

Starling

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I've been going to Midwestcons for a long time. I remember the first one I went to fairly well. That was in 1965, and the convention was held in a Holiday Inn, I think. I had been publishing Starling for only a short time, and didn't know too many people, and didn't know too much about fandom. I felt pretty out of place, but it didn't bother me too much. I didn't feel any compulsive desire to be included in any of the "in" groups, so I wasn't too disappointed when I wasn't. There were some people there about my own age, and we sat around and talked some -- Duncan McFarland then published a fanzine with Creath Thorne; Duncan was there, since he lived in Cincinnati -- he thought Creath might be coming, but he never did. Creath lived near Kansas City, which was actually considerably closer to my St. Louis than to Cincinnati. Duncan published a few more fanzines, popped up at a few more Midwestcons, but then pretty much disappeared from view. I thought I had him talked into writing a little for Starling at the last Midwestcon I saw him at, but nothing happened. Ben Solon made his first appearance at Midwestcons in 65, with the brand new first issue of his fanzine. I remember thinking that the printing in Ben's fanzine was a lot better than the printing in mine, but I wasn't entirely willing to admit that the text was that much better. I don't remember either fanzine well enough now to guess. Arnie Katz buzzed past me once or twice, I remember. Ted White I thought looked Very Weird, with a shaven head and a beard; almost as weird as Mike McInerney, with long hair and a full beard. I was awed by the presence of pros, such as Bob Tucker and Fred Saberhagen, and equally awed by Big Name Fans -- such as Ted White, but also by people like Buck and Juanita Coulson. I'm really not sure if that was a good Midwestcon or not, I was hardly aware enough of what was going on to tell. I remember that instead of a banquet we had a general meeting; after the notables were introduced and had their say (no one remembered that I was a fanzine publisher--that year, they introduced even fanzine publishers, I guess there was a shortage of notables) we were shown some movies, one about Ray Bradbury and one excellent cartoon, maybe some others. I remember the cigarette smoke became so thick I became quite sick. I didn't get around to many parties, I was hardly aware they were going on. But, like I wasn't expecting too much, and overall I enjoyed myself, and I left wanting to come back next year. I also left determined to publish a better fanzine, and to help start a science fiction club in St. Louis.

I missed the Midwestcon in 1966. 1967 and 1968 Midwestcons were an enjoyable whirlwind of bidding parties and fannish energy -- at least for me, involved as I was in the St. Louis bid for a worldcon. 1969 was somewhat slower paced, because at that time the convention had been won, but no less enjoyable.

At the last Midwestcon, someone told me that it was the worst Midwestcon ever. I might have to agree to some extent. There were more things wrong with this one for me at least than at any of the 67 through 69 conventions. (I really can't say what the 65 con was like, you see.) Let me explain.

To start with: the weather. It rained rather hard and rather long on Friday. It <sup>4</sup> was somewhat too cool for me to consider swimming on Saturday. Some of you with more meat on your bones than I, and with considerably stronger constitutions might have gone, but not me. It finally warmed up and stayed sunny on Sunday, giving only one day of typical nice Midwestcon weather. I was told that this was the first bad weather at a Midwestcon since the last time the convention had been at the Carrousel Motel. Which is the second point. . .

The Carrousel Motel is just so huge and so fancy that the Midwestcons seem totally lost and out of place. It must have been a 75 acre spread, with dozens of buildings, one of them very hotel like with 6 floors, the rest of them more conventionally motel like, with only one or two floors. Color Televisions. Two outdoor swimming pools, one of them surrounded by the high rise building, with another indoor pool, two night club/restaurants with live entertainment in the evening, a room full of various kinds of pin ball and game machines, just the fanciest thing I've ever been at for a science fiction convention.

Now, as a result of all of this, the fans were kind of lost. It was a many minute walk from the "low rent" district to the high rise building, where most of the meeting and party rooms were. With two swimming pools, which one did you look at for the swimming fans? Given a boom number, and without a map or something, one person's guess was as good as another's about where it was located. But it wasn't just the size of the motel that made the convention seem lost; there must have been 2 Midwestcons worth of traveling salesmen at that motel, plus several wedding parties which seemed fully as big as the Midwestcon. At the old North Plaza, the swimming pool was centrally located, the rooms were easier to locate, walking from one end of the place to the other didn't take ten minutes, and most of the people you saw walking around over the convention weekend were fans.

Now pardon me if I bring up an unpleasant topic, but with all those Outsiders around the motel, I was made to feel very uncomfortable; I think this is what is called a generation gap. Most of those Outsiders were 4-square establishment, their cars were worth more than the house I live in and they wore clothes and jewelry worth more than my car. I sometimes get stared at at lot no matter where I go (what with my somewhat long hair), but I usually don't notice it too much. But I was subjected to more attention. . . hostile attention. . . during that weekend than I can ever recall being the case ever before. And I don't find that sort of thing pleasant. Nor do I think I was alone in feeling uncomfortable.

There is without a doubt some sort of "generation gap" within fandom itself -- some amount of ill feeling between some older and some younger fans. Both groups have interests and activities which either don't interest or in some cases repel the other group. But there is a great deal more harmony between fans of all ages than there was between fans in general and the Outsiders at the Carrousel. If I could read faces, I'm sure all the Outsider's faces that weekend were wondering where all those . . . those creepy, dirty, wierd people had come from, and what were they doing at their Carrousel. And they weren't wondering about just me, and the other young people their, they were wondering about the Bob Tuckers and the Buck and Juanita Coulsons and Howard Devores. Why, those people don't belong at the Carrousel, they probably buy their clothes at Woolworths or something.

Now, here ~~is~~ an important reason this Midwestcon wasn't as nice as some in the past. . . I don't understand why, but I have just dozens of people in mind who have regularly attended Midwestcons in the past, but missed this one. I missed them.

<sup>5</sup>  
In the past, Midwestcon banquets have been inexpensive, and very good. This year, it was expensive and (from all reports, as I didn't buy a meal) not too great. Reason given: The North Plaza didn't have convention facilities, so the banquet had to be held someplace else -- the consistently fine establishment where we had them has spoiled us. The Carrousel did have banquet facilities, and since costs had gone up at the other place anyway, it seemed silly to the convention organizers to force the convention to load itself into cars and journey down the road. I don't know. . .

Bob Tucker was toast master at the banquet. I came in after everyone had finished eating, you see.

(Aside concerning Bob Tucker:) Ed Smith beat me to the reprint rights on a very interesting Tucker article about a rock festival held near him. But I do have rights on an interesting article about how Bob is turning into a hippy. I'll print it next issue. And I hope I made it clear to Bob at the Midwestcon that I wouldn't mind printing a few more Tucker articles.

Ted White did the longest bit of speaking at the convention's banquet, on a topic understandably important to him, the future of Amazing and Fantastic -- and to some extent the future of science fiction magazines in general. Ted was somewhat optimistic about the up coming quality of his magazines -- and pessimistic enough about their commercial success to make it clear that they need help. Better distribution, better newstand display. (Go ahead, put the sf magazines in front, you aren't being silly.) Ted mentioned that they are able to make more money from newstand sales than from subscription.

Probably it has seemed from my comments that I didn't enjoy the Midwestcon at all. This wasn't the case. The lengths I've gone to badmouth various aspects of the convention reflect only the disappointment I felt with this years convention when compared to past Midwestcons -- despite everything, I did enjoy myself, I was able to visit with lots of old friends and make some new ones. I would like to suggest that if the Midwestcon has to stay at the Carrousel, the organizers try to keep the whole convention in the "low rent" district. Have the Cincinnati suite where it was Sunday, near the low rent pool. I actually wish we could have the North Plaza back, but they tell me it is falling apart. . .

I have to return to an earlier theme: the generation gap. I implied that I felt it was much stronger between the Carrousel Outsiders and fandom than between various elements of fandom. Well, I have a story: Tucker had warned me that he was going to give me a plug at the banquet, because I was huckstering his book. Okay. So last thing, he asked me to stand up. "See that guy back there. . .the fellow with the long hair. . .the. . .the HIPPY back there!?? (with mock antagonism)" So everyone turned around and applauded me. For being a hippy, I guess, since they didn't have any other reason. Then Bob gave his book and me a plug. Allow me to blush, it was very nice. . .all those smiling faces, both young and long-haired and otherwise. I thank you. \* \* \* \*



Postscript to Pangaea: I'd like to thank Terry Hughes, Jim Turner, Hake Ruttson and Jim Schumacher for contributing information to the SF/rock discussion. ## Originally, I was planning to write a long review/consideration of the Rolling Stone's Satanic Majesties album, but then I re-read Paul William's Book, Outlaw Blues, and it says it all. Read it.

# WITH MAZE TOWARD ALL

A Column about Books

+ Joe Sanders +

First of all, I must apologize to you: I promised last time that this column would deal with H.G. Wells, and that's proved to be impossible. I have the material on Wells assembled and waiting to be put together, but I don't have enough time right now to do the job Wells deserves. I have to finish editing the manuscript of a semi-literate historian's book on the modern South, then get into the second chapter of my Ph. D. dissertation. Next time--ah, next time--I'll devote the column to a study of Wells, plus at least one review of a current book, like the one that follows. Meanwhile please take this as a raincheck

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The Warlock, by Wilson Tucker. Avon, 75¢.

The Year of the Quiet Sun, by Wilson Tucker. Ace Science Fiction Special, 75¢.

The Warlock is a spy novel with perhaps a hint of science fantasy. The hero, son of a reputed witch, is assigned to investigate a Charles Fort-type author. This basic situation is interesting, and the action is fresh and lively right up to the conclusion, when the hero is told, in effect, "Congratulations, my lad, you've successfully run through our maze--now you can be Super Spy." In short, it's just another of those silly initiation-into-Captain-Midnight's-inner-circle stories. The letdown is enormous.

One question simply bulldozed flat by the escape-hatch ending: What has Anton Baldo done to show his superior spyship? All he accomplishes is playing some skillful but rather juvenile practical jokes, making snappy dialogue, and, mainly, staying alive. Perhaps Tucker is implying that super luck is in itself a kind of super power. And that notion might make

an interesting basis for a spy novel, but Tucker just leaves it lying there.

The Year of the Quiet Sun is different. It's an honest and and intelligent piece of craftsmanship on a serious theme--time travel into the immediate future to aid government policy making. The book holds interest throughout, with no copouts and it does a bit more than simply flow through your mind for a few hours reading time. I recommend it.

In a backover blurb, A.E. Van Vogt calls the book "a Hugo contender." I wouldn't go that far, largely because, since it deals with several short range predictions, Quiet Sun is almost certain to look quaint very soon. I'm traditionalist enough to like to imagine a prizewinning novel being read with no loss of pleasure after ten years. Unless things move on an unexpected tack, Quiet Sun's general predictions will remain frightening, but specific wrong guesses will begin to get in the reader's way a bit. So, here, Tucker's integrity works against him; he sacrifices some durability by the very willingness to make specific predictions that along with suggestions of broad future trends, makes the novel such a fascinating and frightening work now.

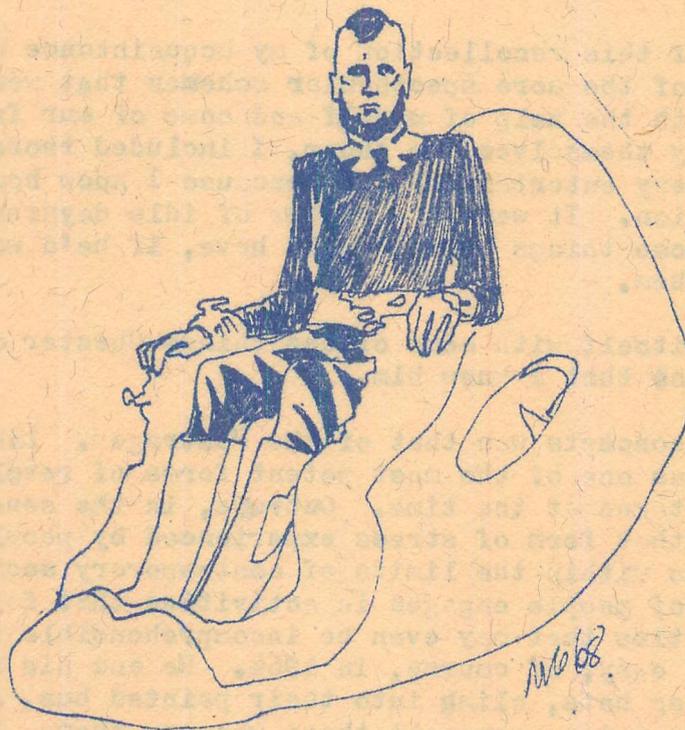
Van Vogt also labels Quiet Sun's main device as "an H. G. Wells-type time machine." Again, I disagree, but this comparison is worth some thought; I believe it complements what I think about Wells, and it illuminates what Tucker is doing. Let's agree, first of all, that Tucker's time machine resembles Wells's only in the sense that everyone who's written a time travel story since Wells is indebted to him. In fact, the difference between the two stories are much more significant than their similarities. Wells's Time Traveler builds his machine by himself; Tucker's Time Displacement Vehicle is constructed by a team of government engineers. The Time Traveler sallies forth on a grand, somewhat vague exploration of Earth's future. The TDV's three-man crew--selected for professional, ideological, and ethnic balance by a computer and a former governor of one of the Dakotas--is sent only a few years into the future to answer a number of limited political questions. Besides changes in practical conditions, these differences show a change in attitudes. So does an even more basic difference. Wells relies on our sharing the Traveler's sense of wonder as he begins his journey; I'd argue that Wells's actual point is quite different than that initial attitude leads us to expect, but that's the first appeal: Wouldn't it be exciting to know what's going to happen! Tucker's appeal is different. He relies on our fascination with TV news analysts and the "Periscope" column in Newsweek: What if the evil we know is fated to become worse tomorrow? And that concern is at least as important, today, as the sense of wonder; I'd bet that as we look forward our futures dread balances anticipation. As I've mentioned above, Tucker's recognition of this situation is Quiet Sun's greatest strength--and weakness.

