



HANSEN 81-

TAPPEN



Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the doormat, it's

## TAPPEX 2

a fanzine edited and produced by Malcolm Edwards, 28 Duckett Road, London N4 1BN, U.K. (Tel: 01-340 9983) It is available for few of the usual reasons. This all-singing, all-dancing and all-too-soon second issue was commenced on Tuesday 11th August 1981, at which time the editor's thoughts were obsessed with such burning questions as: will Leroy Kettle get back from the USA in time to do his bit, or will the air traffic controllers forfeit my sympathy by holding him hostage? For me only time will tell; you lot can just glance at the contents page and miss all the suspense.

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## FRONT PAGE DRIVE-IN NEWS

It would be an exaggeration to say that the response to TAPPEX 1 so far has been overwhelming: a quick check of the bulging correspondence file unveils 5 letters and a postcard. But this is hardly surprising in some respects — most of what I think of as my corner of British fandom is sunk in deep apathy, while all but one or two of the overseas copies will still be in transit. I still have a few copies sitting here waiting to be mailed to people whose addresses I couldn't find. I am not downcast. The verbal response has been encouraging enough. My intention is to push ahead with all speed: this issue in time for Silicon, no.3 before Novacon. With any luck I should by then be able to save money by pruning the mailing list...

It being only two months since I started the last issue (as opposed to the previous seven-year gap) I have comparatively little that's new to report. The major science fictional event during this time was the Birmingham SF Group's 10th anniversary party, held at the Royal Angus Hotel. I travelled up to Birmingham in company with John Brosnan and Roy Kettle (with whom I'd foolishly arranged to share a single room, to minimize the cost). We were to arrive around mid-day, and since the bar was to be open until three o'clock the following morning we decided that pacing was going to be all-important. Too much drink too soon and we'd never last the course. It was a lively journey. John had just got an advance copy of the issue of STARBURST in which I had reviewed his novel SKYSHIP (Hamlyn, £1.65), and vowed awful revenge for the couple of things I'd said which were less than total praise. (His column in the August STARBURST gives an apocryphal version of this vengeance, by the way.) We thought of lots of ways to make our fortunes and promptly forgot them. When the bar opened John was unable to resist a beer, though Roy and I stuck virtuously to coffee.

When we got to Birmingham the first port-of-call was a wine bar next door to Rog Peyton's shop, in which various authors were holding a communal signing session. The place was fairly crowded, so instead of standing around sneering at Dave Langford and Chris Priest we sat at a quiet table away from the throng and ordered a bottle of wine. And another. And another. And another. After

drinking our way through four bottles in little over an hour all our good intentions were blown. Much of the rest of the day passed in a blur, fuelled by regular further intake of various liquids.

But it was, let me say, an exceptionally enjoyable day. By the evening I had passed into a state of euphoria beyond mere drunkenness (hard to achieve, but it can be done), and Leroy was before our eyes shedding his years and responsibilities and regressing into the Kettle who used to terrorize innocent conventions in the early 70s. I was threatened with ejection from the hotel in circumstances which I've retailed to enough people by now. Roy leaped around, fell over, bounced to his feet, behaved appallingly. Even John Brosnan showed evidence of inhuman feeling (lust) hitherto believed absent from his psyche. Another couple of dozen familiar faces would have helped make the evening still better, but perhaps that can be rectified next year if, as we suggested, these 10th anniversary parties become an annual event.

I eventually retired to bed about 5 am. There were still a few stragglers around, notably Brian Aldiss and Joe Nicholas, with whom I was trying to have a conversation. Unfortunately one of the other people in the small circle kept dragging E.E. Smith into the discussion, and that made my brain start to hurt, so I gave up. When I arrived at the room I discovered that Roy had dragged half of the bedding on to the floor and submerged himself in it. All one could see was a heap of tangled blankets from which an occasional muffled grunt emanated. I discovered, after eliminating every other possibility, that he had gone to sleep lying on top of the small bag of things (toothbrush, Alka-Seltzer) I'd brought with me. It was impossible to move or rouse him, and I quickly abandoned the attempt and went to sleep ... only to wake up about 2 hours later full of energy and alertness and stuff. This was an incredible feeling (I don't usually become even semi-conscious until 9 am), but would not be denied. There was no alternative but to get up and go downstairs to join the early breakfasters. Unfortunately the only early breakfasters were a coach party from Glasgow, and I was reduced to going for a walk around the centre of Birmingham (at eight on a Sunday morning!) to pass the time until others began to emerge. Curiously, not all of them shared my state of well-being; indeed, several people, Leroy included, looked distinctly pale and tired. I tried to persuade them to do as I had done, and follow their breakfast with a large Bloody Mary, but they looked askance at the idea. The fan of today has little stamina.

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I think it's time to move straight into the first article, as my brain doesn't seem to be firing on all cylinders. Having juggled the material in hand in various different ways, it looks like first crack goes once again to C. Atkinson (M), cohabitee and spouse of the editor. It's all very odd: Chris went to her first convention no less than 15 years ago (though she didn't get to another for 8 years), and until this year her fanzine contributions could be counted on the fingers of one finger. Now, all of a sudden, she is writing articles left, right and centre. What can have possessed her? Whatever the reason I'm not complaining, as I'm in a good position to demand first choice of stuff for TAPPEN. What follows is the first part of a longer article based on certain of her experiences in social work and beyond, and it should perhaps be made clear that certain names have been changed to protect the innocent.

## LIFE WITH THE LOONIES: PART 1

by Chris Atkinson

Hermione Grant was causing trouble again. All week the neighbours had been phoning up Social Services and complaining about Hermione singing the Hallelujah Chorus on the communal balcony shared by seven other families in one of the council's high rise blocks. Unfortunately for the neighbours, Hermione's version of the Hallelujah Chorus included vigorously beating a frying pan with a meat tenderizer. At one in the morning, that's no joke. Today, however, things seemed to have taken a turn for the worse. When the lady next door had peered in through Hermione's letter box on her way home from the shops, she had seen a towering barricade of furniture and had been treated to Hermione's lurid description of some pretty perverse sexual acts, followed by a threat to set the flat on fire.

As Duty Social Worker I'd been down to the flat a couple of times that week, trying to persuade Hermione to commune with God more quietly. When this hadn't worked I had called in the local psychiatrist, who had commented that unless she beat the neighbours with the meat tenderizer he was too busy to see her. He guessed that Hermione would eventually need treatment as he knew her of old, but until she became uncontrollable he reckoned that the neighbours would have to put up with her.

