see something like this get off the ground; whoever wins the 1983 Eastercon bid, could they please consider this?

We Also Heard From a number of fans who wished us well, following our recent accident; many thanks to you. Thanks, also, for correspondence from RICHARD PHILPOTT, who took exception to James Parker's analysis of Carl Sagon's COSMOS; JOY HIBBERT, who out-did the Albacon Bidding Committee by providing a copy of their bid sheet; NIK MORTON, who scripted a humorous outline for a Soap Opera about a Way Station orbiting the Planet Tharg; MICHAEL MIPPELL, who has just joined the BSFA, at age 66; NIK HOWARD, with suggestions for a Competition; PETE WALKER (artwork); SANDY BROWN (with information); PHIL PROBERT (artwork) and KEVIN CLARKE (artwork). Keep on writing.



Simon Ounsley took
his axe
And gave a fanzine
forty whacks
When he saw what he
had done
He gave the next 'un
forty one

This issue's fanzine review column (written, as usual, by Simon Ounsley, who lives at 13A Cardigan Rd, Headingley, LEEDS LS6 3AE) features the zines received in November and December of that long lost year of 1981. It is dedicated to the undoubted star of the period: Ritchie Smith's sandwiches. (Besieged Joseph Nicholas came a close second.)

What does it all mean? 'The usual' suggests that a fanzine is available for trade with other zines, a letter of comment, or a contribution. If a zine is available for money, the price is listed. Otherwise, try writing in for a sample copy. 'R' means reduced typeface. As for page sizes: FC means foolscap; Q means Quarto; A4 and A5 are precisely what they appear. (I've decided you ought to know the measurements by this time. If in doubt, consult your local stationers.)

And with all that over with, let's wheel on the fanzines.....

A COOL HEAD (NEVER WON FAIR LADY) (Dave Bridges, 130 Valley Road, SHEFFIELD S8 9GA; the usual; A4; 40 pp.) This zine has finally convinced me that there is a difference between a genuine and a personalzine after all. I'd previously dismissed such classifications as another example of putting things into bags just for the sake of it. But no. Articles in genuine zines have to be self-contained, whereas personalzine articles can be apparently inconsequential in themselves but still add up to something worthwhile. Reading the first few pages of A COOL HEAD, I became a little annoyed because each article seemed to finish just as I was getting into it. I wanted each of them to have a beginning, a middle and an end, instead of just a beginning and a middle. But Dave doesn't reach very many conclusions; he just leaps from thinking about buying a new shirt to thinking about buying a videocassette, leaving the reader to work out what, if anything, is the significance of it all. It works though. The articles build up layer upon layer, leading eventually to an intimate glimpse into Dave's strange cool head.

And there's something else: I've sometimes thought that one of the problems of being a fannish writer is that you have to lead a pretty exciting life or else you run out of things to write about. That doesn't seem to bother Dave at all. He has a gift for making the most mundane things in life appear to be interesting, not by over-dramatising or fictionalising them to any great extent (as others have) but by explaining in fine detail how his head reacts to them. Perhaps the secret is to have a pretty weird head. Or perhaps the secret is just to be Dave Bridges. Either way, the outcome of it all is a damn good fanzine. I hope we get a follow-up soon.

Before passing on: a bit more about the contents: Dave covers Silicon (complete with Ritchie Smith's sandwiches - of which more later), the complex art of catching buses, a blind date, rock concerts, buying a TV, and the hundreds of records he's recently bought. I even liked the latter; yes, me, who's complained about a similar sort of feature in TAPPEN. Why the difference, I wonder? Maybe it's the genuine/personalzine thing again. Malcolm's DESERT ISLAND DISCS has to work on its own, while Dave's lists are an important part of what's going on in his head (since the weird bugger spends £15 a week on records, they have to be, don't they?) and so they fit in with the rest of the zine.

One more piece I should mention: Dave writes about the lack of up-and-coming young blood in fandom, arguing that kids these days are much more likely to get into rock, and hence rock fandom, than into SF, and hence SF fandom. And he may well be right. It's a good article, this, and different from the rest of A COOL HEAD in that it could stand on its own in a genuine.

ANSIBLE 21, 22 (Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, READING, Berks RG2 7PW; 5 for £1 in UK, 4 for £1 elsewhere; Q; 8pp (2R) and 6pp (2R)). The usual bundle of news which everyone concerned asked Dave not to print; Dave replying to Greg Pickersgill on TAFF: traffic debut as fannish writer by Geoff Ryman on Milford Writers Conference; con reps by Rob Hansen and Malcolm Edwards on Silicon and Novacon respectively; and an only slightly funny first instalment of Dave Garnett's "Dictionary of Science Fiction" which I hope will not continue for the next twenty-five issues. Do subscribe though.

CRAZY EDDIE 2 (Kevin Rattan, for the Bolton Group, 23 Waingate Close, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancs BB8 7SQ; for 50p or long loc or trade; A4; 32pp) For reasons of which many people are aware, and even more seem to have written down, it's unlikely that the world will ever know a truly wonderful clubzine, but there are three examples around at the moment which go to prove that the things don't have to be uniformly horrid either. They are FORTH (under its various pseudonyms), DEATH RAYS and CRAZY EDDIE. FORTH is out in front of the rest of the field but EDDIE, for my money, is running second and is cast in something of the same mould. It doesn't contain the sort of gloriously irreverent humour which occasionally spouts out of FORTH but it is a mix of the good, the bad, and the ugly, which makes it more akin to FORTH than to the uniformly literate but unexciting DEATH RAYS.