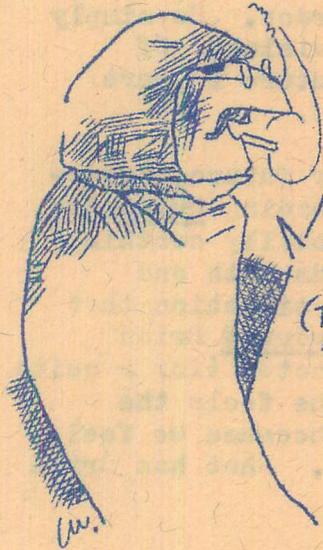
One other comparison. In The Time Machine, Wells shows us that the human race is at the mercy of evolutionary forces beyond its control; in a later novel, The War in The Air, he suggests that the collapse of civilizations could have been prevented if only men had taken the trouble to understand what kind of world they were living in and act accordingly. Tucker does not say that we are simply at the mercy of an historical process, but neither does he offer reassurance that our drift toward increased wildeyed

intervention overseas, greater racial division and political repression at home can be stopped. Perhaps if we take seriously what Quiet Sun shows us, we can act to prevent its predictions coming true. Perhaps that's what Tucker wants. But, rightly I think, he doesn't get overtly preachy or say that everything will be okay if we all just try a little harder. He simply tries to look at ominous trends squarely and to share his vision. Of course, if we shrug and turn away--if we do nothing--our future is more likely to become just the kind of nightmare Tucker predicts.

For that is the strength of Tucker's book; he shows us our future, tomorrow, and he refuses to give us an easy way out. As I was reading Quiet Sun, I thought I saw a couple of alternative showworn but emotionally soothing endings being prepared for. Then, at the end, Tucker avoids both and leaves his hero where he honestly has to be--squarely in a situation that he finds almost too horrible to face. Very effective. I wanted Brian Chaney to escape. He's not very fully developed as a character (for a quite valid reason), but he's sympathetic enough generally, and he feels the right shock and dismay at what he sees happen to America; because we feel alike on that, it hurts and disturbs me to see him trapped. What has Brian Chaney done to deserve this?

But, then, what have any of us done?





YA  
WANNA  
SEE ME!  
DO A  
(TRIPLE FLAP-IP  
AND LAND  
STANDING  
DOWN?)

# THE POLYMER PHOUS FREE-VERT PART TWO

+ Greg Shaw +

In the first installment of this recollection of my acquaintance with Chester Anderson, I covered a few of the more spectacular schemes that were concocted by him, either alone or with the help of myself and some of our friends. Fully aware that far-out ideas by themselves are cheap, I included those stories because they are (to me) very entertaining, and because I know how close these plans came to seeing fruition. It wasn't a matter of idle daydreaming; Chester really did intend to do those things and he could have, if he'd wanted. He just never got around to them.

This portion will concern itself with some of the things Chester did accomplish during the nine months or so that I knew him.

One of Chester's favorite concepts was that of the "outrage". Like Ken Kesey, he believed that outrage was one of the most potent forms of revolutionary activity that could be undertaken at the time. Outrage, in the sense we are considering, is what we call that form of stress experienced by people accustomed to conducting their affairs within the limits of contemporary social forms, when confronted with the sight of people engaged in activities that fall outside these social forms, activities that may even be incomprehensible in terms of those forms. Kesey had it easy, of course, in 1964. He and his friends had only to put on American flag hats, cling into their painted bus, and drive down any street to cause consternation among all those who saw them. In 1967, one would have had to look pretty hard to find anyone who hadn't seen so much long hair and mod clothes that he no longer noticed or paid much attention to them.

That didn't discourage Chester, though. If it was no longer possible to be outrageous simply on the basis of one's appearance, there were still plenty of outrageous things one could do that hadn't been done before. For his first Outrage, Chester chose to have a Happening.

# OUTRAGE UPON OUTRAGE

The Great Glide Church Happening happened sometime in February of March, I have, unfortunately, lost all the posters that were made up for the event, so I can't pinpoint the exact date. But then it doesn't really matter, does it? In any case, it was held in the Glide Church, located in the middle of the Tenderloin District of San Francisco, which is where all the drunks, degenerates, and losers of every description get together. The Church is run by the Glide Foundation, which has been a pioneer in providing programs and services that are relevant to the needs of the people served by the Church. They are a very hip, dedicated and sincere group of people.

When Chester Anderson approached these people with the idea of having a Happening in their church, I doubt that he told them all that he had in mind. Whatever he told them, however, was sufficient for him to be granted the use of the church for three days, to do with as he pleased.

The church itself is a beautiful building. Its center is the Chapel, a huge chamber on the second floor, with stained glass windows, high peaked ceiling, lots of pews, and a great organ behind the pulpit. On that floor were also many smaller rooms which served as offices and meeting rooms. On the first floor were several large meeting rooms, two small auditoriums, and interconnecting passageways that ran to obscure corners of the building and gave access to many odd rooms of varying sizes and functions. All of this was ours for three days, I mean "ours" to include all the people who were working on the project. There were a couple of groups involved, and each had their own activities planned. Chester was directing the entire thing, and I was helping him.

We showed up at the church on a Friday afternoon and began setting things up. Chester brought his mimeo and his electronic stencil-cutter, (his possession of which will be explained in the next installment) and we set up a sort of nerve-center in one of the offices upstairs. The idea was that various things could be printed up and distributed to the crowds whenever we liked. Before it was over, thousands of sheets were printed, containing bulletins (truthful and otherwise), poetry, artwork, whatever. There were experiments in how quickly rumors could be spread around the building, for example. Also on that afternoon we set up movie screens, electrical outlets, put signs all around so people would (or wouldn't) get lost, and tested out the organ. Chester could play it quite nicely.

The Happening was to begin that evening, but I almost forgot about it. The rock music scene in San Francisco was going full steam then, and at the time I was able to get into all the places free. Weekends, therefore were a big thing for me, and I was in the habit of taking in four or five dances in one weekend. This Friday there was a band I wanted to see at the Avalon, so I went there first, figuring it would take the Happening awhile to get moving. I forgot exactly who was playing, but I remember that I was having a fine time; aided, no doubt, by the acid someone had dropped into my coke.

I left the Avalon at maybe 10:30 and walked down to California Hall where Big Brother was playing. That was way back when they were still a great band and they were my favorite at the time. It was a fine dance, and I waited around to hear them close with "Amazing Grace" before leaving. It was midnight by the time I got to Glide.

The scene was fantastic. The entire church was packed, with crowds spilling out onto the surrounding sidewalks. I managed to squeeze inside where I ran into Chester, who pointed to a door and asked me to keep people from opening it. I opened the door to see why, and behind it was a rock band facing the main meeting room, where hundreds of people were listening and dancing, and watching the five belly dancers who were taking off some splendid costumes in front of the band. I spent a few minutes guarding the door, then forgot about it and went inside. The girls had the costumes off by now and the audience was digging it. Some started removing their own clothes and dancing. Presently the band stopped playing and everyone dispersed. I then joined Chester in the mimeo room.

The mimeo was ruining and the door was covered with the sheets that had already been printed. One of them declared, "There will be a funeral for the carcasses of the flowers in the hallways - attendance is mandatory if you wish...destroy the adverse influence of the amateur show - love them with dead flowers or anything else that you love with." Inside Chester filled me in on what I'd missed. My memory fails me, but luckily I have handy a copy of an old Berkelyey Barb with a review of the event, from which I shall quote: "Fully visible for the peripatetic voyeur were such sights as a naked man moving easily around the main sanctuary, a score of belly dancers, some topless, and stag movies...The scene got under way at 8 PM with a rock band downstairs. About 50 people of the large audience danced. In a smaller room next door, some people got ready for bed in a 2-foot-thick carpet of shredded plastic. The church elevator was filled with plastic, too. It was quickly commandeered by elated "elenauts". They ascended and descended and stopped between floors with satanic glee, singing "Yellow Submarine". By 10 PM the sanctuary of the church had been transformed into a panorama of waving candles, gliding, costumed bodies, birds-of-paradise, flowers. Clouds of incense wafted from hundreds of glowing sticks. Notes of flutes, rams' and seaweed horns, and drums blended with the church's organ and piano. Projectors flashed swirling colors on the walls. Behind the altar the long graceful cross was bathed in dancing purples and reds, as a gigantic face of Christ flashed on and off. A procession started around the banks of pews, each participant holding a candle and moving slowly in the undulating line. Soon there were two lines moving in opposite directions. Processioners exchanged candles as they passed, their faces glowing in the warm, intimate light. At 11 PM the Diggers fed several hundred people. The large crowd jammed its way slowly through the halls and in and out of the small rooms. Most were young people; there were a few drag queens and Hell's Angels and probably some narks and other fuzz, but everyone seemed to belong there - there was a feeling of inclusiveness that embraced all styles. . ."

The author of that article had a few facts slightly mixed up. The organ, for example, hadn't been played yet before I got there. There was only one key to turn it on, and Chester had it. We now went down to the chapel together. The light show was going, a few naked people were wandering around the altar, and in general not much was happening. Chester sat down at the organ, turned it on and began playing. I don't know exactly what he played, it could have been Handel or Bach or anyone else of that ilk, but it was a deep heavy sonorous kind of music, vaguely religious but slightly weird, too. It sent an odd kind of vibration through the church, for the organ was connected to a large set of pipes in the hall.

I listened for maybe half an hour, then decided to see what was happening downstairs. I pressed the elevator button and the door opened to reveal half a dozen laughing and screaming hippies cavorting in a huge pile of plastic "spaghetti". Several of them had some or all of their clothes off, and a couple were balling. I entered the elevator, was given a bottle of beer, and taken to the first floor. The trip took maybe ten minutes but it was an enjoyable ride.

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Downstairs people were chanting mantras and burning incense in the main meeting room, where the lights had been turned off. In another fairly large room, the Angels and bikies were dancing and getting drunk. There was music from conga drums and flutes. I went thru that room to another room behind it, which turned out to be filled with the plastic "Spaghetti" stuff. An orgy of respectable proportions was in progress. I would like to be able to say that I joined in and had a wonderful time, but in truth I was too stoned to comprehend what was going on and what opportunities were inherent in the situation. I split, and returned Chester who was now back in the communication room. There was food there, and coffee. I drank a couple of cups and lay down on the floor. I was pretty tired. After awhile some friends came in and we talked some. It was about four in the morning, we were all stoned and exhausted, and our synapses were failing with increasing frequency. If you've ever been in this condition, you'll know that, while it's not a particularly enjoyable state of consciousness, it does give one a certain degree of heightened creativity. As synapses fail, thoughts recombine in unexpected patterns, and ideas are born. We amused ourselves putting our ideas onto stencils and the results were, in my opinion, some of the more interesting one-shots that came out of the happening.

I eventually fell asleep in the office, as did most of the people there. I woke up at about 10 the next morning, and took a stroll around the building. There were about 20 people left who had crashed on the premises, and there was garbage everywhere. I felt terrible, and decided to go back to my apartment for a good meal. After eating and refreshing, I dropped by Chester's place. He was awake and there were a few people there talking to him. He told me the church directors were aghast at what had occurred, and had withdrawn their permission for us to use the church. We decided to hold Saturday's festivities at the beach.