Hermione was a large West Indian lady in late middle age. She had apparently had an unhappy marriage and was now divorced and living alone. Some years before, her then husband had poured a kettleful of boiling water over her head, leaving her face permanently disfigured. Unfortunately it also seemed to have disfigured her mind, and every now and again she would need a spell in the local psychiatric ward. It was beginning to look as though she needed one now.

Hermione's flat was on the 7th floor of the high rise block. Eight identical blue doors lined the communal balcony where Hermione conducted her nightly concert. When I arrived outside the flat there was no sign of the neighbours, however; having done their duty by complaining they had shut themselves away for fear of getting involved. When I knocked at Hermione's door it remained firmly closed, although some muffled scratching noises indicated that someone was at home. Unwillingly I was reduced to calling through the letter-box, but although this produced some interesting terms of abuse it didn't get me into the flat.

I think it was at about this stage that I began to realize there were two sets of human noises emanating from beyond the letter box. One was Hermione's lurid ranting, but in the background there was another sound -- a sort of low, despairing moan. Knowing that Hermione lived alone, I began to wonder exactly what was going on, and communicated this via the letter box.

Eventually a nervous female voice answered, informing me that when she had called round that morning to do Hermione's shopping she had been dragged in past the barricade, and was at that moment being held at knifepoint while Hermione tried to set the kitchen alight using her free hand. Luckily she wasn't ambidextrous.

At this point I began to feel that I might need reinforcements. I borrowed a neighbour's telephone and called the police, an ambulance and the psychiatrist. All said that they would rush to my assistance. Shortly afterwards two ambulancemen joined me on the doorstep. One was a beefy guy in his early forties who had been through it all many times; the other was a rather cautious looking trainee of around 20. We stood there for a while, smoking cigarettes and waiting for the police and psychiatrist to arrive. Suddenly the "hostage" called us to the door in a panicky voice. Apparently Hermione had assembled some newspapers in the kitchen and was threatening to start a bonfire by soaking them in paraffin and dropping in a lighted match. Taking advantage of Hermione's distraction the neighbour had managed to climb back over the barricade and was now by the door. But, she said querulously, she was not going to open it for us because Hermione might knife her afterwards. No amount of reasoning about death by fire being just as final as death by carving knife would persuade her. I began to wonder if Hermione was the only loony in there.

As the smell of paraffin began to drift through the door we started to get a bit worried. There was no sign of the police, so eventually the older ambulance man winked at me and put his shoulder to the door. Thanks to shoddy council workmanship, it opened quite easily. As the door swung back Hermione Grant's neighbour bolted out without saying a word, and disappeared along the balcony in a cloud of dust. When we went into the flat, we found Hermione standing in the middle of the kitchen holding a box of matches in one hand and a can of paraffin in the other. A beaming smile lit up her face as we entered. "Hallelujah! Jesus saves!" she cried triumphantly. Luckily she was quite happy about taking a ride to the hospital, as without the psychiatrist we had no legal means of coercing her. As we drove out through the entrance to the flats we noticed that a police car was just arriving....

That ambulance journey will remain vivid to me for the rest of my life. For some reason the older guy decided to drive, leaving Hermione in the back with me and the trainee. She behaved quite co-operatively at first, settling her ample body comfortably back into the ambulance seat. "Jesus loves me," she would tell us from time to time, but that seemed okay so we drove in quite a leisurely manner through the now darkening streets of Hackney. Slowly, however, her manner began to change.

"Jesus loves you," she said forcefully, poking a finger at the young ambulance man. "Jesus wants you. Hermione wants you. C'm here!!" With that she tore off her blouse, letting free her ample black breasts, and threw herself upon the now terrified young man. His muffled yell alerted the driver, who squealed to a halt and came to our rescue. Unfortunately, however, the arm restraints supplied with the ambulance were defective, so we had to race the rest of the way with the siren wailing, while Hermione Grant continued her amorous approaches to the now shaking and white faced young man. Flying

breasts were everywhere. I thanked God Hermione was heterosexual.

It sometimes seems quite mean to laugh at the predicament of someone like Hermione. After all, she must have had a shitty life, and it's no fun really to humiliate yourself in the back of an ambulance. However, working with the mentally ill did often have its hilarious side. One justification I can make is that I went through a bit of a loony episode myself, so I'm not just laughing at the misfortunes of others.

My own experience of being a loony must have been about eleven or twelve years ago, and I have to admit that it could well have been precipitated by overindulgence in noxious substances. My first intimation that I was different somehow from other people came during an acid trip, when I had a long and serious conversation with an archangel called Leonard. On other acid trips I had at least some idea that the hallucinations were chemically induced, but this time I got the impression that Leonard had actually been sent to look after me by an external agency, rather than that he was a figment of my dazzled imagination. Leonard made himself known as a disembodied voice, coming from above me and towards my right. He spoke in deep, calm tones, sounding caring and gentle, rather like an ideal psychiatrist. Amongst other things, he told me that the reason God had sent him to look after me was because I had a special part to play in Armageddon. After the effects of the acid wore off I still firmly believed that I had been in contact with an archangel because the experience had felt so real. Unfortunately the people who had been with me at the time of the trip, and had only heard my half of the cosmic conversation, firmly believed I was a little deluded.

Not long after this trip I had to go into hospital for a minor operation which involved a general anaesthetic. As I came round from the anaesthetic I remembered previously meeting a guy who at the time had seemed quite normal, but who for some reason I now realized had been surrounded by a sort of glowing aura, marking him as very different from most of the rest of humanity. Obviously I too was different, having talked with an archangel, and I therefore concluded that we were probably both members of an emerging super-race. I resolved to go and look for this person, whom I remembered was called Andy, as soon as I was let out of the hospital.

In fact, what did happen on my discharge was that I had two further encounters with Leonard in fairly quick succession. These happened without the help of acid, or drugs of any kind, and I did not get the impression that I was having one of those "acid flashbacks" that were so popular with the media. The first of these experiences happened when I was on the bed in my rented room. Leonard came to sit next to me and held my hand, talking comfortingly and reassuringly to me. I could distinctly feel the pressure of his hand on mine, and I could sense his presence strongly, although I couldn't see him. I was also very aware of his position on the bed, and the thing that persuaded me of his divine origin was that the side of the bed he was sitting on was against the wall. Only a being close to God could defy the laws of nature with such impunity.