Have you got all that? Don't worry if you didn't. The important thing is that EDDIE has now cast off its purple gunge and gone black and white and litho, which means that more people are actually able to read the thing. As to the contents: I don't think that the Bad group would argue that Steve Gallagher is the star amongst them. Here, he contrib-



utes an excellent article on his method of writing a novel, which certainly warrants a reprint in FOCUS (any of said authors listening?) and some good illustrations. And there's another piece by Burt Rowley who produces the sort of stuff that could almost make fan fiction respectable (but not quite).

The rest of the stuff wasn't so good: the second Gallagher piece is an article in search of a raison d'être (which in the end is established as something to fill up the pages), while Bernard Earp's fanzine "reviews" are far too brief for my taste - I don't mind putting up with such brief comments when someone's trying to cover a large selection but with only eight zines reviewed I should have thought that a bit more depth was possible. And then there's Tom Taylor on sociology which, even if it is a joke, is still rather boring. Kevin says in the editorial: "I see my function as editor of a groupzine as trying to represent the ideas, views and abilities of the group". And that's what he does. And that's why clubzines will never be wonderful because in any other type of zine, "Sociobiology" would have been thrown out on its arse. There you are then. I've written it down again.

DEADLOSS 3 (Chris Priest, 1 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 0DA; "available only on whim"; A4, 16pp). "Fanzines have started talking about each other again; a sure sign of a fan-nish spring" says Chris at the start of the zine. But is it equally refreshing for fanzine review columns to talk about fanzine review columns? I have my doubts, so I'll be brief: DEADLOSS 3 consists solely of reviews of other fanzines; with some of it I agree and with some of it I disagree, which is very much what you'd expect perhaps. But with two parts of it I strongly disagree and I'll most likely talk about those later, both in this column (re: NEW RIVER BLUES) and in my own fanzine (re: EPSILON). All in all, though, it's an interesting survey of a fanzine field which for once, thank heavens, is actually worth surveying. Perhaps the most original point which Chris brings out is the extent to which fanzine writing should be fictionalised in order to make events which appeared funny at the time (or even ones which didn't) appear funny on paper. Something to bear in mind this, but I think it's more a matter of instinct than of conscious effort. You're walking a fine line: stick too close to the truth and you miss out on potential humour, but stray too far and the reader might refuse to be strung along. Even dropping a slice of toast down the back of a fridge can require a certain suspension of disbelief to be funny.

DEATH RAYS 2 (John Bark (for the South Hants group), 5 Byerley Close, Westbourne, Ensworth, Hants PO10 8TS; for the usual; A5, R; 12pp.) I've already described DEATH RAYS (in the CRAZY EDDIE review) as being "uniformly literate but unexciting" and so it is. There's nothing in the issue that might be described as bad, but neither is there anything to stick in your mind after you've read the thing. What there is: the transcript of a speech to the group by Hazel Faulkener, a founder Brum group member, talking chiefly about conventions; a ten best books listing from Mike Cheater, which ranges from Philip Dick and Mick Farren to Robert Heinlein and Anne McCaffrey (OK, Mike's catholic taste provides one surprise); an explanatory piece about fanzines from Jeff Suter; and reviews of Ballard and the TV version of SALEM's LOT. All of it, as I say, is well written enough, but the arrival of a new DEATH RAYS is more likely to be greeted with a yawn than a whoop of delight. John, I know, would like to include some non-SF-related stuff (which might improve things) but he's not getting it submitted. A pity. One thing which might improve DEATH RAYS is to change the layout. Ted White writes in PONG 25 about the effects of production on the "feel" of a fanzine and certainly the white paper and rather unimaginatively ordered layout of DEATH RAYS give it a rather cold and sterile appearance, as though it was designed and, one might infer, written by a computer. A change of layout wouldn't be a real substitute for interesting material, of course, but it might help.

Still, we ought to be grateful that DEATH RAYS is literate, I guess, and it's still got plenty of time to improve. Time will tell, as they say.

DOT 11 (Kevin Smith, 10 Cleves Court, St Marks Hill, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4PS; most likely for the usual; Q, 12pp.) You can't help feeling sorry for Kevin, who only six months ago was writing about how he and his mates could produce wonderful fanzines only they couldn't be bothered any more, and now here he is, obliged to produce a fanzine to win TAFF votes, and he can't think of a damn thing to write about. Bloody hell, isn't it a hard life?

Kevin started off doing fanzine reviews but was pipped at the post by Chris Priest's substantial effort, so he decided to resurrect an idea he'd used a few years ago. The idea of writing in the



style of a first person narrated gangster novel worked very well back then, and it works well enough at the start of this piece. Famous fans are seen in a new light when presented as American gangsters and Kevin manages to write entertainingly for almost two pages about being asked a question by Chris Atkinson and Linda Pickersgill and not being able to think of an answer. Two pages!! The trouble is, the piece lasts for nine pages and gets pretty tedious after a while. Instead of sticking to fandom, Kevin starts talking about the east-west political situation. Now, I'm not one of these fanatics who wants to keep politics out of fandom, but this bit just isn't funny. Dave Langford as a gangster organising "trips down the west side" is incongruous enough to be amusing, but Reagan and Brezhnev as gangsters fighting it out with machine-guns is too close to the truth.