Posters announcing the move were placed on the church and announcements made on the radio, but only a couple of hundred showed up at the beach that night. A few large fires were built and we huddled about them for awhile, but it was cold and nothing much was happening. Most everyone split by midnight. So ended the Invisible Circus.

Then there was the Bedrock. To explain in detail what Chester hoped to accomplish in the series of three Bedrocks he began planning as soon as the Invisible Circus was finished would require more words than I care to devote to it at this time, but here's the condensed version:

The rock dance-concerts that started in San Francisco in 1965 have changed a lot since then. Nowadays the Fillmore is where 3000 people can pay \$3.50 to be packed as closely together as possible to watch a succession of bored musicians shuffle onstage play an uninspired set and shuffle off. Not so, once upon a time. In the old days, the dance-concert was an art-form, conceived, promoted and enacted by artists. The musicians dug the dancing and played better. There were in San Francisco, then a large number of Freaks who used to enjoy the dances as social occasions. All came in costume and played whatever games they liked in the course of the dance. In short, if there was a dance coming up, it was looked forward to as an event.

By now all the freaks have split to the mountains or wherever, but in March, 1967, they still turned out occasionally when they got the scent of an extraordinary event. It was Chester's intention to put on a dance-concert, actually a series of three, that would be such an event. A dance-concert that would be so radically different from what had gone before that it would break all the forms that were even then beginning to stagnate.

The posters began appearing in mid-February, and they caused quite a bit of talk. The large one is one of the most beautiful posters I've ever seen, and I don't

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know how to go about describing it. It is a line drawing and it is highly suggestive, for careful perusal will reveal sexual implications intricately combined on many levels. (A small version is reproduced with this article). Of the two smaller posters, one was by Robert Crumb, the first work of his I know of that was done for the heads in San Francisco. At the time I'd never hear of Crumb; nobody had. It wasn't until two years later that I realized who he was.

For the Bedrock I Chester had lined up the Steve Miller Band (they were his favorite band at the time), Dino Valenti and the Orkus'tra, a collection of freaks playing electrified "classical" instruments (oboes, cellos, etc.) The leader of the Orkus'tra, David LaFlamme, later went on to form a band called It's A Beautiful Day. Also appearing at the Bedrock were the people from the Radha Krishna Temple, who specialized in the "Hari Krishna" chant, Richard Brautigan, Warren Hinckle (of Ramparts) and Mark Comfort. "Happenings" were scheduled by the SF Mime Troupe and Sexual Freedom League, the diggers. Many "surprises" were promised.

Chester had charted an extensive timetable for the six hours of Bedrock, listing everything he intended to occur, and when. I wish I had a copy of this now, for my memory fails me. I do know that there were some very unusual things planned, including; the Mime Troupe, their bodies painted and feathers stuck on, descending from the balcony on ropes; the Sexual Freedom League would be projecting stag movies in the ladies' lounge, and they also intended to have signs saying "Men" and "Women" which would be alternated between the men's and women's rest rooms at random intervals. Enough drugs would be distributed to insure that few would know the difference anyway.

I'm not sure about those details and for the sake of accuracy we'll leave it at that. I'm sure you get the idea. The motto on all the posters was "outrage upon outrage", and Chester Anderson really meant it.

He had rented California Hall for the occasion. California Hall was the traditional place where independent head promoters did their one-shot dances, and some of the best dances ever held in San Francisco went down there. I can't recall a Calif. Hall dance that wasn't a complete gas; I also can't recall one that didn't lose money. I had helped to put on one dance there previously, however, and I thought I knew enough about the hazards of the place to help Chester avoid most of them. The main hassle is the guy that is in charge of the hall, a little old German fellow. He has a secret clause in his contracts that nobody ever notices that gives him the right to close the dance down at midnight, even though the promoter has paid through 2:00. I told Chester about this and he promised to take care of it.

We went down there the day before to look the place over and start setting up. Chester had never checked it out before and I gave him a tour. California Hall is a beautiful old place. There is a main ballroom with a great high ceiling. There is ornate woodwork and glittering glass on all the walls and ceiling, and in the middle hangs a huge chandelier. On one side of this room is a smaller room with a bar and tables, on the other side is a fairly large room with another stage which is separated from the main ballroom only by pillars.

One could climb up a ladder behind the stage to a platform that led to a passage containing a dozen or so dusty old rooms that had been used as dressing rooms years before. There were side passages leading to deserted hallways and staircases going up to the fifth floor of the building. In short, it was a fascinating place with infinite possibilities for exploration. Chester began planning activities for some of these remote reaches.

The next day we showed up early and got to work. Huge screens had to be unrolled and hung from the balconies for the light show. The light equipment had to be

set up on the main balcony and the area fenced off. All was in readiness by <sup>14</sup>about 4 PM and I split with my friend Jeffrey and his chick Ellen. We went back to our apartment to eat, and then we went to visit Harry. Harry is one of the most interesting people I've ever known. We had lived in the apartment next to his before we moved. We occasionally went back to visit and to purchase drugs from him. Harry was a quiet, shy young man who looked sort of like Jim Morrison (with short hair). He had a job as an accountant by day, and by night he dealt dope in our apartment building. He wasn't just another dope dealer, tho; He was an arrist at dealing. He had a little cabinet with about twenty drawers; each one contained the very best there was of any type of drug you could name, some of it imported from distant corners of the world. He was on close terms with all the experimenters in the drug scenes and from time to time he offered us samples of new creations to test. You would knock on the door of his apt. and after a couple of minutes he'd pull back the corner of the curtain and open the door. You'd say "Hi" and he'd just sort of smile and shamle down the hall. You'd follow him, maybe getting hung up on the four by five feet blown up photographs of crystal lattices; or the nude girl, sitting crosslegged eating a bowl of rice with chopsticks. This was Harry's old lady, a Playboy bunny. He'd sit down, open one of his drawers and drawl, "Man try some of this shit. Just come in from Tangiers." Ten minutes later you'd be floating, digging the Indian music and the tapestries on the ceiling. After awhile you'd tell Harry what you'd come for and the transaction would occur.

On this occasion he had some clinically pure Sandoz acid, which had been unavailable in this country for some months. I couldn't pass this by, so I purchased three caps, which Harry rated at 750-1000 micrograms each. It was about 7:00, the Bedrock was to begin at 8, so we bid farewell to Harry and caught the bus downtown. On the bus, for what reason 'Ill never know, I downed all three capsules. Jeffry was a bit surprised, because he knew I'd never taken that much, but I told him it was all fight. He and Ellen promised to stick with me.

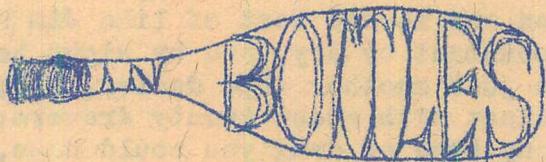
I'd never come on so fast as I did that time. Before we got downtown I was so far gone I didn't know what a bus was. Nevertheless, I managed to get off it. I made it to the center of the floor and sat down, and Jeffrey and Ellen went off to dance. Steve Miller was beautiful. The music was all upside down and inside out and sideways too and it took me further and further out (or in) until I reached a point where I did not know anything existed. I did not have a body. I was a single point of consciousness drifting through another dimension. I was completely gone.

Then the music stopped and somebody announced the dance had to end. I didn't understand, I got paranoid. Jeffrey and Ellen came and helped me up, and we somehow made it into a bus and back to the apartment. I didn't find out until the next day that Chester had gotten stuck with the Midnight Clause again. I go into this detail about my acid trip only as an excuse for not giving a better description of what went on at the Bedrock, but I gathered from comments of people who had been conscious there that it hadn't been an exceptional affair. I was probably the only one associated with the thing that had no regrets; my evening had been as interesting as I could have hoped for.

In any case, the Bedrock was a bust, Chester lost a bundle, ended up not paying some of the musicians, and of course Bedrocks II and III never occurred.

Next installment: "Comce". The Communication Company and Chester Anderson's contribution to the formation of the Underground Press as we know it today.

15  
MSS. FOUND



+ Banks Mebane +

Reading is more than an avocation with me -- it's a compulsion. I don't keep a record of how many books I read in a given time, but I'm sure it'd average out to at least one a day. On an evening of leisure I often get through three novels, and I've been known to spend a whole weekend with a stack of books. Such periods make up for days when I snatch only an hour or two of the printed page (and the days when I don't have at least that hour are damned few).

It follows that I must read an awful lot of trash. Bad books outnumber good ones overwhelmingly, so even being selective I can't find enough gourmet fare to satisfy my appetite.

I'm calloused to bad books by now. If they're unspeakable, I don't finish them. If they're bearable, I wade through, hoping for an occasional reward.

Rarely (very rarely, thank the gods), I find one that infuriates me. The Islar by Mark Saxton just punched that button, and I'm going to use this column to vent my spleen.

The Islar is a parasitic novel, taking its existence from another book, Islandia by Austin Tappan Wright. Islandia itself ... well, I'll have to tell something about it to explain why The Islar enrages me.

Austin Tappan Wright was a professor of law who died in 1931. From childhood (he was born in 1883), he had built up in his mind an imaginary country called Islandia, an agrarian Utopia located on a non-existent continent in the southern hemisphere. Islandia seems to have been a compulsive escape from reality for him: he developed its history, geology and geography in exhaustive detail.

Islandia the novel was probably begun about 1908 and finished during the 1920's. It was not published until 1942, and the book, long as it is (over 1000 pages), has been out from Wright's manuscript. It's an everlasting wonder that such a personal, idiosyncratic book was published at all, and much is undoubtedly due Mark Saxton, the editor who saw it through publication. Like Tolkein's Lord of the Rings, another long work that almost

didn't get printed, Islandia has justified itself commercially, although not so spectacularly. It saw a second edition in 1958 and a later paperback.

The time of the novel is from 1907 to about 1910. Islandia has remained deliberately isolated from the rest of the world and is under pressure from the colonial and industrial powers to open itself up for trade and development. The protagonist of the book is John Lang, sent as American consul to propagandize for a trade treaty. The two threads of the story are Lang's increasing involvement with Islandia and Islandians and the political events taking place simultaneously. Islandia rejects all trade alliance, and Lang immigrates there with his American bride (he has earned the right by an act of heroism).

It's hard to convey the charm of this book to someone who hasn't read it. The plot, although rather long-winded, is skillfully woven. The characters are well realized, even if they tend to have Victorian vapors at times. The real magic is Islandia itself, which occupied Wright's mind with so much emotional force that his adoration comes through to the reader.

Objectively, one would expect Islandia to repel as much as attract. Its society is an aristocracy based on ownership of farmland, like an idealized pre-industrial British squirearchy. Ties of family and land are strong, and a man inevitably (and joyfully -- here is the fiction) follows his father and takes his ancestral place. There are touches of racism: the white Islandians frequently have to fight the black nations across the mountains. The ideal of aristocracy does have some democratic mitigations; the classes are not socially isolated, and mobility upwards and downwards is possible. The government is a limited monarchy.

Islandia was Wright's escape from the bustle and rootlessness of industrial America with its weakening of family and tradition and its frequent ugliness. He wasn't proposing a practical Utopia but merely indulging in a daydream -- a leisurely world like the Golden Age of a glorified past that never was. The genius of his work is that the reader can enter the same daydream and dwell there for a time "where no storms come, where the green swell is in the havens dumb, and out of the swing of the sea."

In its career as a book, Islandia has attracted readers as devoted as Tolkien's are to Middle-earth -- the appeals are similar -- if not so vociferous. Mark Saxton, as its editor, must have been among the first of them. If anyone today would be qualified to bring Islandia's history up to date, one would expect him to be Saxton. Alas he wasn't.

The Islar, published in the fall of '69, is set in the mid-60's. Islandia is losing its fight to keep itself inviolate. As mentioned in the earlier book, by the opening of this century Islandia had already industrialized to the extent of producing enough modern weapons to defend itself -- its factories were carefully isolated in one place and insulated from the life of the country. By the 60s more of these industrial suburbs had been built, and Islandia had an industrial proletariat and a government bureaucracy, both out of the mainstream of land-based tradition. These are plausible developments for such a country, however unwelcome they may be to visitors to a daydream; unfortunately Saxton uses this background for a cheap melodrama of political intrigue and revolution, with some of the most wooden characters in fiction.

The narrator and protagonist is Lang III, the grandson of John Lang. Descendants of other Islandia characters stalk through the story, bearing the ancestral names of Dorn, Mora and the like, as is Islandian custom. They're little more than labels and pale echoes of their Wrightian forefathers. Even the Morana who is Lang's lover has no real vitality compared to the Dorna, the Nattana, the Morana of the original.