The second time I came across Leonard he was a completely disembodied voice, as he had been on the acid trip. I was sitting at my desk at work when everything went grey, and I saw a tree, made completely out of water,

eternally flowing upwards. Leonard's voice came in as a sort of commentary, saying: "Mankind has gone astray and must be brought back." I got the feeling that I was intended to play a part in the "bringing back", but I was not sure of my exact role. Perhaps more instructions would be broadcast shortly.

I finally met Andy again at a rehearsal of the group he managed. He agreed that we were probably both members of an emerging super-race, and suggested that because of our common heritage we should go to bed together. I didn't really fancy Andy much so I wasn't too happy about this suggestion. As a diversion I therefore told him about my cosmic experiences with Leonard. Andy looked very interested but suggested that I looked a little run down, and that maybe if I talked to my doctor he would give me a tonic. This seemed a reasonable enough suggestion at the time, as even agents of Armageddon need to keep their health up to scratch.

A few weeks later I turned up in the doctor's surgery. I had continued to have strange experiences, and I was beginning to find them a bit frightening. When I asked the doctor for a tonic I guess I wasn't too convincing, because he started to ask about what went on in my mind. Did I, for instance, ever hear voices? "Oh yes," I replied innocently, "I have had a number of messages from an archangel called Leonard. Just recently he's begun to run Dymo tapes with written instructions on them through my brain."

The doctor looked interested. He wanted to know more details about the Dymo tapes, so I launched into an explanation. The first two tapes had slotted into my brain while I was at home in my bedsit. It's very difficult to describe the experience exactly because to do that I would need to reconstruct my state of mind at that time, which is probably undesirable. The nearest I can get is that the images were about as solid as dream sequences, but I was seeing them while I was wide awake with my eyes open. The tapes were black with typical white Dymo lettering on them, and they slotted in through the right hand side of my brain and ran through and out of my field of vision towards the left. The first message told me to listen to a track called "Wooden Ships" on the Jefferson Airplane's VOLUNTEERS because it contained a message about my role in Armageddon. I played the song a few times without being able to isolate the message, but I had the feeling that it would show itself to me when the time was right.

About a week later the second Dymo tape message appeared, and told me to go on the Pill. I had used the Pill up to about six months before, but gave it up when drugs and rock'n'roll got more important than sex. I was a bit puzzled by this particular instruction, as I had no intention of having sex with anyone as far as I was aware. Still, Leonard had to be obeyed, so I dug out my leftover supply of Ovulen and set about taking the tablets, wondering idly whether I should write to the Pope about this heavenly blessing on contraception.

The third message was rather more sinister. I was crossing the footbridge on Beckenham Station when a tape slotted into place telling me to throw myself under the 9:15 am train to London Bridge. I made my way to the edge of the platform, but I felt very confused as this message did not seem to fit with the idea of the kindly Leonard preparing me for my role in Armageddon. Despite that, the compulsion to obey the tape was pretty strong, especially as I had

done so on the two previous occasions. As the train approached the platform both the compulsion and the confusion grew until in the end, thankfully, I was paralysed by indecision at the vital moment. As I climbed rather shakily on to the train and took my seat I began to wonder if the force in my mind was less than benevolent. (It also now occurs to me that if my suicide was meant to begin a succession of events leading to Armageddon, I probably saved the world a lot of hassle.)

Back in the surgery my physician was looking more and more concerned. "Anything else been happening?" he asked.

"Oh yes. I've been having a series of dreams where I dismember people with a meat cleaver. Blood and brains everywhere. Last night, for instance, I dispatched a whole rugby team. Then when I wake up I find that the bedding is soaked with sweat and the sheets are all knotted up. That usually happens at about four in the morning and then I can't go to sleep again."

The doctor looked at me with pity in his eyes. "My dear, I think you need help," he murmured, and picked up the telephone to the nearest psychiatric ward.

The hospital itself was okay, because it was a very informal place where you got up and got dressed every day instead of, as I had imagined, lying around being ill. It wasn't really a hospital, in fact, but a sort of halfway place for people who were only loony around the edges. The psychiatrist was a woman called Dr Smedburg, and typically enough she was Austrian. I had two five-minute sessions with her, which went something like this:

Dr.S: "Have you ever wanted to murder your mother?"

Me: "Not really."

Dr.S: "Oh. Have you ever wanted to murder your father, perhaps?"

Me: "Not really."

...and so on for the rest of the five minutes. At the end of my second session I asked her what they thought they could actually do for me. She said the idea was to try me on different drugs until they found one that would suit me, and then I would have to keep on taking the tablets until my brain fell out or I died or something. I recounted this to Nick, a guy who had been sharing my bedsit with me at the time. (Despite sharing the same room our relationship was completely platonic, but we were very fond of each other.) Nick said that no way should I stay and let them continue to experiment on me with chemicals, and that if I came home he would look after me and make sure everything was okay. As the whole thing was voluntary anyway there was nothing they could do to stop me going, although Dr Smedburg said it was a pity, because I had a "good personality" somewhere in there which the right tablets would reveal like magic. So back I went to my bedsit with Nick.

Nick was lovely. Every time I went out he would sit in the window so that I could see him there on my way back. He did all the housework for me, and took me out for lots of meals at the local Indian. All this loving care seemed to work far better than any pills, and I got no more messages from the Other Side. Then one Friday night I got paranoid and decided Nick was trying to get control of my brain. Never one to hesitate, I threw him and his

belongings out of my bedsit and into the street. I never saw him again, and I'll never really forgive myself for that last lapse into delusion. But for Nick I might still be taking the Largactyl. Still, who said life was fair?

Looking back on these experiences it is very easy to analyse them away. It all happened not long after I had left home and launched myself into a lifestyle very much in contrast with my deeply religious upbringing. My parents were, and still remain, fundamentalist Christians, and the coming Armageddon is never far from their thoughts. Events in the world and in their lives are often interpreted by them as signs of the Second Coming, so it's not really surprising that my delusions should take on a highly religious doomsday colouration. (As to why the archangel was called Leonard, I shall never know. The only Leonard I knew in real life was my grandfather, and he was far from angelic.)

Despite the obvious links with my religious past and my equally obvious guilt feelings about myself, I found it very difficult afterwards to accept that what had happened was delusion and not a spiritual experience. Of course, it's very flattering to think that you've been chosen to help change the destiny of humanity. The main reason for my difficulty, however, was that it had all seemed so real. Although the visual hallucinations resembled dream images, they did not share the unreality which dreams assume once the dreamer is fully awake. The memories of my contacts with Leonard are just as clear — if not clearer — than memories of external events around that time. I also remember feeling very strongly that it would never again be possible to feel so close and so much at one with another being as I had felt with Leonard during the good times. The frightening experiences I relinquished with relief, but basically I missed Leonard. At the same time, I had never quite worked out just what I was supposed to do if Armageddon ever arrived, so I was probably doomed to make a balls-up of things, as usual. That meant I was likely to let down this caring archangel who had given up his precious time to look after me and give me a glimpse of eternity.