I'd rather have seen the fanzine reviews after all. Kevin still finds time to make unappreciative remarks about Chris Atkinson's writing and STOP BREAKING DOWN. I'd be intrigued to know why he finds such fine material so awful. And I'd

quite like to know the answer to that question they asked him: Is he glop or leather? Think carefully, Kevin, and study the fetishes of American fans. The TAFF race might depend on it.

DRYGULCH 5 (from Cretinfandom and the Red Army Choir. This week's address: Bill Carlin, 78 Abbey-craig Road, Glasgow G34 0DN; most likely for the usual; FC; 10pp.) Oh yes, Drygulch. Never really thought of it as a proper clubzine, so it didn't get into the list I mentioned earlier on. Generally makes for jolly reading though. Last issue I suggested they make it longer, and this issue it is (just a bit), but I was wishing they'd made it shorter by the time I was half-way through. I thought they were getting away from the in-jokes, but this is the most incomprehensible issue they've ever produced. I did like the idea of a con at the Overlook Hotel though. A potentially brilliant notion this - everything comes to life at midnight: "... some drunken asshole called Torrance came staggering past our table". (You know - Stephen King, Stanley Kubrik.) As for the rest of it, I eventually had to give up because it wasn't making any sense at all. A pity. I expect all of it's funny in Glasgow.

EPSILON 8, 9 (Rob Hansen, 9A Greenleaf Road, East Ham, London E6 1DX; most likely for the usual; Q 20pp and 22pp.) Issue 8 contains Rob's thoughts on the importance of fan history and TAFF, plus anecdotal highlights from Novacon 10 and Silicon 5. Issue 9 has Rob on the SECOND HAND WAVE editors, Chuck Connor, and Joseph Nicholas, plus Leroy Kettle on, ostensibly, Novacon 11. Both issues have interesting letter columns. So, what do I think of it all?

Well, I must admit that I tend to sympathise with Chris Atkinson when she writes in START BREAKING UP: "I rarely read editorials in fanzines. They so often seem to be bristling with words like 'Hugo', 'TAFF', 'Doc Weir' and similar boring garbage that I know I'll have no interest in whatsoever, so my attention wavers and fails after the first glance." Then: "The unique feature of fanzines - and the one that I therefore prize - is the opportunity they afford to get to know the article-writers better..." and I must admit that it's the anecdotal writing that I, myself, prefer in fanzines. However, a bit of fannish politics is always good for getting a few locs, and in moderation I find it interesting enough, as long as it isn't allowed to take over completely. When that happens, the whole thing seems to me to become as incestuous as fandom's denigrators are always claiming it to be. I can't pretend that this is anything more than personal taste, but I do happen to think that fanzines should look outwards as well as inwards occasionally. I find the serious fannish debate in EPSILON interesting, but after half a dozen pages or so I find myself stepping back and wondering if it isn't all being taken too seriously. Maybe this outlook has been brought on by Rob's reaction to the editorial remarks in the last SECOND HAND WAVE. I mentioned last issue that I hoped this wouldn't be blown up into another 'fannish barrier' debate, and now Rob seems determined to do just that. Oh well. Despite it all, his arguments on this matter, as on all the others, are well thought out and well set down, and I find myself by and large in agreement with him. After all, this is the sort of fannish writing that Rob is best at, so who can blame him for doing it? By comparison, his anecdotal writing is unmemorable. Take his con reps in Issue 8: Rob is knowledgeable enough not to fall into the trap of reeling out a boring list of consecutive events, including what he had to eat and how many times the car broke down on the way; he confines himself to the highlights (including the affair of Ritchie Smith's sandwiches, of which - ahem - more later). The result is amusing but it can't hold a candle to anecdotal writing at its best, viz. Leroy Kettle in Issue 9, and if it did there would probably be an explosion in any case.

Leroy certainly knows how to write an entertaining con report, and it's good to see him writing fannish articles again. A good conrep needs a theme, rather than just a list of unrelated events; the theme here is that Rob Hansen farts a lot and Leroy was sharing a room with him. Around such themes classic articles are woven. The conrep doesn't tell you all that much about Novacon, but it certainly makes you laugh, and it's memorable alright; you won't forget it any easier than yesterday's vindaloo.

Though I have my reservations about stirring up the SECOND HAND WAVE thing, Rob's comments about Joseph Nicholas raise an interesting point about the effect which Joseph's reviews may have had on fanzine production in recent years. And Leroy's conrep provides an excellent counterpoint to all this. Yes, all in all it's a very good issue indeed.

FANZINE FRANTIQUE 1 (Keith & Rosemary Walker, 6 Vine Street, Greaves, Lancaster, Lancs LA1 4UF; for the usual; A4; 6pp.) Keith's usual hastily assembled reviews, plus loads of apologies about the standard of production, which comes as quite a surprise because it's no more horrid than usual.

FOUNDATION 23 (edited by David Pringle. Subs to SF Foundation North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham RM8 2AS; £5 for three issues; A5; 112pp.) Main feature this issue is an interview with M John Harrison by Christopher Fowler, plus four other features and reviews which include Moorcock on Ballard, Clute on Shaw, and Watson on Priest.