The heir to the Islandia throne develops a Caesar complex and plots to set up an absolute monarchy with the aid of foreign Communists and the landless minorities. His revolution is foiled by the hero's heroics and the timely arrival of the U.S. Navy. Islandia eventually brings in Americans to assist in its economic development as the least of the evils confronting it.

This plot, trite as it is, might have been bearable if it had taken place in an Islandia peopled by Islandians, but Wright's daydream has become Saxton's hangover. The Islar shows a cardboard country with no society -- its people are the puppets of a James Bond romp without their color.

Saxton's prose is shudder-making. "The angles of the doorway afforded a protected look at the alignment of forces in the main room," states the narrator on page 11, meaning he peeped at the people through the door. Such awkward and abstract sentences are common, as are passive constructions and even grammatical errors like dangling participles. These alternate with clumsy simple sentences only slightly elevated over "See Jack run." There's no rhythm, no flow to the prose.

Literary considerations aside, the main trouble with The Islar is Saxton's picture of Islandia, insofar as it can be discerned through the mud of the book. It's probably more like Islandia would be if it really existed than is Wright's original conception -- there's the rub, the daydream is shattered. Saxton's Islandia is so unattractive that, if it did exist, the sooner it became just like the rest of the world the better.

Saxton states that "any reader is free to suppose events other than those recorded here." I do so suppose, and this is why I hate The Islar.



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# FROM READERS

+letter column+

John J. Pierce, 275 McMane Avenue, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey 07922

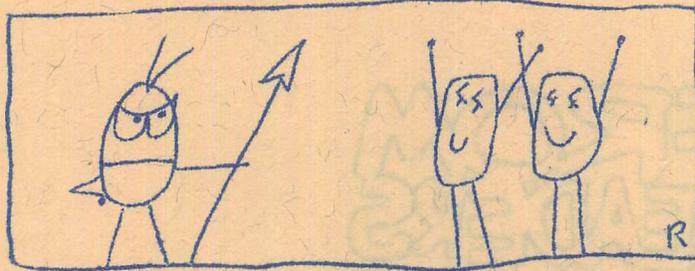
It was inevitable, I suppose, that someone would eventually notice the connection between a certain J.J. Pierce who was prominent at the University of Missouri and myself. I'm surprised, really, that it didn't happen sooner, but Messrs. D'Amassa, Turner and Sanders seem willing to make up for lost time.

D'Amassa's piece is the least satisfactory, primarily because he has not researched his case. Had he done so, he would have been aware of my great admiration for genuinely new and "experimental" writers like Cordwainer Smith, Ursula LeGuin, Roger Zelazny, Keith Roberts and others. I enjoy Alfred Bester; what he did 15 years ago in The Stars My Destination makes the New Waveicles look pathetically inept. I like Farmer's better writing, like Flesh, though his lowbrow efforts like Image of the Beast turn me off. I've never read Neil R. Jones, nor heard of Alexander Blade and Don Wilcox, nor do I wish to; my "old Wave" examples are Verne, Wells, Heinlein, Weinbaum, Asimov, del Rey, Simak and others. I hope D'Amassa isn't too upset by learning all this, but then, he appears set in his ways, and I doubt the knowledge will do him and good.

Jim Turner has done a fairly effective job of tracing my career at Missouri; most of his facts are accurate, if not his interpretations. But I never tried to crash Greek Week; I wouldn't be caught dead there. Mr "rattling" consisted of wearing a sandwich-board sign denouncing a corrupt political deal to the caucus of the party perpetrating it. I actually wrote the update of the GBI history, but the WRHA official I gave it to apparently never had it published. Turner, of course, can't seem to tell the difference between jest and earnest, as in his analysis of the Gamma Delta Iota column. He might have mentioned, too, that I made enemies in my own house by opposing the Kappa Kappa Williams crowd there. By the way, what's become of the Word? Dead, I suppose; haven't heard from it in two years.

\*Ex-God Damn Independent leader J. J. Pierce will be please to learn that the Williams House Word continues to muddle on here at old UM at C. HL\*

Which brings us to Sanders. Hindsight tells me the method of relying too much on quotations was unsatisfactory. Various people don't agree with each other on everything, nor with me, and that gives Sanders the opportunity to show how "inconsistent"



I am. Actually, I was just using statements that seemed approximate points I was trying to make, though they may well not have been always "representative" of the sources. I wouldn't do so today. But some of the inconsistencies are on the part of the sources; Kornbluth, for example, once led an "anti-Mandarin" group that smacked of the Second Foundation, but switched sides after that journey to Milford (which I learned about from del Rey). Knight can never agree with himself; he attacked anti-science fiction in the fifties and supports it now. He also supports books as cockeyed on literary grounds as Van Vogt's; example: M.K. Joseph's The Hole in the Zero.

Sanders goes on a great deal about Plato vs. Aristotle, which has little to do with anything I was saying. He notes that a lot of early sf like that of Wells was pessimistic, which is true, of course. The point is, however, that sf was based on imagination and wonder, whereas the New Wave is based on nothing but pessimism. The purpose of sf was to explore certain themes that were unique to it, whether "optimistically" or "pessimistically." The purpose of the New Wave is to imitate the techniques and messages of prestigious mainstream "pessimistic" writers, without regard to whether the results have anything to do with sf. We have copies of Kafka, copies of Joyce, copies of Beckett, copies of Jarry, copies of Robbe-Grillet, copies of Roth. If a character in a mainstream setting has a hallucination in the course of a story, they call it "speculative fiction," and go on about how "profound" it is.

Mainstream readers tend to be sheep; how else could they be taken in by silly things like Portnoy's Complaint? Sf readers are less so; I agree the New Wavicles haven't changed reading habits much. The problem is, the New Wave has become the Establishment, the "intellectual elite" of the genre. "Literary" standards mean New Wave standards, and the genre risks becoming a body without a head. But literature has nothing to do with it; I've read the reviews, and praise by critics for "new books" is directly proportional to the borrowed "experimental" style and the pessimistic message. I've yet to see a single example of a New Wave critic giving a bad review when he agrees with the message. Indeed, only two messages seem to be allowed at all these days: 1) Science is the root of all evil and is destroying humanity, and 2) Science is the root of all evil, but humanity can be saved by Togetherness. Zelazny really has gone out of favor lately, because his books don't have the right messages. The same process may be started with Delany. But the New Worlds clique is patronized by Edmond Wilson, various "avant-garde" media, and the British Arts Council. Over here, Ellison, Disch, and even Spinrad win recognition in places where, so it seems, Le Guin and Heinlein are considered equally subliterate with Warner Van Lorne.

I don't like establishments, I never have. Less still do I like establishments that masquerade as revolutions, as the New Wavicles do. In 1967, at the Lunacon, I got disgusted when no one raised a single objection to Spinrad calling Pohl a "pimp" and all Galaxy writers "prostitutes." I was sick of hearing Heinlein called a hack and William S. Burroughs a genius in the same breath. I was sick of hearing, over and over again, that everything but the New Wave was written on a "comic book" level, and that the people who wrote and read sf were all "fascists," "pig-idiot illiterates" and "corpses wired for sound." So I got mad and decided to write a counter-polemic.

I wasn't entirely satisfied with it; I even went to del Rey and Pohl for advice. They thought it was all right as it stood, so I went ahead. I was working under pressure of a deadline, and perhaps it shows. For any clumsiness in the piece, I apologize, but I do not regret my intentions.

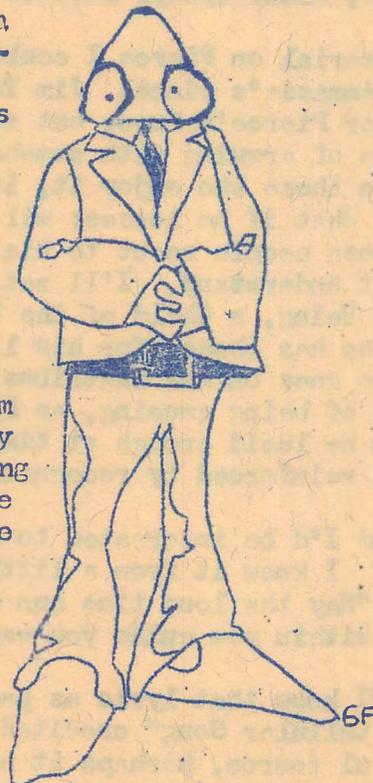
Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

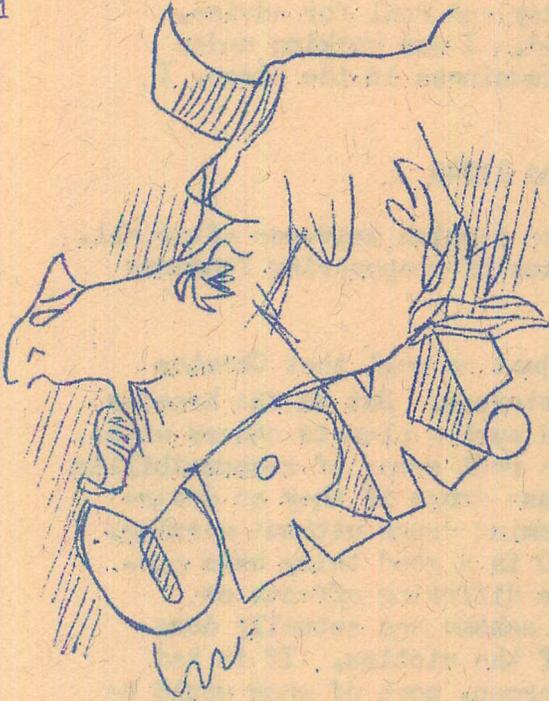
It is fine to know that Missouri has not vanished from the fannish universe after all. I hope this new Starling will be the first of a long series of reappearing fanzines after the semi-silence from your area.

In view of the way Dr. Wertham is studying fandom, it's just as well that Chester Anderson didn't carry out his little surprise for the Westercon. But on the broader level, it disturbs me that anyone could have communicated such a plan to others without being tattled on to the authorities by someone with a real sense of responsibility. It's one thing to advocate the right for individuals to use drugs if they so desire but it's entirely another thing to trick people into consuming drugs without warning. Even the fans who are most vocal in their belief that LSD is a good thing have precautions for the first trip or two, because acid can have differing effects on people. I gather that something resembling the Anderson scheme was actually done at a party in California with serious effects on a few of the victims. If it had happened to the much greater number of persons at a Westercon, most of whom would be in a high state of tension and excitement that fans normally possess at such events, there could have been a few wrecked lives and enough publicity to break up fandom as we know it and to drive it genuinely into the underground occupation that Dr. Wertham seems to consider it.

In line with Juanita Coulson's letter: one of the earliest big civil rights hassles of this generation happened within the Hagerstown city limits and may have helped to bring the whole matter into the limelight. The Howard Johnson's at the edge of town refused service to a diplomat from one of the new African nations and the thing got national attention in the press, then Russia seized on it as a propaganda device. The mayor of Hagerstown apologized and invited him back for a good meal but there were still some segregated restaurants within the city until about eight years ago when the Zantziger trial was moved to Hagerstown. This was the first time a white man had ever been tried in Maryland for murdering a Negress, and the chief of police went the rounds of the restaurants giving instructions: serve everyone.

Jim Turner gives the most useful information I've seen so far about John J. Pierce. I'd thought that there was something about his writings that I hadn't identified, a certain quality which I should be able to recognize and couldn't. Jim makes it instantly plain: Pierce is a politician, and probably the kind of politician who takes up causes because he's looking for something with which he can attract attention, not because he has strong genuine beliefs about the causes. I can imagine Pierce becoming a firm New Waver, if suddenly in the next few months the Old Wave began to drive all the New Wave stuff out of existence and there was no longer any point in continuing to crusade against the New Wave. Of course, at this point I've begun to write like one of the participants in the controversy who imagine the individuals scattered around the world attempting to eek some spare cash by writing science fiction as members of vast unified armies with sworn





old music boxes.

Greg Shaw, 64 Taylor Dr., Fairfax, Calif. 94930

I am quite surprised at Redd Bogg's views on rock. While what he says could easily be proven, he has obviously missed the essence of what rock is all about. I didn't think Redd was in that place, at all. He could at least have said something nice about Sargeant Pepper, which even the most confirmed fuddy-duddies (not saying you are one, Redd) always seem to find some worth in.

The material on Pierce I could have done without, though I appreciated the humor of Don D'Amassa's piece. Jim Turner's background should provide some powerful ammunition for Pierce's foes, but as for me I don't think it's worth the trouble. What's the use of arguing with somebody over whether a type of writing is worth anything or not? To those who enjoy it, it is. What possible outcome could such an argument have? What if he losses; will fans never again read the works of Asimov, et al.? I suppose people react to his writing by saying "why, the poor fellow. He just doesn't understand. I'll set him straight." But to me, though J.J. Pierce is a Divine Being, a Child of the Universe, and I cherish his immortal soul, the personality he has chosen for his life cannot be taken seriously. He's a fanatical idiot, when he goes on his diatribes, and should be ignored. He doesn't even have the virtue of being amusing, as Pickering was. There's a place for Pierce in fandom, for he can be lucid enough at times, but his irresponsible vituperation should be not be reinforced by recognition.