Because what had happened did make a profound impact on me, it took quite a while to get it out of my system. In an attempt to get back the good bits of Leonard without the scary bits, I went along to a Spiritualist Church for a while, but the powerful experiences I had had did not seem to fit with the collection of earnest elderly ladies who wore their best hats to the meetings. Then one night I felt that if I went out and wandered around a bit Leonard would guide me to a sign which would help me make sense of it all. What did happen, typically, was that I ended up sitting on the steps of Bockenham parish church, but my religious upbringing had been so fiercely anti-C of E that I could not believe the local vicar held the answer to the mystery of the universe.

When I started going out with guys again I went through a phase of telling them all about Leonard on our first date. This was partly, I think, to see if they could tolerate an ex-loony, but also to see if they were prepared to accept the possibility that I might have had a real live spiritual experience. The number of relationships that foundered at this point is probably quite staggering. However, as time went by I gradually began to admit to myself that what had happened was probably the result of a combination of culture-shock and too many drugs. This is basically what I feel about it nowadays, although to

be honest there is still a small part of my mind which wonders if, after all, Leonard is still around there somewhere, keeping a kindly eye on me and waiting for Armageddon.

Coming back to my experiences with mentally ill people in my job, obviously it is useful to some extent to understand how reality can start to slip. In some ways it does help to minimize any possible fears of mentally ill people, because I know that I have had a glimpse of what it might be like, and I have remained human. I've also had a mild experience of facing hospitals, psychiatrists and chemotherapy. The problem with it is, though, that if I meet someone whose experiences start to resemble my own too closely, I start to feel rather panicky inside. After all, some of my strange episode might have been ecstatic but a fair amount of it involved a terrifying loss of control. The ludicrously funny side of mental illness, like Hermione's ambulance trip, helps to cope with the slight suspicion many of us may have that somewhere at the back of our minds there's a nasty corner of insanity looking for a way out.

--- Chris Atkinson

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There are times when I regret never having tried LSD (when I was a student and the stuff was reasonably commonplace I was unwilling to surrender so much self-control; these days I couldn't care less about self-control but the stuff is hardly to be found). On the other hand, there are times when I feel that maybe I didn't miss much....

In the month or so since I finished TAPPEN 1 a fair number of fanzines seem to have appeared -- although any number would seem fair compared with the almost complete dearth in the few months previously (British fanzines I mean, obviously). Two of them provoked me towards comment, but of those I've lost one (Chris Hughes's FANTASMAGORIA) somewhere in the house, which leaves only Rob Hansen's EPSILON 7.

Rob has something of the same problem I encountered in easing rusted wheels back into motion. He hasn't been inactive for anywhere near as long, of course, and in the almost-three-year gap since the last EPSILON has produced a couple of interesting other fanzines -- but he is somewhat hampered here by the outdated dead weight of comment on his last issue. Few people in mid-1981 will be greatly interested in reading letters worrying about what might or might not happen at Seacon. If I'd been Rob I would have junked this stuff, even though it was conveniently already on stencil.

The main point of interest here is Rob's short piece on the desirability or otherwise of introducing politics into fandom. On the whole he's against it (specific instances being Ellison's ERA activities at Iguanacon and, more recently, Ian Watson's political Guest of Honour speech at Yorcon). Being a born wishy-washy liberal I can, as usual, see both sides of the argument. In those specific instances, for example, it's traditional for a convention Guest of Honour to make some kind of personal statement, and if that involves a political dimension then so be it. In Ellison's case, of course, everything

tends to become an Ellison centred mediahype (the focus is not so much on the ERA as on Ellison's espousal of it); Watson, as I understand it (I missed his speech) was arguing that if we didn't get out in the real world and do something, then the only one of the futures laid out for us in sf stories like to come true was the radioactive wasteland. I couldn't agree more, though I don't agree with the parallel conclusion that it's therefore essential to support the Labour Party. (I voted Labour in the GLC elections, largely because the local candidate is a CND activist, but in general I don't like the direction the Labour Party seems to be taking, not because it's becoming more radical but because it's also tending to become more dogmatic.)

So, here I am doing what Rob deplures and talking about politics -- and, moreover, party politics -- in the pages of a fanzine. It doesn't feel inappropriate to me. Politics are fundamental to the real world, and I assume fandom and fanzines to be part of the real world. Certainly to the extent that conventions are weekend-long parties political activity is no more appropriate than it would be at any other party -- but the Eastercon, at least, is supposed to have a serious side, and of late seems to have been starved of decent topics for discussion. To judge from the response to the political debating at Yorcon it may be just the fillip that aspect of conventions needs.

But on the other hand I do agree that it's futile to try and turn fandom as a whole, or a convention as a whole, into some kind of (trivial) political weapon. The attempt at Yorcon to pass a motion on disarmament whose conclusion would then be publicized as the view of the British SF Convention was ill-advised, though the response of the Doreen Rogerses of the world was as daft as it was predictable.

Actually I've been thinking off and on over the past few months of the advisability of trying to get together a loose fandom chapter of CND -- there seem to be a fair scattering of members around. I don't suppose such a group could accomplish anything much, but we might at least make our presence known and try to convince a few more people at sf conventions that if they're interested in the future it might be worthwhile supporting an organization doing its best to see that they're around to experience it. Any takers?

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Time for another article, I think; and, more specifically, time for another choice of fave records. The lucky ego-tripper this time is a comparative newcomer to the pages of fanzines, the famous FOUNDATION critic and Arts Council supported (but not for much longer) creative writer-in-residence at the SF Foundation, Colin Greenland. Mr Greenland is one of the country's few Doctors of Sci-Fi (Sf.D), having spent several years at Oxford researching and writing a thesis called NEW WORLDS: WHY IT WAS SO TRIFFIC. He could not in any real sense be termed diminutive, and he is not -- repeat, not -- a fan. Oh no. It would be silly and gauche of me to make such a crass error as to refer to him as a fan. Well, sod it, I can call him what I like, because average though I am in height and build I'm at least twice as big as he is, little creep.