FUSION 2 (Ken Mann, 87 St Fillans Road, Dundee DD3 9LA Scotland; £1 plus 25p postage & packing; A5, 90pp.) A well-produced fiction and poetry magazine, with contents that seem in general to be not much above the general fan fiction standard. Ever present in the writing is the assumption which most amateur writers have that, whoever picks up the zine will be eager to read it and not have to be enticed into it by their own artistic ability. There are not engaging tales; they require a resolute effort by the reader to get into them. Not always a bad thing, many people will argue, the same might be said of some of the greatest works of literature. But these are unknowns fighting to be heard amongst



the great mass of available writing. I'm not suggesting they sell out to commerciality, but some attempt to write a story which grabs and holds the reader's interest might, nevertheless, be beneficial: both to help sell FUSION and to develop their writing skills. In this issue, Karl R. Hansen's WIRES is no more engaging than the rest, but the writing isn't bad and the idea is good, and there's a wonderful poem called IN A MOMENT by Des Ryan which just about makes the whole thing worthwhile.

NABU 11 (Ian Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY; for the usual or 50p for TAFF; Q; 40pp.) This issue contains the third part of Dave Longford's TAFF report, which makes American worldcons sound every bit as horrible as I'd always imagined they would be; the usual lively LOC column, with a few comments on Chris Evans's article last issue and lots of Joseph Nicholas; and an article by Joseph himself, responding to the letters and going on to talk about the low standards of fanzine writing ... and reading.

Joseph starts by attempting, none too convincingly, to explain away the faults of his last NABU article as being planned in advance specifically to fool the Americans. As Rob Hansen pointed out in EPSILON 9, Joseph had previously poured scorn on a similar ploy which Tom Jones tried in WAIF, so how can he expect us to take his own attempt seriously? (For the last few months, Joseph seems to have been happily digging similar traps for himself and then falling into them. Was there something in the kangaroo steaks or is this all some subtle new master-plan he's devised to fool us all? No doubt all will be revealed next issue.) Anyway, Joseph then goes on to dismiss the letters which the Americans sent in response to the article as being, by and large, examples of an inability to read what is written down and an inability to think straight when composing a response. He then goes on to apply this outbreak of "non-reading and non-thinking" to fandom in general. He does have a point here, and it's one which he illustrates well, partly by exposing the vapid comments of others, and partly by exhibiting considerable vapidity himself. I do sympathise with his dislike of capsule reviews whose writers have obviously not paid reasonable attention to the material under review, but I fail to see why he spends a paragraph scolding Rob Jackson for the comment that the title of one of Joseph's columns was "totally unfair as the article contained not a single swearword that I could find". This was surely a joke, not perhaps a particularly funny joke, and perhaps it was a rather annoyingly irrelevant comment on an article which Joseph had doubtless spent considerable time and trouble in writing, but it was nevertheless a joke, and deserved to be treated as such rather than studied under an electron microscope and blown up with a hydrogen bomb. Whereas, it's perfectly reasonable to expect someone doing a large number of reviews to exhibit enough care and intelligence to make the task worthwhile, it's equally ridiculous to expect their every sentence to be the epitome of wit and wisdom. In failing to recognise a joke, Joseph is exhibiting the same literal-mindedness of which he accused the Americans in NABU 10, thereby admirably illustrating his point in NABU 11 that we're all as stupid as each other.

Back in OCELOT 1, the first fanzine that Graham James and I ever produced, Graham wrote a parody of a sercon article about "what is SF?" composed of utter nonsense, with hardly a sentence which followed on logically from the last, yet every response we got treated it as a serious article. They criticised it, but they treated it as a serious article. And Joseph wrote in to say that (as well as our humour being "the wrong kind") we shouldn't have included the article as you couldn't have sercon and fannish stuff in the same issue! And we sat back amazed and perplexed at the literal-mindedness of the whole fannish readership. We would never be like that.

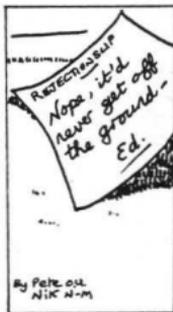
But I recently got a letter from Jim Darroch of FORTH fame, saying that, in passing, Owen Whiteoak is not Captain Black, as I speculated in a previous column, and also that FORTH were joking when they said they didn't know what fannish writing was, a comment of their which I'd taken quite literally. I'd even gone on to explain to them what it meant. Gulp. Just goes to show etc etc...

So where does all this leave us?

Well, Joseph goes on to explain our collective stupidity as being indicative of the laziness of twentieth century man, subjected to bad journalism, bad TV, etc, and no longer able to think for himself. He concludes: "the problem of what to do about the lousy standard of what currently passes for good in fan-writing is insoluble", basically because we're all idiots. Bloody hell, sounds bad, doesn't it? My reaction to this apocalyptic statement will appear later in the column, because it ties in with something which crops up in TWENTYTHIRD, and because I can't really carry on the NABU review forever, can I? So, leaving the wider problems of mankind to one side for a moment, what of Joseph himself?

Some 18 months ago, he expressed an intention not to do any more fanzine reviews, and in the recent EPSILON 9, he writes: "Who cares what boring old farts like (Rob) or I or Alan or even Simon Ounsley have to say about fanzines?" Well, ahem, if Joseph feels like that, and since he's been intending to stop writing about fanzines for so long, why doesn't he do so? As it is, Joseph writing about fanzines vies with Ritchie Smith's sandwiches for Most Commonly Observed Phenomenon this issue. He's either defending his BY BRITISH anthology in PONG, or re-assessing his own columns in a LOC in EPSILON, or writing about subject matter to TAPPEN or, here in NABU, responding to the response to his previous article.