On, and I'd be interested to know where you got the phrase "May the long time sun shine." I know it from a little song the Kundalini Yoga people sing that goes, in full: "May the long time sun shine upon you, all love surround you, and the pure light within you guide you way on."

\*I know that lyric as part of the Incredible String Band song called "A Very Cellular Song" credited to Mike Heron. Perhaps he borrowed it from a traditional source, perhaps it has just become traditional since he wrote it. I see and hear it all over the place. HL \*

loyalty to either the good guys or the bad guys. It is obvious that the whole Second Foundation thing makes us all stupid and I have strong doubts that I'm going to read anything more about the squabble or mention it again in locs.

On the other hand, ignorance and lack of familiarity with the subject cause me to say little about the rock music material in this issue, not the fed-up emotion that the Second Foundation creates. But surely Redd Boggs is incorrect when he criticizes rock because it can't be played without electricity. Isn't the human body's operation created by electricity in minute amounts that cause the muscles to contract and so on? If that's so, then all live music requires electricity and if a short circuit is introduced into every situation where electricity creates music, by providing an electric chair in operation condition for every fiddler and singer and so on, then all we'll have left are some windup phonographs and

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I find the interest in music implicit in the fmz especially interesting, since I have been in the thing myself, more or less. I have done an LP and a number of single records, my own lyrics and music and in some cases playing as well. I did some straight sf records as well -- you know, sf short stories put to music, and they went well without being successes in any way. Those were highly intellectual ballads, really, sung with choir and just a couple of instruments -- my latest record, a single, had a magnificent experiment on the A side, called "Shakespeare's Amusement Park Nine to Twelve O'clock." Sort of new wave sf lyrics that didn't mean much except I liked the sound of the words, and I had a jazz group playing and I liked the thing, but it went flop like that and the record sold perhaps a thousand which is little even for Sweden.

I am out of the rat race now, my producer died and the record company went bankrupt. I will do one more record, an LP with nice romantic ballads that I wrote while living in France, and that's the end of it. Too many drugheads and acidheads and hard-eyed ghouls out for money in this business. I'm never signing any contracts again. Nevertheless, music is fun, and I read the parts of Starling dealing with pop with much interest. I did only one electrified record myself, I hate electric guitars and things, it doesn't sound right. I used an electric bass guitar in the background of a record, and it was terrible. The old acoustic bass anytime for me. I like my music soft and intricate, like Spanish madrigals or the Elizabethan music. That's what I think, but I'm just a very small person in this field.

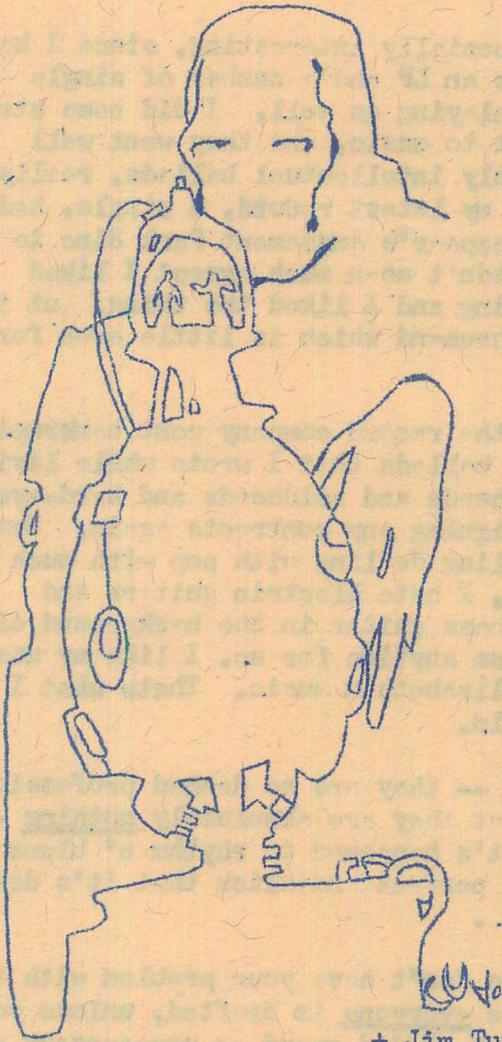
Most of the US pop bands make me unhappy these days -- they are so damned professional, so slick, so stream-lined and depersonalized that they are absolutely nothing -- it's perfect, and it's dead. This is, I believe, what's happened to rhythm n' blues and rock music -- it's got so damned commercial and perfect and slick that it's dead all over. Like listening to Mantovani's strings. . .

The draft kept popping up in the letter column -- we don't have your problem with the draft in Sweden, here we have much worse ones. Here everyone is drafted, unless you can prove you are a homosexual or something like that. I did spend an unnecessary year in the armed forces, sabotaging everything until everyone left me alone. It was great. I was AWOL most of the time, and no one cared. The good patriotic guys worked like devils all the time, but unpatriotic people like me were not to be trusted even with a gun. I would prefer no army at all, but if there must be one, make it voluntary. This is a democratic country, and if some nuts get a kick out of holding a gun, let him have it.

John Boston, 2109 Blakemore Avenue, Apt. 4, Nashville, Tennessee 37212

I got a chuckle out of one line in Bill March's defense of the draft: "The day that a majority of individual American citizens are not willing or able to place their all on the line to preserve our political heritage spells the beginning of the end." That is as good a rationale for resisting the draft as for submitting to it, depending on which part of our political heritage you identify with. (General Custer, meet Mr. Thoreau.)

WAHF: Bill Capron, Arnie Katz



+ Jim Turner +

TAK-  
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Synthajoy

The Silent Multitude

The Steel Crocodile

all by D. G. Compton (Ace Specials)

The three novels by a previously unknown Englishman are an excellent facet of the Ace Special line. H.G. Wells is the obvious forebearer of Mr. Compton's method: the single, all-important event which changes everything and the way a number of people of varying degrees of competence interact with it and try to make do with what they have left.

Synthajoy is the oldest of the three. Written in 1968, it develops the growing effect on society of a device which measures -- and records -- feelings, sensations, etc. The ostensible aims are medical and psychological; the commercial possibilities are evident and inevitable. We watch through the eyes of the inventor's wife, knowing from the start that she is under confinement and therapy for murdering her husband. She keeps a diary of her experiences

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during treatment and her day to day jottings and written reminiscences make up the text of the novel. Slowly, often too much so, she opens herself and her husband, and his assistant who also happens to be her lover, to the reader.

The two British Johns -- Wyndham and Christopher -- were famed for excellent rewritings of Wells. The Silent Multitude is very much in their vein, reminding me muchly of No Blade of Grass. A mysterious spore drifts in from space and has a taste for cement and concrete. The city of Gloucester has already been evacuated when the book starts. The story concerns the last ones left in the decaying city as it collapses literally around them: the Dean of the Cathedral who's too old to leave the building he's served most of his life, a demented old man living in the past, a girl reporter looking for a big feature story, and a cynical young man eager to watch the city rot. And Tug, the cat, whom I consider the novel's most sympathetic character.

The trouble with this book is that nothing happens. Then Compton realizes he's got to end the damn thing so there's an attempted rape and killing, the girl gets her story. The people meet, they squabble, and are dwarfed before the well described destruction of the city.

The Steel Crocodile is certainly the most ambitious. It's told through a husband and wife in alternating chapters. Like the others, it's in a near enough and sufficiently unpleasant future to be uncomfortable: ever encroaching computerization and depersonalization, the omnipresent "bugs" and hidden cameras (your friendly supermarket can, however, fit you up with a complete line of scramblers.)

Dr. and Mrs. Oliver take up residence at the Colindale Institute where he will head up the Sociology Department. Security at the institute is fanatical, everybody is minding everybody's business, and his predecessor was mysteriously murdered. And the underground Civil Liberties Committee in the person of Mrs. Oliver's brother is messed up in it all somehow. Well, you think, another computer-takes-over-the-world-deal. Maybe. . . but there's more than that. I wish the book had ended differently. I would have been interested in seeing how the project started; I would have liked to read about it in full swing. But then The Steel Crocodile would have been another novel entirely. I would have preferred that though to the Alistair MacLean doings with bombs and sabotage and assorted people greasing.

David Compton writes well. He knows the mechanics, how to develop a character, a moment, a setting. Alas, a series of such vivid sparks need not necessarily make a novel. You recall people and incidents from the books but not necessarily what happened to them. It may be said that life leans in this direction but Heaven forbid that art should imitate life. I think at once of the cat roving the dying city, the cathedral shaking in the wind, Thea Cadence watching her lover die in her husband's Synthajoy machine, the many sure and knowing depictions of domestic fencing in The Steel Crocodile, but it's hard to connect the impressions together into the memory of a story.

Maybe he's too good. Thomas Wolfe (no, not the clown we are infested with today) wrote to Scott Fitzgerald that authors tend either to be "putter-inners" or "taker-outers." Wolfe, of course, was possibly the ultimate "putter-inner." Compton fits definitely into the other category.

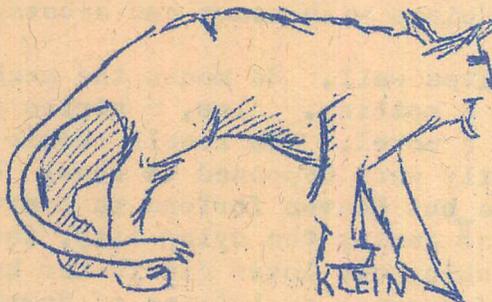
He underplays everything sometimes so much that you lose track.

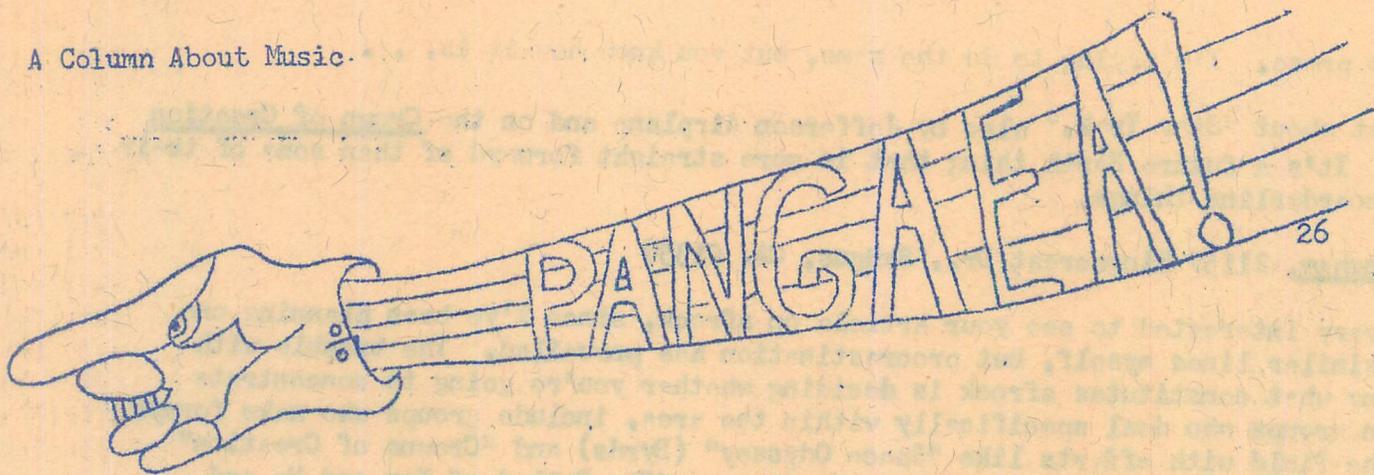
And maybe it's my fault. My youth was misspent amid libraries. I read four books a day in high school. After that, it's hell slowing down to catch details. Mind you, the details in these books are worth slowing down for. He writes with thousands of bright hairline touches and precious few broad strokes.

The better characters turn out to be women, so much so that James Blish in the August F&SF (reviewing The Steel Crocodile) allows to having thought Compton to be a woman until Ace's biographical sketch informed him no, not so. As Blish says, ". . . Compton conveys his feeling of utterly feminine depth, warmth and special concerns without invoking one single magazine cliché, not one recipe, not one moment of chintziness, not one stock reaction, not even one trace of the bitchiness which creeps into the work of almost every male who has a broad feminine or pseudo-feminine streak in him."