## DESERT ASTEROID DISCS

by Colin Greenland

TAPPEN taps into one of my favourite fantasy occupations here. I can always be counted upon to produce party tapes at the drop of a stylus: I love making compilations, stringing old and new tracks together, resurrecting forgotten greats, and slipping in as many unacknowledged gems as possible. Variety is something more than a spice for this; unpredictability is the essence, to keep everybody (literally) on their toes. But party tapes necessarily preclude all the rock that doesn't roll, and I love lots of that too. I used to envy friends of mine at the University of Surrey, who had a campus radio station where just about anyone could drop in and spin anything over the air for a couple of hours or so ... the disadvantage of that particular facility being that all their friends would squeeze into the studio and clutter the decks with the stuff they wanted to hear. Too much audience feedback makes for more variety, but less ego satisfaction. So setting out a playlist on paper is especially appealing, even if you can't turn the volume up.

Unlike Greg Pickersgill (with whom I share a few tastes), I'm going to stick to the Beeb format. I've picked eight tracks, each of which brings an album with it (cunning smirk), and arranged them by periods in my life which they denote. Nevertheless, they probably aren't the eight I'd actually want on a desert island or asteroid or space capsule or whatever, perverse as that may sound. I'd be far more likely to take a pile of Beethoven symphonies, or Mozart or Vivaldi: music I love but don't know at all well, which would repay thorough and repeated listening. I definitely would not want music to remind me of my life, my friends, my past, all the things I'd presumably left behind. Would you?

### 1. THE BEATLES: "And Your Bird Can Sing"

This isn't a top eight, it's a chronological list. My awareness of rock starts belatedly somewhere around 1968 or '69, though I was tempted to lead off with the first record I actually bought -- "The Young Ones" by Cliff Richard and the Shadows. But that seemed a bit too much in the cause of history and not enough in the cause of taste. Equally, other records were more prominent in that fetid school study with its eighteen inch mono speaker, pounding the plaster off the walls every break: Pink Floyd's UMMAGUMMA and ATOM HEART MOTHER (no, that was 1970, wasn't it?), the CBS FILL YOUR HEAD WITH ROCK sampler, and the acned glory of Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, Ten Years After, and even Grand Funk Railroad, none of which made much impression on my taste buds, however much they dented my brain cells. (It wasn't even his record player, actually.) I was more enamoured of SCT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND than REVOLVER in

those days too, but that has dated so badly in places that I've gone for what would have been my second choice then, first fave of the Fab Four's albums now. I select "And Your Bird Can Sing" by default, really, because there isn't a totally outstanding track on REVOLVER: every one is a Grade A Golden Goodie. Harrison's at his finest on this album, making cheerful, shining sounds that haven't yet lost touch with the material world. "Your Bird" is Lennon rather than McCartney, a choice I'd have to make -- a clear, rising melody with a mysterious, slightly introspective lyric (a definite touch of the Dylans), which is a pretty good stab at what was best about the Beatles in this, their best period.

## 2. MELANIE: "Lovin' Baby Girl"

I think I can now claim to be the last surviving Melanie freak in Britain. I don't mention her much, mainly because nobody else seems to remember her at all, though you all think you do. What you remember is the savage packaging she got from Buddah Records, a bubblegum stable that dished her up as their idea of a flower child, all doe-eyed winsomeness, animal crackers and Winnie-the-Pooh pyjamas. Certainly that was all there, the hippie cult of innocence being what it was, but in rich and wonderful confusion with so much else: sexual longing, an imagination in exile, the anxieties of freedom, and faith desperate for a form. And power. God, did she have power. The confusion meshed very closely with my own in 1970, aged sixteen, and Melanie was certainly one of the biggest influences on the formation of my beliefs and ideals, back when I actually had some, so she still occupies a place of special honour in my record collection, if much more rarely on my turntable. "Lovin' Baby Girl" isn't the best track on CANDLES IN THE RAIN, her best album, but it's the one that focuses all the elements I've mentioned: light despite darkness, desire despite pain. It's an aggressive song, only just over-orchestrated, which is what spoilt much of her work. Try her again now, and you'll find she's somebody different from the waif you thought you remembered: a white gospel urchin, with a head full of potent dreams, and a voice that owes more than a lick to the blues. She was a buddy of Janis Joplin and wrote a secret elegy to her on GATHER ME, her other best album. See if you can guess which track it is.

## 3. TREES: "Sally Free and Easy"

Recorded two years earlier, for me this is 1972, the year I arrived at Oxford, a wretched year of missed opportunities and crippling nostalgia. I thought I was into folk music then, though I didn't make much effort to explore it. What I liked were the strange, amoral, elemental visions of the old ballads and a melody I could just about get my recorder around. If more people had listened to Trees (a band I discovered on the old CBS samplers mentioned earlier), folk-rock would not have been such a dodo and the shape of rock in general might have been different through those dreary years at the start of the decade. Fairport Convention had it but lost it through the looseness of their line-up and attitude (WHAT WE DID ON OUR HOLIDAYS is probably still in my Top Twenty). Steeleye Span got off on the wrong foot with glossy "modernizations" that cut the music off both from its roots in the permanence of the oral

tradition and from the directness of rock'n'roll. Dylan got out early while the rest of the troubadours smabled on into earnest inconsequentiality, leaving Planxty, Stivell and co. to pick up the pieces. What they produced was too ethnically limited to be anything but a diversion from rock as a popular medium. Trees were not a folk band who thought of electrification as a sort of special effect, they were a rock band who picked up folk songs for their compatibility with rock: their tough lyricism, their crude beauties, their uncompromising vitality. I'd guess they were probably the best band ever to be fronted by two guitars. They would have been a great band if anyone had bought their first two albums and so permitted them to make a third. THE GARDEN OF JANE DELAWNEY and ON THE SHORE now fetch anything from ten to twenty-five quid on the vinyl junk market, of course. I bought mine when they came out, so there. "Sally Free and Easy" is a nineteenth-century lament of faithless love and the general hell of being at sea, which I suppose was an attractive metaphor for the doldrums I was in at the time.

PAUL KANTNER, GRACE SLICK & DAVID FREIBERG: "Sketches of China"

Sigh. I used to think the Jefferson Airplane were the best thing that ever happened to music. Can't listen to them now, except "White Rabbit" and this, effectively the second Jefferson Starship album. Gone are the days when you could call an album BARON VON TOLLBOOTH AND THE CHROME NUN. Or even want to. Moan, grouse, fart. This is terrific, however, the ultimate in West Coast hallucinatory music, jewelled cavernous vistas and dodgy ecstasies. 1973, and the onset of my career as a serious druggie. There didn't seem to be anything wrong with sleeping all day, spending your nights in bemused lethargy and amiable delirium, while feeding your head with sounds of strange and altogether intangible wonder. Kantner's at his least aimless on this track, Slick at her least hard-boiled, and Garcia (always indispensable on the best Starship tracks, I thought) drops in with a contribution of comfortable magic. Can't remember who plays water-gongs. Water-gongs! John Barbata, I suppose\*. California, the inscrutable East, but more than a touch of the Byzantine too. All together: "It ain't what you want, it's what you need; it ain't what you want, it's what you need." I thought that was true too. I wonder if it was?