I think it's a pity that Joseph seems to be neglecting NAPALM IN THE MORNING with its wider subject-matter in order to constantly defend and re-assess his work on fanzines, half of the time trying to back up what he's said before and half of the time negating it. In this NABU, the subject matter of the article is actually quite wide-ranging and - I think - interesting, but it's submerged for the most part beneath Joseph's desire to have a go at his critics. I think he'd do himself a favour to let the past be for a while, let the fan historians make of it as they will, and not let it get in the way of his other writing. If he wants to stop writing about fanzines, all he has to do is stop. Mind you, what NABU would fill its pages with if he did is another matter.....



NEW RIVER BLUES 5 ((??? can't find a number on it, though perhaps I'm blind, but Chris Priest claims it's issue 5)) (Roz Kaveney, 15 Mascott House, Whiston Rd, London E2 and Abigail Frost, 69 Robin Hood Gardens, Cotton St, London E14; for the usual or 20p in stamps; A4; 20pp.) Well, I've always thought that NERB would be wonderful as opposed to being merely good, if only they would take a bit more care over it. When I've said this to Abi Frost in the past she's always said that she sees fanzines as pieces of journalism and that fan-writers should, therefore, be subject to the same constraints which journalists face, i.e., they should do things in a hurry. I've never quite understood this argument, so I hope she'll forgive me if I haven't presented it very well, and perhaps she'll take me up on it if anyone lends her a copy of MATRIX. I can see that it's often good fun to do fanzines in a hurry and that the results can often come out best if they're quickly written, because they have a certain freshness and immediacy about them. But, except in very special cases (the NFRB special Lennon Memorial issue), or unless the zine has a very frequent schedule, I can't see the fact that things are done in a hurry can be used as an excuse for bad presentation or sloppy writing. Previous NERBs have often contained long, rambling con reports, full of gems of wit, but crying out for pruning and re-writing; others have contained articles by Roz Kaveney which contained a large number of baffling abbreviations for organisations and movements and go knows what, which she made no attempt to explain. I always got the feeling they were enjoying the writing, and the zines were always worth reading for the bits you could understand, but I did wish that they'd bear their audience in mind and make a better attempt to communicate, rather than just happily writing down what was in their heads and then sod it.

Anyway, the reason I'm dredging all this up is that this issue of NERB gets rather heavily attacked by Chris Pries in DEADLOSS 3 for sloppiness of presentation. He objects, in particular, to an article by Roz which is indeed badly presented: "...it should have been fascinating reading" says Chris, "But for me the dreadful carelessness of writing, spelling and typing got in the way. It's not as if Roz Kaveney has a false arm, or is a bus-conductor or in some other non-literary activity. Roz is a professional journalist, and can clearly do better than this. The fact that she doesn't bespeak of the unpleasant attitude that NERB is 'only' a fanzine, that its readers are 'only' fans. Thus she is in contempt of her medium and her audience..."

Is she indeed? Well, I've spoken to Roz about fanzines on a number of occasions and I've never got that impression from her. On the contrary, I've always found her to be refreshingly interested in fanzines and enthusiastic about their possibilities. Over a period of several years, when few people were turning in good fanzish writing and hardly a soul seemed interested in the situation, Roz was one of the few who was. So Chris's attack seems unwarranted. Anyway, I've checked up, and the editor of FOUNDATION, a journal read much more widely than by mere 'fans', told me in confidence that the manuscripts Roz submits are in very much the same parlous state of presentation as NEW RIVER BLUES, and I wouldn't mind betting that the editors of THE SUNDAY TIMES, BOOKS AND BOOKMEN, and GAY NEWS suffer in a similar manner. From which I conclude that the spelling and typing in NERB is much more indicative of Roz's approach to writing in general than of any contempt she might hold for fandom.

I can understand how Chris Priest might arrive at an assumption of such contempt from reading NERB, but I think he holds too rigidly to this assumption. And, this annoys me because this issue is the best I've seen. The presentation is, indeed, poor in places, but the writing itself is generally more careful, the articles better constructed. The best of them is Roz's description of the threats of violence which were made against her, a piece which ends with a plea for fanzine subject matter to be more constructive, less art for art's sake. Couldn't agree more. Fanzines don't have to talk about matters of life and death all the time, but they should be able to encompass such things. There's also two good pieces from Abi: one, a piece which examines fanzines in comparison with other "small press" publications: "Fanzines could take over the world," says Abi, albeit rather jokingly, "if it weren't for the people who write and edit most of them". Well, I do sympathise, and I like the way she places fanzines in a broad context, but I think she's unduly pessimistic in her conclusions: "The whole thing started with science fiction and the social life revolving around it" she says, "only those two topics are permissible subjects". This is not so and is becoming less so, and one of the fanzines which has recently helped to broaden the scope is TAPPEN, which she goes on to criticise. Her argument runs something like this: TAPPEN is close to the established idea of what a good fanzine should be like. Because it is good, it will encourage others to imitate it, when in fact they should be going off and doing their own things, the latter being something new and different.

Well, I can see her point, but I think she's becoming unnecessarily worried. The other side of the coin, after all, is that quality material encourages others to imitate its standard, as well as its subject matter. And I happen to think that quality is what we need more than anything at the moment, a point I will elaborate on later.