A minor quibble: Brother Compton, being only human I know well that we must all from time to time woo the convenience and achieve relief. I do not need your pen to remind me that we all have to take a crap occasionally. I am heartened to know that your characters -- even your cat -- suffer not from irregularity. I'll bet your people even shower and change socks and blink their eyes and we are, all of us, even the least, God's children.

But enough of this. Buy them all and read with care. And wait with me for the next one.





Last issue when I published my notes on science fiction and rock and roll, I figured that a lot of the people who read Starling would know more about the subject than I do -- and I hoped that when that was the case, they would write in and tell me about it. The response hasn't been Overwhelming, but it has been gratifying.

In that article last issue, I said that I thought the Byrds were the most important rock/science fiction group -- followed by The Rolling Stones (because of their fine album Their Satanic Majesties Request), Jimi Hendrix and Jefferson Airplane. Then I mentioned a number of other groups and recordings that were somewhat science fictional. In at least 3 cases I thought that probably the groups had done quite a bit that I wasn't aware of. I hadn't listened too much to the Bonzo Dog Band, or The Pink Floyd or the Steve Miller Band, each of which I was sure had done some science fiction, but I wasn't sure how much. About those first two bands, various readers were kind enough to write me (letters follow), but as yet no one has told me anything about Steve Miller.

Another topic I touched upon in that article was the number of science fiction writers and fans who had worked within the rock publishing scene. Greg Shaw, who should definitely know, wrote me with more names for that list.

And three more things before I start with the letters: A recent Locus mentioned that the Jefferson Airplane were going to be releasing an album called Science Fiction Songs -- now, I have no idea where Charlie Brown got that little bit of information, I haven't noticed it anywhere else, but it could be very interesting. Rolling Stone #63 features a large photograph of Canned Heat in space suits posing for the cover of their upcoming album Future Blues. And... why didn't anyone except Terry Hughes remind me that last issue I had forgotten to mention a very recent, extremely popular science fiction side? You remember, it was called "2525" by (I think) Zeger & Evans. At times it seemed like it was the only thing I could listen to on my car radio (which I listened to a lot, as I lived an hour's drive from work then), and I thought it was just awful. (-- HL)

Dave Burton, 5422 Kenyon, Indianapolis, In 46226

To my mind, Hendrix is the closest thing to a rock sf writer. "Third Stone from the Sun," if you play it slow, either 33 1/3 or 16, has an interesting radio discussion between two aliens, one of which is circling the earth and saying how it cannot support intelligent life.

\*Something like that going on at 78 near the beginning of the record, too. HL  
You didn't mention the title song from Axis which is "Bold as Love". This is a really fine fantasy. I'd like to see a pro, probably Delany or rather Zelazny, convert

<sup>27</sup>  
this to prose. I'm trying to do the same, but you know how it is. . .

And what about "Star Trek," also by Jefferson Airplane and on the Crown of Creation album? It's a future Earth thing that is more straight forward sf than some of their other borderline things.

John Ingham, 21157 Kingscrest Dr., Sanguis, CA. 91350

I was very interested to see your article on sfrock, since I've been planning one along similar lines myself, but procrastination has prevailed. The trouble with deciding what constitutes sfrock is deciding whether you're going to concentrate only on groups who deal specifically within the area, include groups who make forays into the field with efforts like "Space Odyssey" (Byrds) and "Crowns of Creation" (which was stolen from Rebirth by John Wyndham -- "The Ballad of You and Me and Pooneil" was stolen from "Now We Are Six"), or else go all the way and include things like "Martian Hop" and "Purple People Eater" (which is where you really bog down.)

\*The lyrics of "Crown of Creation" coming from Wyndham's novel is detailed in a letter from Frank Kornelussen in Rolling Stone #43.

In Rolling Stone #45 a Bruce Scotland says in a letter that "The Ballad. . ." is taken word for word from a poem called "Spring Morning" by A.A. Milne. HL

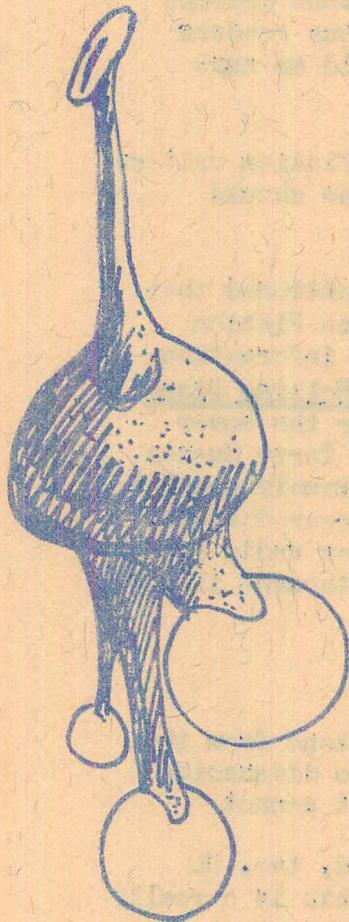
Some omissions: King Crimson (which might be fantasy), the Moody Blues (at least as far as "To Our Children's Children's Children" is concerned, although I would include "In Search of the Lost Chord"), Sun Ra, and also Southwind's "Cool Green Hills of Earth," which is credited to R.A. Heinlein.

To add some details, Pink Floyd work completely within the realm of sf. If it isn't "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun," it's "The Grand Vizier's Garden Party" (which is nothing but percussion). They are also rather unique in that they have a sound system which comprises of speakers placed along the sides and the back of the auditorium, with provisions so that each member can make his music come from any speaker at will, or else make it circle the room. They also include lots of tapes of birds and the sea and other such science fictional things.

The Bonzo Dog Band have done many more songs in an sf vein besides "Urban Spaceman" (they're very interested in man, machines, and the cyborg), but the trouble with categorizing their work is that they work in a very dadaistic, surreal (not to mention brilliant) form of satire, and who is to say that "Mr. Appollo" (He's the greatest benefactor of Mankind; Everybody knows that a healthy body builds a healthy mind; Wrestle poodles and win! Impress your friends!) is no less science fiction than "Beautiful Zelda from Galaxy 4"?

John Boston, 2109 Blakemore Avenue, Apt 4., Nashville, Tenn.  
37212

Your preoccupation with sf themes in rock music doesn't excite me too much; for me they are two completely different kicks. But the subject gives me an excuse to rave about the



Pink Floyd, who are just about my favorite rock group and who play around with sf themes quite a bit. Aside from "Interstellar Overdrive," they have done things called "A Saucerful of Secrets," "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun," "Let There Be More Light," (a UFO vignette), and "Astronomy Domine." The music itself is much more interesting than the sfnal content; the band is very tight and very imaginative, and they create a beautiful eerie atmosphere that is for me a much more lasting source of enjoyment than the usual blast-your-ears rock fare. I've never heard them live, just heard their records; but reviews on their concerts (as Richard Gordon says in the letter column) that they bring their studio tricks onstage with them and perform all kinds of electronic feats in concert. They have four records out -- Pink Floyd, A Saucerful of Secrets, More (a film soundtrack) and Ummagumma. The last is probably the best to buy if you haven't heard any of them -- it's a double album for the price of one record. (It's also easier to find; it's put out by a Capital subsidiary, while the other three are on the poorly-distributed Tower label.)

There is also a jazz band called Sun Ra which you might describe as science fiction-oriented (or bughouse-oriented, or just disoriented). They played at Vanderbilt in May and proved to be about ten times as bizarre as the Pink Floyd. The audience turnover was very funny: a steady trickle of straight-looking people fleeing, to be replaced by freaks drawn in off the street -- Sun Ra plays loud. The band consists of about a dozen musicians and a female singer, all Black. About half of them play percussion -- two trap sets plus assorted congas, bongos, etc., there are three or four horn players, and a flautist (?), plus an organist who seems to think he's playing drums too. The music ranged from an incredible cacophonous din of percussion to a very nice smooth jazz to little rhythmic ditties such as a tour of the solar system. (They sometimes bill themselves as Sun Ra and His Magic Band from Outer Space.) They play in the midst of a theatrical sideshow suggesting some sort of musical Marat/Sade. Several of the musicians have perfected a walk in which nothing moves above the knee, so they move around the stage looking like mannequins on wheels. At one point two of them went backstage and walked/shuffled/rolled out carrying a large red velvet banner with a gold asterisk in the center and "Sun Ra" and "Infinity" in gold letters above and below the asterisk. I guess their most outrageous stunt was when one of them began wandering around the darkened stage with a strobe light in each hand, madly windmilling his arms. Shadowy figures began to converge on him -- they proved to be the horn players, who pantomimed driving him off the stage with their instruments. (There was no interruption in the music.) Later, half the band left the stage and went out into the audience banging their drums, blowing their horns, etc. This wasn't the guerrilla theatre idea of drawing the audience into the performance, though -- they either ignored the audience totally or else blew their horns into the ears of the people on the aisles. You should definitely go hear/see them if you get the chance -- they're good musicians and spectacular freaks.

Greg Shaw, 64 Taylor Drive, Fairfax, Calif 94930

As far as root science fiction songs -- that where we run into the most difficulty. "It was a one-eyed, one-horned flying purple people eater -- what a sight to see!" An awful lot of the novelty records of the '50s had sf themes. I see you almost recalled Buchanan and Goodman's "The Flying Saucer;" they had several other records on similar themes, and a host of imitations. A lot of early R&B records had references to rockets, planets, and so forth. Marginal things like "Guided Missles" by the Cufflinks would have to be considered. Then there's the classic "Flying Saucers Rock 'n' Roll" by Billy Lee Riley on Sun Records, which leads me to the next thing I want to talk about.

I've been publishing a zine for REAP (the Rock Enthusiasts' Amateur Press Association) called Who Put The Bomb. I've decided to expand the zine to a genzine, starting with

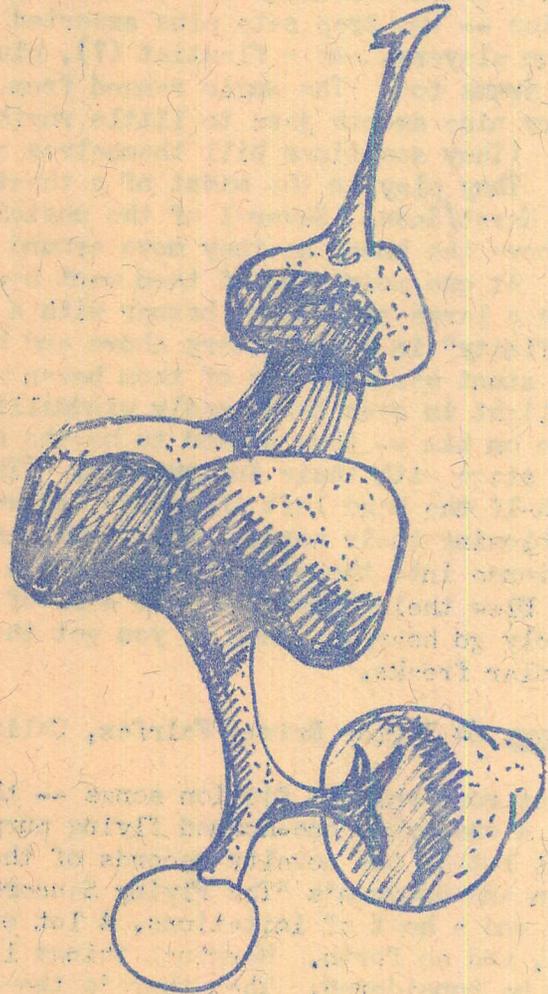
#4, which will be out in June. Four will be a special issue on Sun Records, with a 5-color mimeo cover of Elvis. Included will be the complete lyrics to "Flying Saucers Rock 'n' Roll," illustrated by John Ingham, who's an excellent artist/artist.

Now then, thanks for mentioning me in your list of fans taking over the rock publishing scene. Actually, we're taking over the whole underground publishing scene, of which rock is just a special case. More errata: James Wright published a rock magazine in Seattle in '67 that sold on newsstands called Electric Frog. Lenny Kaye who was active in fandom in the early 60s is now on the staff of Hit Parader and free lances for other rock papers. Les Nirenberg, Les Gerber, Andy Main, Thom Perry, Ray Nelson and Bob Lichtman, to name a few, have been active (influential, even) in underground publishing. Hank Stine is now writing for Crawdaddy. I could go on and on (if I wanted to think about it for a while).