PHIL MANZANERA: "Diamond Head"

1975. Living in a household of grim silences and frenzied power-struggles. The pressurized insanity of Finals. The sun came out during my last paper, which I'd expected to be the worst and turned out to be the easiest, and I walked out blowing bubbles, into the arms of a very touching welcome. We took punts on the Cherwell and consumed champagne and opium: the only trad decadent Oxford thing we ever really did, in fact. Then I moved into a new house, a most implausible co-operative of nine people, all of them moving in different directions. It worked, amazingly. I wrote my first novel. DIAMOND HEAD is something of a co-op album, so that I get lots of my favourite people in at once: Brian Eno,

\* Mickey Hart, actually (omniscient ed.)

Andy MacKay, Charles Hayward, Robert Wyatt, and Manzanera at his best, out from under the thumb of Mr Ferry. It sounds like a sampler by several different bands until you pick up on that weighty, graceful guitar shimmering down through every track. It is a sampler, in a way: Manzanera's own Desert Island Discs for 1975, a slice of just the creative unpredictability I was talking about earlier, from the reticulated jazziness of Quiet Sun through the oblique strategies of Eno and Wyatt to the post-Roxy urban melancholia, the "cold window pain", of 801. I take the title track because it's Manzanera's best instrumental, moving, simple, and yet oddly indirect. My mate Chris says the guitar sound is "muscular", and I've no better word for it: muscles at work, flexing organically, instead of just being obtruded in the iron-pumpings of your Nugents and Van Halens. Tasty.

#### 6. TRAFFIC: "Hidden Treasure"

This is the following summer, the end of that remarkable year, with me moving to the other extreme, into a bedsit, to concentrate on the beginning of my research on NEW WORLDS. I took up with Traffic very late, having been unable to connect with them during their career, but now Steve Winwood instantly joined my musical pantheon where he remains firmly enstarred. I never know which is my favourite Traffic album, most of their studio work having occupied that niche at one time or another. THE LOW SPARK OF HIGH-HEELED BOYS dates from 1971 and I didn't acquire it until 1980, so I see every reason for putting it in here. "Hidden Treasure" is deft and haunting, not as punchy as some of their more intense songs, but concise too: Traffic's big flaw was always their weakness for the eternal riff which automatically generated the ten-minute track. Sometimes it floats, but sometimes it founders and has to be rescued. Later Traffic albums are underrated, it seems to me, though a born master as prolific as Winwood could hardly expect to get all his work the attention it deserves. Having said that, I wonder if I should have filled this spot with the "Woodoo Chile" jam from ELECTRIC LADYLAND (another late acquisition of mine). Even at the risk of excluding Hendrix, I still do prefer Winwood working at his own pace rather than being constrained by a more demanding talent. And "Woodoo Chile" hasn't got Chris Wood, of course.

#### 7. DAVID BOWIE: "Wild is the Wind"

Yes. Well, now we have it, don't we. STATION TO STATION was the album which got me into Bowie, in '76 or '77, though I'd toyed with ZIGGY STARDUST and one or two songs from TMWSTW and HUNKY DORY. Bowie is my candidate for the title of contemporary genius, not least because he seems to me to have the element of instability that marks the type. And there's the unpredictability again too, the ability to change direction overnight, creating whole styles and rock sub-genres with a flick of the wrist, and later proving to have done at once and more perfectly what a whole caravan of disciples could only do partially and at length. Compelling image, plus personal freedom from that image: the trait of a lot of great rock musicians: Dylan, Eno, Clapton once, even Joni Mitchell. Do it, drop it, start again. Retreat into obscurity, even

trivia, come back in glory just when they're least expecting it. Yes, Greg, I love YOUNG AMERICANS too, but STATION TO STATION was the comeback album, almost-but-not-quite a parallel soundtrack to the inviting and infuriating MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH, a widescreen album of strange and attenuated yearnings, prayers and cynicisms and schmaltz souped up and switched around, strung tight in the rhythm section and strung out on the manic guitar of Earl Slick, who left the band in a foul temper: this epic ain't big enough for the both of us. "Wild is the Wind" is so bloody ridiculous it's brilliant. STATION TO STATION is still my favourite Bowie album, though there was a time recently when I had to stop myself playing SCARY MONSTERS for fear of doing it to death. A masterpiece of latter-day baroque, and just the thing for pushing back the walls of a bedsit.

#### 8. TALKING HEADS: "Air"

I seem to have skipped a few years, because this brings me virtually up to date. The band of the moment, with David Byrne fast on his way to achieving a mad, insidious, forceful poetry to rival what I find so arresting in later Bowie lyrics. "Air" I like a lot, but just about any track on FEAR OF MUSIC would do. They're all so edgy and evocative and peculiar. The collaboration of Brian Eno once again, of course: a man who thrives on what can otherwise be the crippling conditions of the music industry today. REMAIN IN LIGHT is magnificent, and MORE SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND FOOD is extremely clever, though it took me a long time to appreciate it, but FEAR OF MUSIC is the most original and diverse of the three, I think. I still find the first album a bit too raw, or something. I don't have much more to say about this last choice, except that one thing I admire about Talking Heads is the way they take uncertainties of all kinds and make them exciting, which is not my personal attitude at all. I'm not famous for my adventures, even to desert asteroids.

Is that it? All right? But I haven't got the Incredible String Band in, or Bob Dylan, or Joni Mitchell, or Nick Drake! Catch me on another day and I'll do an equally convincing list which includes Van Morrison and Steely Dan, Marianna Faithfull's BROKEN ENGLISH, Keith Jarrett's KOLN CONCERT, and Madness's ABSOLUTELY. And what happened to Gong and (blush) Yes, which any exacting historical account of my musical tastes would have to include? Oh, well, there's always another lifetime, I suppose.