OVERMATTER 4 (Steven J Green (for the Solihull Group), 11 Fox Green Cres, Birmingham B27 7SD; most likely for the usual; A4; 4pp.) Newsletter with, ahem, news and Garry Kilworth (still) on aliens. Steve is shortly taking over the Brum Group's zine, so OVERMATTER's future is presently in doubt. Other Steve Green news: his apazine (whose name and whereabouts escape me at the moment) is shortly coming out of its apa and expanding. Seems like a sensible move.

PONG 25, 26, 27, 28 (Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St. Falls Church, VA 22046 USA, and Dan Steffan who lives at No. 1010 on the same street; for the usual incl. trade to both editors; USQ; 34pp, 8pp, 6pp and 10pp; part R.) An incredibly frequent zine (fortnightly through most of 1980, though postal costs have now forced a change to three-weekly) which has the noble aim of encouraging a re-birth of fannishness. Ted and Dan want to promote an awareness of the good fanzish writing of the past, while at the same time looking for an encouraging new talent. All this seems laudable enough to me, and I certainly enjoy receiving PONG. I can't say that any one part of the issues I've seen has struck me as being brilliant in itself, but the nett effect is impressive. The artwork is amusing and good, all the writing is eminently readable, and the production (particularly in view of the

punishing schedule) is excellent. PONG is lively and enthusiastic and likely to encourage enthusiasm in its readers. If there's such a thing as a spiritual home of fannish writing, then it's probably centered around PONG at the moment, which is exactly what its editors want.

As an American zine, it's particularly effective for a British audience. There does seem to be a certain transatlantic communication gap, in that many US zines read like they come from a different universe. PONG, in company with BLATANT and SPACE JUNK, manages to avoid this; in fact, it often seems more concerned with matters British than with matters American. This is particularly true of the bumper first anniversary edition (first anniversary, as they put it) number 25. There's an article by Joseph Nicholas defending his exclusion of Greg Pickersgill from the BY BRITISH anthology, and considerable debate about this in the LoC column. Here, and in issue 28, the editors express optimism about the current British fanzine scene and Ted is hopeful of the emergence of "a fruitful era of cross-fertilisation" between Britain and America. Well, that would be nice, wouldn't it? Ted's glasses may be tinted a touch too rosily, but his optimism is valuable simply because it's infectious.

RAA 1 (Martyn Taylor, RAA House, 5 Kimpton Rd, Camberwell, London SE5 7EA; for the usual; A4, 16pp.) The first fanzine from the BSFA's resident film critic and a very good debut it is. But I wish Martyn wouldn't worry so much about having to be fannish. I, too, have a preference for that kind of writing but the best bits of this issue are where Martyn lets his hair down and gets into the serious stuff, like the film reviews; the piece on Tarkovsky; and an intelligent and sensitive article on Bob Dylan. Fans tend to dislike serious material because it's so often dull to read and frequently not too intelligent. Martyn's rare gift is to be able to tackle serious material and make it entertaining and interesting to read, and he shouldn't be afraid to use that gift as much as he wants to.

RAFFLES 5 (Larry Carmody and Stu Shiffman. Write to Stu at 19 Broadway Terrace 1D, NY, NY 10040, USA; for \$1, old fanzines, or the usual; USQ; 42pp.) According to the people at PONG, the fanzine renaissance in the US is lagging behind Britain a bit. Even so, they mention RAFFLES as being one of the best US zines, and since Stu Shiffman won the TAFF battle last year, one might certainly expect that to be the case. So it comes as quite a surprise to find that RAFFLES 5 is really quite a mediocre fanzine. The production is certainly not shit-hot, but it's nothing like as disappointing as the leaden contents.

It isn't uniformly awful. There's the transcript of a speech by James White, reminiscing about the golden age of Irish fandom and, as one might expect, that's quite amusing. But it was written as a speech, and like all speeches it loses a bit in translation to the printed word. There's an article by Jon Singer about how he couldn't be bothered to write anything for the fanzine, hardly the most original of subjects; a rambling, inconsequential, almost unreadable shaggy-dog story from Gary Tesser, which they've actually seen fit to re-print from elsewhere (I'm surprised it got published the first time); an editorial by Larry which talks about the fairly parlous state of US cons and comes to the hardly inspiring conclusion that noone should do anything about it; and a long editorial column from Stu which might actually be interesting in places if it wasn't for his leaden prose style. If this is one of the best US zines, then yes, the renaissance over there is lagging behind.

SIKANDER 6 (Irwin Hirsh, 279 Domain Road South Yarra Victoria 3141 Australia; for the usual, old fanzines or one aussie dollar; Q-ish; 20pp) My reactions to this are much the same as to Raffles above. I get the feeling that Irwin is a fairly prominent Aussie fan since he attracts lots of writers and loccers; Joseph told me how "triffic" this was: issue 5 seemed reasonable, but issue 6 is worse than that. The editorial, for instance, is so sloppily written that its point is almost completely submerged under the weight of phrases like "waiting for the scandal to brake(sic)", while John Alderson contributes a piece on the use of the word "person" which is so arrogant in its approach one might almost assume John knew something about English Language, which he patently doesn't. John objects strongly to a number of usages which are by no means incorrect, and he doesn't seem to appreciate that language is not static - it adapts to changing circumstances.

Other stuff: a faintly amusing but inconsequential piece about escalators by John Berry; a shaggy-dog story about census forms from Eric Lindsay and a very muddled piece about war game and con committees from David Grigg (another inexplicable re-print, this one).