\*I thought about it for a while, and in addition to these names and those I had last issue, I can only add Joe Pilati, widdy published in places like The Village Voice and Rolling Stone, and recently a featured columnist in Fusion. But, say, did I read somewhere that Tuli Kupferberg now of the Fugs was once a fan? Fringe fan? He is certainly an "underground" figure. How about Jay Lynch and Doug Lovenstein and Jay Kinney and George Motzger, fans all, with varying amounts of work in the underground comics. HL

To even keep the subject barely manageable, you'll have to exclude songs having fantasy/supernatural/surreal/mystic themes. You could probably find close to a thousand. Maybe even more. However, a good 10-page paper could be written on science fiction in rock music. The reason it's there is the same reason the hippies are all reading Stranger in a Strange Land (in its new edition with "GROK!" emblazoned on the cover, just like it is on the buttons they buy at their local head shop) As to why hippies are interested in science fiction, I think part of the reason was brought up in my letter of this issue, that is that it's a tool for dealing with new, changing environments; another part of the reason came to me while writing a comment on Len Bailes' letter in Metanoia 3, the fact that science fiction is a "high."

There may be more to it. It's pretty obvious, though, that fans and heads are being gravitated toward one another, and I just wonder when the first crisis at a convention will take place. The consequences of a drug bust to fandom can hardly be ignored. It would seem that a crisis is inevitable, though, with larger and larger numbers of non-fan heads turning up at cons. As for me, I'd rather see the confrontation occur on their ground, in the underground press.



MARTIAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENT  
 MR

# GLASS ONION

+ Creath Thorne +

The Beatles: The Authorized Biography by Hunter Davies. 372 pages. 1968.  
McGraw-Hill.

One of the most conspicuous aspects of the counter culture that began to develop in the early 1960's has been the Beatles. They have been with us very nearly all the way, and as times have changed and developed, so have the Beatles. Within the counter-culture they have attained a status granted only to a very few people such as Dylan or Ken Kesey; outside the culture they have stood in many person's minds as prime symbols of everything that is wrong with the young people of today. Before I gave up newspaper reading I remember quite regularly finding in the letters column someone complaining about the Communisitic influence of the Beatle's music or something equally valid. Obviously, people wouldn't keep writing such letters and the press wouldn't keep printing them if there weren't some national love-hate relationship with the Beatles, and, by extension, the whole counter-culture. The relationship is an obsessive one; it pervades most aspects of American life today. The same businessmen who say that more than four students should have been shot at Kent State nonetheless wear their sideburns long and model their satorial appearance after a modified version of hippie clothing. The dichotomy can be found in many places from the ridiculous to the sublime. Hunter Davies's biography of the Beatles is a product of this obsession. It was commissioned by a major publishing house, and no doubt made a good deal of money for McGraw-Hill when it appeared. It was serialized in Life and was a best seller; essentially journalistic in nature, it attempts to explain the Beatles to a mass audience.

In short, it would be very easy to write the book off as a minor attempt by a capitalistic economy to exploit a trend in culture. I don't think this should be done. I do think, however, that the problem of journalistic stance is a very important one here, and one to be kept continually in mind while reading the book.

The problem of journalistic stance as I see it is this: some basic experiences exists (e. g., the actual music of a song; the experiences one undergoes while high on a drug) that has a prior verbal meaning. People begin to talk about the experience, however; and in talking about it a structure is built up around the experience which influences any future experience. How you react to a Beatles song is almost certainly conditioned by what you have heard about the Beatles in the past, what your friends think about them, etc. This structuring is inevitable, but problems enter in when the verbal structures become too dissimilar with the actual experience, too removed from it. To put this into more specific terms, if you are a professional writer, if you have to fill a certain number of pages by a certain date, if you are writing for a certain group of people many of whom may never have experienced what you are writing about, if you are concerned with how much you are going to be paid for your piece, if you are concerned with

getting it past your editor and publisher: if you are concerned with all these things which are essentially incidental to the actual experience, is it really possible to write words that meaningfully relate to the original experience?

Davies's book has to deal with this problem, and I want to look at it in this light. Davies takes the straight, traditional approach. He doesn't pretend to be anything more than a good journalist. What this means for the book is that he deals mainly with traditional journalistic material: quotes from extended interviews with the Beatles; material about their lives that can be dug up from relatives, friends, old newspapers, magazines. Davies is a good writer and what he does he does well, but his limiting of himself to the traditional journalistic patterns means that some very important things are neglected.

For readers today the book has one mark against it before one even begins reading: it was written over two years ago, and in that time a great many things have happened to the Beatles. John has divorced Cynthia and married Yoko; Paul has married Linda Eastman; the white album, Abbey Road, and Let It Be have been released, the great death hoax has lived and died; the Let It Be movie has been released; all four Beatles have begun to produce their own albums apart from the other three; Paul has broken from the group and possibly ended their performing together ever again. Davies realized this would happen when he wrote in his last chapter: "Doing a biography of living people has the difficulty that it is all still happening. It is very dangerous to pin down facts and opinions because they are shifting all the time."

But the datedness of the book didn't really bother me when I read the book recently. What was true in 1968 should be at least somewhat true today. What did bother me about the book was what I see as Davies's failure to recognize some important subjects. The Beatles are primarily musicians, but their musical development and achievements are passed over in the book. The first part of the book deals with their early days in Liverpool and Hamburg. What I would have liked to have seen here is an account of how each Beatle learned to play; how rapidly he progressed; whether he showed exceptional talent early on that was recognized; and, if not, when his music began to develop into something special. One of the most interesting facts in the book for me was that George Harrison practised his guitar when he first bought it "until his fingers bled." A minor thing, perhaps, but it says a great deal about how hard George must have worked to become a musician and about how dedicated and in love with music he must have been. But Davies neglects this subject, perhaps because it is so difficult to talk about music in ordinary, newspaper terms.

The second part of the book is called "London and the World" and deals mostly with the Beatles from the time of their first big hits to the end of their touring days. Here, since I am more familiar with the music of this period, having heard it on albums, I was less frustrated than I was while reading the first part. However, I found another lack in this part: Davies attempts to deal with Beatlemania. You have to realize that a great deal more than music was involved. I can remember reading in Newsweek while I was a sophomore in high school about the tremendous success of the Beatles in England.

This was before any of their records were being played or distributed in America. I can remember being greatly excited about the news stories; I remember tearing them out and showing them to my friends -- and all this before I had even heard any of their music! There was something intensely attractive about them; they offered something that was lacking in the world at that time that a lot of young persons needed. In The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test Tom Wolfe describes Ken Kesey's realization of the power of the Beatles. Kesey and the Merry Pranksters go to a Beatles' concert at the Cow Palace:

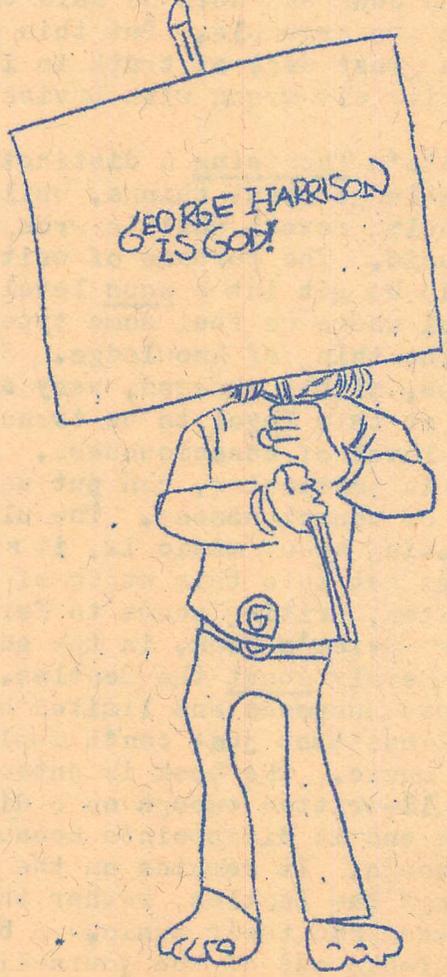
One of the Beatles, John, George, Paul, dips his long electric guitar handle in one direction and the whole teeny horde ripples precisely along the line of energy he sets off -- and then in the other direction, precisely along that line. It causes them to grim, John and Paul and George and Ringo, rippling the poor huge freaked teeny beast this way and that --

Control -- it is perfectly obvious -- they have brought this whole mass of human beings to the point where they are one, out of their skulls, one psyche, and they have utter control over them.-- but they don't know what in the hell to do with it, they haven't the first idea, and they will lose it.

Kesey and Wolfe, I believe, realize the implications of the tremendous social power that the Beatles had; but Davies does not seem to, and he makes not, real attempt to understand or explain it.

The third part of the book deals with the Beatles as they were in 1968. Here Davies stays too much on the surface of things. For instance he attempts to describe how the Beatles compose their music. Having just seen the movie Let It Be recently I think I can see what bothered me about this section of the Davies book and what I think he missed. The first half of the movie shows the Beatles in the process of working up some songs. Mostly they mumble at each other, play little bits and pieces of music, and give the appearance of not doing too much. This is the impression you get from the Davies book. And yet, if you watch the film closely, even in the short, edited version, you get the feeling that there is a lot more going on: The intimate working together of four people who know each other well (perhaps, as Rolling Stone suggested, too well) and whose ways of communicating and creating are subtle enough to be missed by superficial observers.

The most intriguing section of this part for me was some unfortunately brief quotes from John about his music:



It's nice when people like it, but when they start 'appreciating' it, getting great deep things out of it, making a thing of it, then it's a lot of shit. It proves what we've always thought about most sorts of so-called art. It's all a lot of shit. We hated all the shit they wrote and talked about Beethoven and ballet, all kidding themselves it was important. It just takes a few people to get going, and they con themselves into thinking it's important. It all becomes one big con. . . .

It is depressing to realize we were right in what we always thought, all those years ago. Beethoven is a con, just like we are now. He was just knocking out a bit of work, that was all. (293)

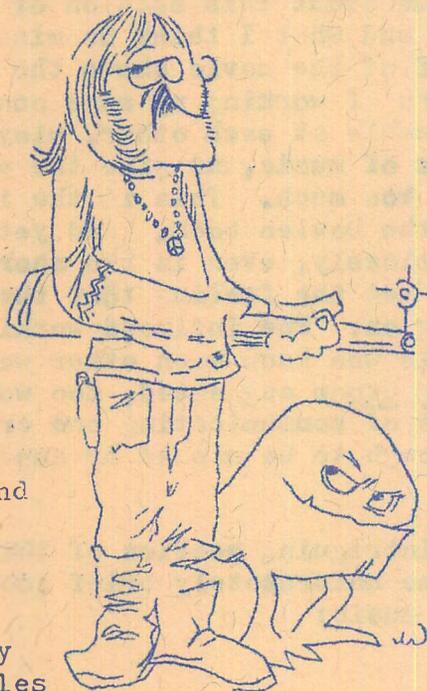
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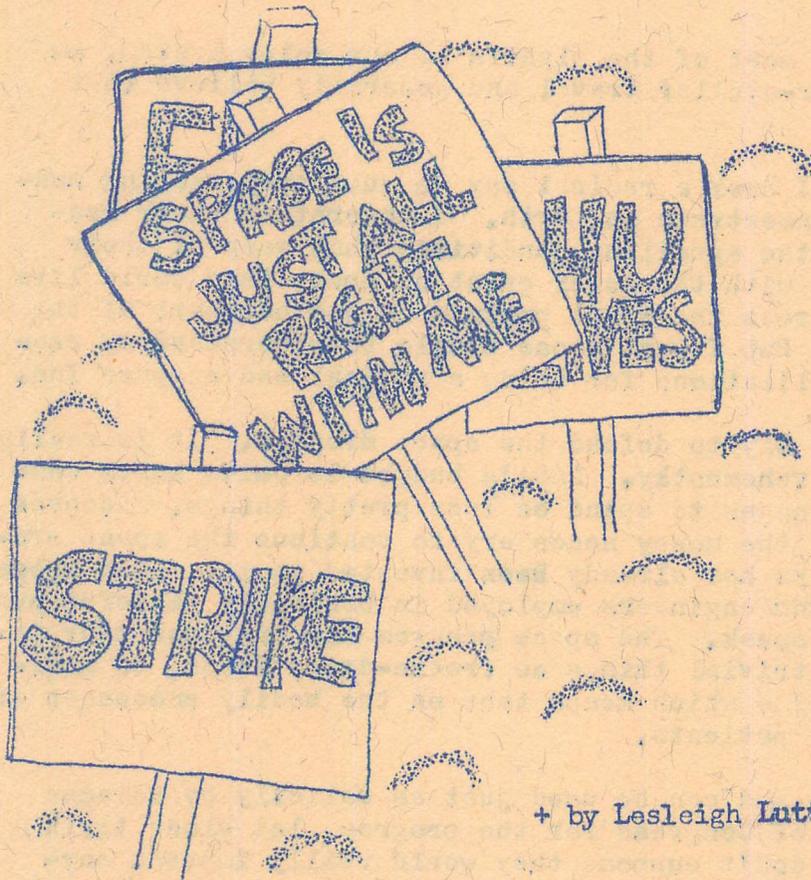
We're no better than anybody else, Nobody is. We're all the same. We're as good as Beethoven / John apparently has this thing about Beethoven /. Everyone's the same inside. You need desire and the right circumstances, but it's nothing to do with talent, or with training or education. . . .