If I could take just one of these records, I think it would have to be Melanie, even after all these years. At times when rock seems shallow and frivolous and my record collection turns to one solid slug of inert vinyl, CANDLES IN THE RAIN shines through. My one book, on an island already equipped with the works of Shakespeare, would be George Herriman's KRAZY KAT, but I can do without the Bible, thank you. And my luxury would be a vast supply of leafy substances. Thank you, Roy, it's been a pleasure.

— Colin Greenland

Hmm, yes, I see. I think I may have to inflict my own list on you ere long, before other persons of good taste pre-empt my choices. Neither Greg Pickersgill nor Colin has done so, but Colin in particular has come close here and there. Some of his other choices, however, are far from being mine.  
(Melanie!)

\* \* \* \* \*

A strange thing happened to me yesterday. I woke up in the morning (this isn't the strange part) and lay in bed, only three-quarters awake, my mind wandering inconsequentially here and there. For some reason I lit upon an isolated memory of a second-year English class, back when I was thirteen. One of the exercises we were given was a completed crossword puzzle, for which we had to furnish clues. I remember nothing about the puzzle except that the solution to 1 down was "double-barrelled". This odd fact has stuck in my mind mainly because of a lousy joke a friend made concerning overstocked pubs, but it isn't something I frequently dwell on, and as far as I'm aware this was the first time I'd thought about it for years.

So I got up and spent the morning doing the things freelance writers tend to do in order to get through to lunchtime. Come 12:30 I sat down with my lunch and decided, as I often do, to tackle the GUARDIAN crossword. Well, you'll never guess what the solution to 1 down was.... I refused to believe it for quite a while and sat there thinking, Oh, come on, this is silly. But there it unmistakably was.

Coincidence? Well, yes, undoubtedly. But the sort of coincidence which could readily make one believe that there are Secrets of the Universe of which we know Nothing. Trivial though it doubtless seems the incident was very distinctly disorienting. I'm used to apparent coincidences; the difference here is that the only possible link between the two events is in some sense psychic. The other coincidences I've encountered have largely been over such matters as my family's uncanny ability to send each other the same birthday and Christmas cards, which reached its climax when my mother, my brother and I all independently sent my grandfather the identical birthday card (what made it worse was that my brother was by this time living in Australia). This was certainly odd and amusing, but could readily be explained in terms of parallel tastes. I read Arthur Koestler's book on coincidence a few years ago, and though some of the instances he put forward were stranger by far than anything I've encountered I remained thoroughly unconvinced that there was more to them than straightforward, plain coincidence, which one must regard as an inevitable part of a universe filled with such a multiplicity of incidents.

\* \* \* \* \*

By another staggering coincidence, Chris Priest not only reads the GUARDIAN from time to time, but he's also been to Australia! How amazing. It's difficult to say whether he'd send the same Christmas card as my brother, because the mean bugger never sends Christmas cards. I suppose these writers have to learn to watch every penny. Priest, for those of you who don't know him, is a long-time British fan and publisher of the fanzine DEADLOSS, whose third issue is more than a little overdue. He is related in some obscure

but intimate way to the famous author Christopher Priest, whose latest novel, THE AFFIRMATION, was published earlier this year to general critical incomprehension (irrespective of whether or not they liked the book). It's a good novel, though -- almost the best of the year so far (see below), and far better than any genre offering I've seen in 1981. Such accomplishment makes his lesser-known alter-ego Chris Priest an ideal contributor to TAPPEN, and by a truly staggering coincidence the next thing you are about to read is an article by none other than he!

### OF FEET AND MADNESS

by Chris Priest

I used to share an office with Darth Vader. There, it's out now.

It's odd how the rise to fame of someone you once knew gives you a proprietorial feeling. As I watched STAR WARS the first time, and saw Dave Prowse striding down the corridors of the Death Star in his black cloak and shiny helmet, my thoughts were cast back to those long-distant days when I produced books for a living and he flexed his muscles. We were both good at our jobs, for a time. Since then, Dave's rise to fame has been steady: he's the Green Cross Man, known to millions of kids (if not adults), and he played Julian in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. (You mean you don't remember Julian? Patrick Magee's musclebound bodyguard in the latter stages of the film?) But for me he will always be Darth Vader.

After STAR WARS I thought I really ought to write an article about him. But when you've said, "I used to share an office with Darth Vader", you've about said it all. Especially as all I can remember about Dave, at this remove, is that he had the most amazingly large feet.

But the truth of the matter is that he was flexing his muscles for a living, and I really was producing books, and we were sharing an office. All this was going on in Wandsworth, back in the late sixties, and we were engaged in something called Fulfilment. There can't be many firms, now or then, with such a wide range of products as ours: in the next office there were two more young men, one selling LP records and the other fine art reproductions, and in the office beyond were two women, one specializing in blankets and the other in virility tablets.

I had joined the firm in the mistaken belief that they were publishers. Their name was something like Crane Books Ltd, which had done much to persuade me of this. I was hired as Book Production Manager, which seemed hopeful, although the words "no experience necessary" in the advertisement I'd answered had been a bit worrying. I got the job with remarkable ease, which was also something of a warning. Anyway, the outcome was that I had been conned.

The firm was in fact a retail mail-order outfit. One of the many things

they merchandised was books, and the way they merchandised them was through a number of book clubs. The books themselves were mock-leather bound reprints of classic works, inexpensively reproduced and sold at "discount" prices. As for my role in this enterprise, I quickly discovered that a "Book Production Manager" was not someone who negotiated with printers or designed books or ordered paper stocks, but was someone who, er, produced books. Rather as a delivery van produces furniture from its insides ... or to be more exotic, as a conjuror produces a rabbit from a hat.

What I had to do was to make sure that the printers delivered the books to the firm's warehouse by the proper date. However, the snag was that the warehouses were not large, and storage space was limited. The books had to be delivered at about the same time as they were needed.

Simple enough, you'd think. Especially as only two printers were ever used. One was a huge, modern and efficient company in England: it took them two days, exactly, to deliver the right number of books to Wandsworth. The other was a more huge, more modern and more efficient company in Switzerland. Their only difficulty was that their deliveries were subject to the vagaries of tariffs, international treaties, strikes, dock inefficiencies, and so on.

Yes, but the problem was with the warehouses. There were four of them, and only one was in Wandsworth. The second was in Tel Aviv, Israel. The third was in Sydney, Australia, and the fourth was in Auckland, New Zealand.

It took the British printer two days to deliver to Wandsworth ... but six weeks to Israel, and three or four months to Australia and New Zealand. The Swiss printer took about three months in any direction.

My job was to synchronize the deliveries.

Getting confused? In the words of Mike Collins's infamous joke: you've heard nothing yet.