Why am I slating these foreign zines so much? Is it because I think the editors are too far away to come and hit me? I don't think so. I think it's just that, judging from RAFFLES and SIKANDER alone, which may not be fair, the current standard in Britain really is higher, believe it or not. Irwin Hirsh's editorial would be tidied up for inclusion in, say, DEATH RAYS, while there's as much good stuff in a relatively new clubzine like CRAZY EDDIE as there is in RAFFLES.

And, as though to rub home the point, here come two of the best of the British zines.....

START BREAKING UP (Chris Atkinson, 28 Duckett Road, London N4 and Linda Pickersgill, 7A Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London W5; "this fanzine is available to whoever we give it to, and whoever asks for it - whatever it is"; Q; 22pp.) Chris and Linda, contributors to STOP BREAKING DOWN, decided that Greg Pickersgill was taking too long getting round to bringing out the next issue, so they decided to publish their material themselves. Greg must be kicking himself, because the result is excellent: the main articles are a Silcon report by Chris and a piece of reminiscing by Linda about drive-in movies. I found the latter superbly evocative of an institution which is completely alien to me. If I was American, I might have found it humdrum and boring, but being British I found it downright exotic. Good stuff.

Chris's conrep is another good example of how such things should be tackled. This was the first place where I read about Ritchie Smith's sandwiches, so it was the version which made me laugh the most. Whether it was the best it's difficult to tell; I'd have to wipe my brain clean between fanzines to do that. Anyway, if you want to find out about that infamous snack, you

could do worse than to try here. You weren't expecting me to tell you, were you?

Other stuff - a couple more lists (Chris Evans's excellent A DAY OF LIVES, and Linda on TEN SILLY THINGS MEN ASK AFTER SEX (!)), plus Chris and Linda attacking the excesses of fannish politics and fannish intolerance.

TAPPEN 3 (Malcolm Edwards, 28 Duckett Road, London N4 1BN; available by editorial whim; Q; 42pp.) A bumper edition of Malcolm's renaissance-inducing genzine, with a Unicorn 2 conrep by Chris Evans (theme: the gradual decay of the Evans body); veteran Dick Howett on the awfulness of cinema supporting features; Chris Atkinson in the Desert Island Discs spot; the fifth part of Dave Langford's TAFF report; Chris Priest on his unpublished dirty book; and the usual outbreak of Leroy Kettle. Nothing this issue to match LIFE WITH THE LOONIES from issue two but it's all good stuff. The trouble is, like Dave Langford's writing and Pete Lyon's artwork, TAPPEN is going to start being taken for granted, which isn't fair. Keep them coming, Malcolm, they are appreciated.

THE PATCHIN REVIEW 2 (Charles Platt; write to British agent Dave Pringle, 21 The Village Street, Leeds LS4 2PR; £6 for six issues; A5-ish; 60pp.) The sercon scandal magazine, with articles by Brian Aldiss, Thomas M Disch, Alfred Bester, and others.

THIS NEVER HAPPENS 1 (Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake. Write to Lilian at 1 Braehead Rd, Thorntonhall, Glasgow G74 5AQ; for the usual; A5; R; 42pp.) This is the first attempt by Lilian and Christina to produce a zine of predominantly fannish writing, and the result is rather lacklustre. They write very literately about conventions, Trout meetings, and their travels abroad but there's no more thought gone into the construction of the pieces than to start at the beginning and write down what happened next until they get to the end. I think they're capable of better if they have a mind to it. The writing needs a bit more planning and a dash of the unexpected, to make the mundane into the memorable. (Good cover by Dave Harwood, though.)

TRIPLE ECHO 4 (Steve Roberts and Andrew & Josie Briggs. Write to Steve at 236 Fletcher Rd, Preston PR1 5HH; £2 for 4 issues, cheques payable to Steve; A5; R; 56pp.) Much the same mix as the previous issue - a sercon zine dealing mainly with media SF but there's a bit of fiction thrown in for good measure. Contents this time include an interview with Garry Kilworth, a piece on the recent DR WHO repeats, a review of Carl Sagan's COSMOS, plus news and rather a lot of fiction.

TWENTYTHIRD 5 (Jimmy Robertson, 64 Hamilton Rd, Bellshill, Lanarkshire M14 LAG; most likely for the usual; FC; 12pp.) "A different stlyee?" asks Jimmy at the top of this issue, and there does seem to be a slight change in this slightly-larger-than-usual edition of TWENTYTHIRD. The first time I read it through I was quite disappointed - I was left with the impression that Jimmy was moving towards a looser stream-of-consciousness style of writing which didn't seem to work too well. The second time I read it through, though, it didn't seem much different from usual. The change is subtle, I think, but not successful. Despite what I said last time, maybe Jimmy's style is important, and maybe what I miss in this issue is his usual economical use of words. Jimmy himself does not seem too pleased: "a bit patchy this time" he says. There's nothing wrong with a bit of experimentation and I may be accused of trying to hold back the tide of progress, but I must say I'm hoping for a return to the resident style next issue.

In one article, Jimmy writes: "When Malcolm Edwards says fannish writers should give of their best, does this put him at odds with the literary critics? I agree that to do your best is necessary but how do you tell when someone is giving of their best?" Now, what I find interesting about this is that Malcolm made a comment about writing and Jimmy's reaction is to turn it round and apply it to criticism, implying (whether this was his intention or not) that the statement may not be valid because it's a difficult basis for a critic to work from. All of which seems to me symptomatic of a fandom which is taking "criticism" and "critical standards" too bloody seriously. As far as I'm concerned, it is writers who set standards, not critics.