Someone wants to bust open this whole talent myth, wise everybody up. Politicians have no talent. It's all a con. (302)

Of course, the first question you have to deal with here is the one of just how serious John was when he said these things. Certainly his comments about talent are arguable. But this comment about appreciating art seems to me to have a great deal of truth in it and, I think, points the way to what I think is ultimately wrong with Davies book.

In Plato's Theatetus a distinction is made between nous and dianoia. Dianoia is knowledge about things, while nous is knowledge of things. This distinction helps reveal what is wrong with so much criticism and writing about art and music. The purpose of writing should be to help us get into a nous level of knowledge, a level where we feel some type of relation with the thing of knowledge. Such a level is intense, highly charged, very emotional. One seems at this level to be transformed into another level of consciousness. Music, Beatle music in particular, can put us into such a state of consciousness. The ultimate purpose of writing about music is, it seems to me, to help us get into this state of knowledge. But too often, writing seems to forget this purpose. Hunter Davies's book, in the end, comes down to being merely about the Beatles. It seems torn by cross purposes and limited by conventional restrictions that just can't apply to the Beatles and their music. The book is entertaining enough and well-written enough on a dianoia level, but in the end it disappoints because it doesn't go far enough. It remains on the level of "appreciating" the Beatles, rather than trying to really know them and their music. A Book about the Beatles that breaks out of the journalistic stance and moves to the real matters at hand remains to be written.





+ by Lesleigh Luttrell +

It would seem that being a science fiction fan could not have anything to do with one's politics. After all, one can find a wide range of political views expressed in fan writing. But recently I have found my love for science fiction affecting my political ideas.

I consider myself to be something of a radical. I believe in a good many of the ideas of the New Left, have belonged to a local chapter of the SDS, taken part in demonstrations, and feel along with many other people, that our world is in bad, bad shape and something must be done about it now. This feeling is not totally unconnected with reading science fiction. I, like most of you, have read sf stories where the ills of today's world are carried to their logical extreme; there are any number of sf works about nuclear holocaust, the complete pollution of our environment, the ills that continued polarization of blacks and whites will bring. Science fiction readers become used to thinking of the condition of the world in terms of future possibilities. It seems impossible to be a true radical without having a sincere interest in the possibilities of the future.

But there is one thing that separates me from many other radicals. Others say 'forget about space, forget about looking outward; we must dedicate all the resources of our world to solving our problems here before we even begin to think farther than our own polluted atmosphere.' I agree that great energies must be spent in righting our world, yet I cannot bear the thought of forgetting the extra-terrestrial. I am tremendously excited by the idea of space travel. I have read about it so often that the moon landing seemed to have happened many times over. Yet I desperately want to know what is really out there. I

hope to live to see man reach most of the planets of our solar system, am intrigued by the idea of inter-stellar travel and generally believe that space travel is worthwhile.

So I often become angry when I hear a radical say we must stop wasting money and effort on space and concentrate on Earth. I understand their reasons; the black radicals see the appalling conditions that many of their people live in and think that with the money spent on space they could live decently; the white radical sees the space program as another part of the military-industrial complex. But I want those people to understand my reasons, to listen to my rationalizations for being a radical and a space fan.

There are many things I could say to defend the space program. It is really not huge enough to attack so vehemently. NASA's budget is quite small compared to what the Pentagon manages to spend on less pretty things. According to Arthur Clarke, most of the money necessary to continue the space program for the next several years has already been invested in it. NASA keeps some of our best scientists and engineers employed in basically peaceful pursuits, out of trouble, so to speak. The space program has provided many incidental benefits, from such trivial things as freeze-dried foods, to medical advances such as the machine which keeps tabs on the bodily processes of astronauts and critically ill patients.

These are all nice arguments and can be used just as validly by someone trying to get more money out of Congress for the program, let alone trying to justify its existence. I don't suppose they would really impress anybody who feels our society cannot exist in its present form much longer anyway. But I also look at the space program in much broader ways.

A great many of the world's problems stem from people's hatred or at least indifference to other people. While most wars are fought for economic or political reasons, rather than the hatred of one people for another, it would be impossible to mobilize armies unless the people involved identified themselves as two sides. One's own side is the 'good guys', and the other side is the 'bad guys'.

Naturalists like Konrad Lorenz have found among other animals this same tendency to divide members of their species into two groups, us and them. 'Us' may be a lone individual, a family unit or a group such as a herd, flock or troop. 'Us' and 'them' are mutually aggressive, generally in regards to the establishment of "territory", an arbitrarily bounded piece of property that an 'us' group will exploit and defend from other groups of its own species. This is basically what man does.

Man has done some strange things with this arrangement. He has shown that he does not have a natural limit on how many people can be 'us' and how many 'them'. He can consider a family of a dozen, a tribe of a few hundred, a city of several thousand, or a nation of millions as a proper 'us'. He has proven ingenious in developing ways of keeping 'them' off his territory, from bow and arrow to atomic bomb. He has found it possible to belong to several different 'us' groups at the same time; family, church and nation to name a few. Man has found it possible to live on good terms occasionally with 'them'. Many people think that this 'us-them' dichotomy is basic to human nature. They fear that we will never have a peaceful world until we discover some

other 'them'; so that the whole human race will be 'us', or at least find some basic problem that demands the co-operation of all; 'us' against a super challenge.

If it's another them that's required, the obvious place to look for one is beyond Earth. Or we can sit here and wait for them to find us and a number of people believe they already have. The 'them' idea may be a little far-fetched, but it seems obvious that space can provide the super-challenge. But then it can be argued that man can find the super-challenge here at home, organizing the world so that poverty is eliminated, stopping pollution and cleaning up the water and air, but the space program has shown that it can inspire just as much, if not more, feeling of unity in men than these worthy tasks. People over the entire globe expressed unity during the lunar landing. In fact, I have not seen such an expression of unity in feeling since John Kennedy's assassination and surely sending three men to the moon is a much better way to achieve unity than killing one man.

Again starting at the idea of finding a way to achieve peace in the world, these thoughts. It seems from anthropological research that the weapon made man. The first creature generally recognized as man's direct ancestor australopithecus, did not have the big brain we think of as man's trademark. But he did walk erect and he did use weapons. It seems that only the use of weapons allowed such a ridiculous creature to survive. Certainly there were other factors, such as his erect carriage and his carnivorousness that aided him, but not his superior intellect. That came later. Later the individual with the larger brain, the smarter individual could figure out how to make better weapons, could develop social 'us' groups more efficient in killing food and defending territory. What other use would such a creature have for superior intelligence?

If we accept the fact that the superior man is the result of the search for the superior weapon, and there is much evidence for it, where does that leave us? Man seems driven to make things bigger and better as it were. Some peoples, it can be argued, aren't terribly aggressive and haven't changed their weapons for thousand of years. True, these people have so often been defeated by other men and the environment that they have turned this urge to other things. The Bushmen, one of the most primitive people in the world, have a very complicated social and religious system. 'Bigger and better' perhaps. This is the situation all men would probably find themselves in if we discovered a really 'bigger and better' culture out there. But our particular branch of humanity, Western civilization, has had a lot of success with technological 'bigger and better'. We have got weapons big enough to wipe out everybody on this planet. (The only way to escape this mass destruction would be to leave the planet.)

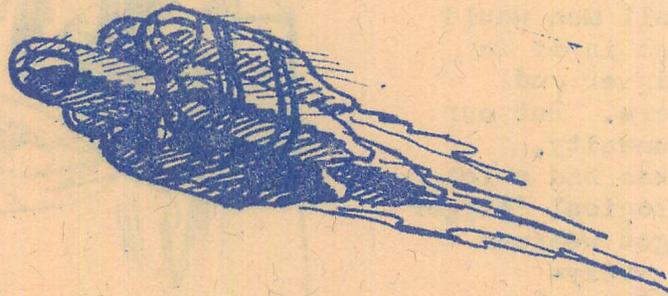


If you see this urge as a deep and necessary part of being homo sapiens, what is there to do? It seems a little late for western world to forget about their weapons, and a little too much to hope that no one will ever decide to use them, or build 'better' ones. No, it seems we must keep out technological urge, but turn it to other uses. And that seems valid. Man has been inventing tools with weapons all along. So, let him turn his urge to 'bigger and better', his ability to organize groups, to the greatest technological challenge there is -- conquering space.

Space is certainly the largest, if only in size, challenge man can find. And it seems that societies must have challenge to remain viable. A number of historians and other thinkers believe that a frontier is necessary for a society to grow and escape stagnation. The frontier in the United States was what made us grow so rapidly important. It offered, not only newly discovered resources, but also a challenge, a place to try new ideas, a feeling of self-sufficiency. Now that there is no actual frontier in our country or anywhere in the world, there is no challenge, no place for the dissatisfied to go and try their new ideas. Space is the only frontier that can never be exhausted. Our universe is infinite.

To the science fiction reader it is obvious that only the contemplation and exploration of space can give us a true perspective of ourselves. We are an infinitesimally small part of the universe. We are almost certainly not the only intelligent beings in the universe (if we are, indeed, intelligent). Man is insufferably self-important. He has always thought himself the be-all and end-all of creation, yet when one thinks of the vastness of space, this is ridiculous. It would be good for mankind's collective soul to find out just what his real place is in the universe.

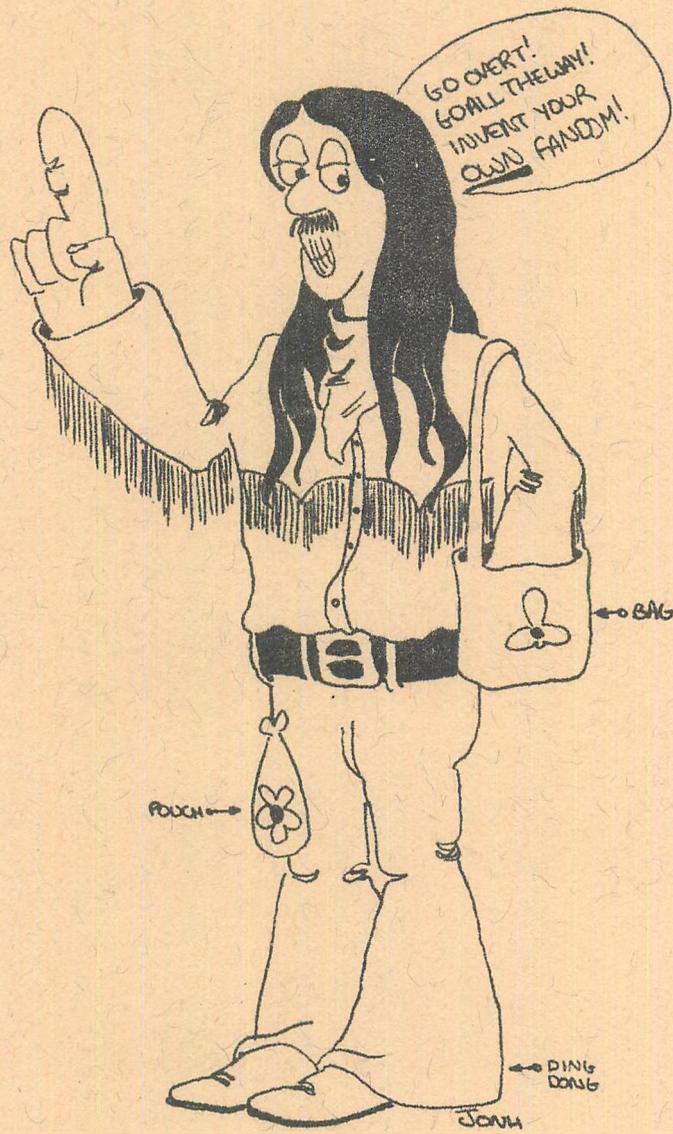
There are many arguments I could put forward for the necessity of space exploration. Our world is rapidly becoming over crowded; we must find others. We are rapidly exhausting our resources; we must find more. After all this, my radical friend will still say, 'Yes, but let us put our own house in order before we visit our neighbors,' and I must answer, 'But damnit, I can't wait to find out what the universe holds for man.'



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GO OVERT!  
GO ALL THE WAY!  
INVENT YOUR  
OWN FANEDM!

← BAG

← POUCH

← PING PONG

JOHN