Joseph Nicholas and Alan Dorey used to go on about declining standards in fanzines, as though they believed they had a holy mission to correct this through their review columns. Joseph has now come to realise that this was a hopeless task and his present stance now often seems to be diametrically opposed to his previous one. He seems to subscribe to the view expressed by Chris Evans in NABU 10 that no standards are universally applicable, that new fanzines will come along whose editors won't give a damn about any standards which Joseph might seek to impose. But those fanzines haven't come along, and Chris Evans's view remains just a theory, and one which is cast much in doubt by D West's response in NABU 11. Nevertheless, Joseph is probably better off believing that, than to believe that a fanzine review column can ever improve general standards.

But what about FOULER, some of you might say, the fanzine which stood fandom on its head in the early 70s with its shit-kicking reviews? Well, I wasn't around in fandom at the time, but I'd be willing to bet that it was Greg Pickersgill's own writing and attitudes which created the stir, not any effect he might have had on the zines he was reviewing. He wasn't really criticising others so much as showing the way with his own writing. Joseph may well be right when he says we're all doomed - but all we can do is set what standards we can and hope that they're good enough and that

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MY BOY...



others will follow. And we do that by writing, not by reviewing. We have to raise peoples' expectations of fanzines. Clever tricks, like Joseph's "fooled you, didn't I?" don't work because people don't expect such clever stuff from fanzines. One day they might, but that day hasn't arrived yet, so it's no good using them. Graham and I learnt that doing our first fanzine - I'm surprised Joseph didn't pick it up sooner. But all that doesn't mean to say that good writing always goes unnoticed. There is hope, as evidenced by Chris Atkinsons' sudden rise to popularity through her excellent work in TAPPEN and STOP BREAKING DOWN. The attitude of PONG is important, because it enhances the credibility of fanzines by demonstrating that some of those who wrote for them decades ago are still admired today, but most important of all are those who are producing good writing at the moment: people like Chris, Dave Bridges, Jimmy at his best, and not forgetting Dave Langford. And there are other who are capable too, Joseph included. Fans can set standards by writing to a good standard and writing entertainingly, not by engaging in long and tedious debates about standards.

WALLBANGER 5 (Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Rd, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3QH; 16p stamps or the usual; A4; 3pp.) Finally, here's a fanzine that's looking to the future. The best pieces this issue happen to be written by Eve and John themselves (Eve on a concert by Ultravox and John following up last issue's article about how he lost his job) but there are four other articles by newer writers.

Arnold Akien contributes an extended loc which has been used as an article, based purely around a picture of John with his mouth open. Like most of Arnold's locs, I didn't find this particularly amusing. For all his famous tireless letter-hacking, the only pieces from Arnold that I've actually liked are the two articles I've seen which were actually intended as such: both in FANTASMAGORIA, one vaguely about Mancon and the other - I think - about communication. Though the latter was a little overlong, both pieces were ambitious and exhibited a considerable amount of planning. I think Arnold does have a fair amount of talent, but it's rarely shown to proper effect. Maybe if he cut down the long letters and concentrated more on each piece?

The articles by Martyn Taylor and Brian Smith both start in the same way: describing how they were asked to write the article. Eve puts it down to an astonishing coincidence - I would tend to call it lack of originality on both parts. Still, the articles which follow are OK. I've already remarked that Martyn seems happier with sercon than fannish stuff and shouldn't be afraid to stick to what he prefers. I think he could become a very good fannish writer, but only if he really wants to be. At the moment, I'm not sure his heart is in it. Brian Smith's article deals with the origins of the names of various drinks. It's difficult to make this sort of piece flow very well - there's a tendency to produce a set of paragraphs which are rather disconnected, and this example is no exception. Still, it's OK of its kind.

Finally, there's a piece by Roy Macinski about how he got into fandom through the BSFA. It's a very serious piece - I would have liked to see a touch of humour here and there - but at least it made me feel we BSFA people are serving a useful purpose in life, however often we may doubt it.

Just one more point: I didn't think the extracts from the Financial Times worked very well. They would have been OK along with some comment from Eve, possibly linking them in to something else in the fanzine, but not on their own. Still, Eve's doing a good job encouraging new people to write for fanzines (I know how soul-destroyingly difficult that can be) and I hope she can keep it up. I wonder, could she have found so many people willing to try their hand before the recent renaissance?

NEWS FROM THE SON 4 (Dave Pringle, 21 The Village Street, Leeds LS4 2PR; send two first class stamps to get on the mailing list; A4; 3pp.) Whoops! Almost missed this one. Pringle would have come round and hit me with his crutch. Anyway, this is the new newszine for J G Ballard fans, issue four containing a letter from Charles Platt; a survey of Ballard's books in German; and a review of an illustrated edition of THE DROWNED WORLD.

And that's it then - a bumper edition of DEEP CUTS reflecting a bumper crop of fanzines issued in November and December. Will the renaissance continue, I wonder? Tune in next issue to find out.

Fanzines to Simon Unsley, 13A Cardigan Rd, Headingly, Leeds 6.

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COMPETITION M39: Footnote

Our joke about the competition being "incredibly easy" turned out to be prophetic; in the sense that it must have been so easy that hardly anyone bothered to enter! Ha, perhaps the competition was too difficult for you'all. Due to the small number of entries, the competition is held over until next issue. So, if you care to apply yourself to the problem - a book token awaits the winner.



P. WALKER