Making matters infinitely worse was the way in which the book clubs were promoted.

Newspaper advertisements were a way not only of acquiring new members, but of testing various advertising methods and approaches. Actual replies were almost secondary in importance, and the reason for this was that they knew in advance how many people would reply. They had an extremely scientific approach to this. They wanted 2,000 more middle-class, white-collar members? They placed £4,000-worth of advertisements with the DAILY TELEGRAPH, because experience had shown that members acquired through the TELEGRAPH cost on average £2 per head. This theory worked, and went on working day in and day out, all the time I was with the firm. Crane Books Ltd had immense charts which they constantly used and updated, showing the current cost-per-head of replies from every magazine and journal in the English-speaking world.

So that was one way. The other was through the mailing-shot system. This was based on vast, computerized lists of names and addresses, which were constantly being acquired, updated or discarded. Mail order companies buy and sell such lists among themselves (which is why, incidentally, if

you ever buy anything by mail order you start receiving junk mail from all over the place). They also acquire their own, much more expensively, by placing newspaper advertisements. These lists were categorized in great detail: by source, by ABC categories, by whether the names were "buyers" or mere "enquirers", by urban address or rural, by county, by city, by gender, and by all manner of minor minor divisions I never really understood.

And, like the newspaper advertisements, the mailing-shot was very scientific. They wanted 10,000 new members? The current average reply-rate from forty selected lists might be 2%. So they mailed out 500,000 pieces of junk mail, and within a week they would have 10,000 new members.

This aspect of the business was therefore under tight control. It was a cinch to know that by a certain date so many thousand books would be wanted, and accordingly have them delivered. But there's one inescapable problem with merchandizing cheapo reprints of classic books. That is, many people quickly change their minds about being a member once they realize what they've let themselves in for. The drop-out rate was extremely high.

This too was scientifically dealt with. Our 2,000 new members from the TELEGRAPH would be sent copies of Books 1 and 2 by the club. My job was to get 2,000 copies of each delivered that week. However, four weeks later, when Book 3 was due to be sent out, it would be discovered that 40% of the readers had realized their ghastly mistake, and cancelled. Thus, only 1,200 copies of Book 3 would be needed by that time. Four weeks later, another 20% would have dropped out, and so only 800 copies of Book 4 would be needed. Book 5, four weeks later, would need only 750 copies. Book 6, only 700 copies. And so on. By the time you reached the last book in the club, nearly three years after the original advertisement was placed, you would probably need only 20 or 30 copies for the diehards.

My job was therefore to find out what advertisements were going to be placed, and what mailing-shots were going to go out, and how many new members they would generate ... and then, by calculating the drop-out rate based on past experience, predict up to three years in advance how many copies of each title would be needed, and when.

Getting more confused? Starting to go mad? You've heard nothing yet.

One of the inescapable economics of printing books is that you print as many copies as possible, to keep the unit cost down. To use the above example, it would clearly be more economical to print 2,000 copies of Book 1 than it would be to print 30 copies of Book 36. As Book 36 always sells worst of all, the order of titles was changed around from time to time. So what was Book 36 in one "offer" might become Book 15 in another, and Book 3 in yet another.

The way they shifted their offers around was to take split advertising in newspapers. Suppose the club we're talking about is called Great Adventure Classics. Two ads would be prepared for insertion in the TELEGRAPH, both for Great Adventure Classics.

Advertisement I would feature an exciting painting of a sailing ship in a storm, and would offer (say) two Hammond Innes titles free, plus an

Alistair Maclean for a "special introductory price".

Advertisement II would have a photograph of a Lancaster bomber, and would offer (say) two aviation books at a token price, a Jack Higgins novel free, and a Hammond Innes novel at the regular club price.

Both advertisements would appear in the same spot in the TELEGRAPH on the same day, the newspaper including one in half their edition, and the other in the other half of the print-run. So fifty per cent of the readership saw one ad, and fifty percent saw the other. One would invariably work better from the other (from which the company learned), so that of the 2,000 who replied, let's say 1,150 replied to Advertisement I, and only 850 to Advertisement II. But these two offers send the books out in quite different sequences.

My job was therefore to find out which offers were being advertised, and what their book-sequence was, and what their cost-per-head was, and how many copies of each title would be needed, by when, and in what order.

How's the confusion? Madness encroaches, no doubt. But there's more to come ... you've heard nothing yet.

Meanwhile, the mailing-shots were going on. They too were sub-divided, with test campaigns being constantly run. My job was to keep tabs on all these offers (some of which were the same as the newspaper tests, but some of which were different), and calculate again how many books would be needed in which order by when.

By now you should be glimpsing the scale of the daily problem. In the Great Adventure Classics Book Club there would be any number of different "offers" on the go at any time. Usually, there were about six, each one running its titles in a different sequence. And these offers and tests weren't just tried once or twice: they were going on all the time, in different magazines and newspapers, and in different mailing-shots ... so that new members for new offers joined up every week, and entered the four-week cycle system. Every four weeks everyone still in the club got a new book. All the figures had to be estimated in advance, and a detailed delivery order sent at regular intervals to the printers, in time for them to get the books to the warehouses. Later, when the real figures were known (e.g. a mailing shot might produce 15,000 new members instead of a projected 14,000; a significant percentage difference) then the drop-out calculations would have to be amended from beginning to end, and the orders adjusted.

But you really have heard nothing yet.

Remember, this wasn't just going on in England. When I joined Crane Books they were running campaigns in Australia and New Zealand as well. These countries were testing "offers" not only different from each other, but from England too. To keep me alert, some were the same. Meanwhile, depending on which printer was involved, delivery took three, three or four months. (At least half the books were printed in Switzerland. Sometimes the introductory packages consisted of one book printed in England and one from Switzerland, both to be received at the warehouse in New Zealand the same week.) However, during my first month at the

company, while I was experiencing the first symptoms of insanity as I realized what I had been conned into, Crane Books opened their branch in Tel Aviv and immediately launched a saturation campaign of offers in Israel. Thus the scale of operations increased overnight by 33%.

And that's not all.

So far, I've been talking about one book club that runs for 36 four-weekly cycles, operating six different offers in four different countries, starting a new sequence or sequences every week or two, taking into account a constantly renewing membership, and a constantly cancelling membership, whose purchases have to be fulfilled by two printers in two different countries, delivering to four different countries.

Actually, there were five different book clubs, on four-weekly cycles, with six offers, in four countries, with two printers....

That was in the first week I was there. By the end of my second week two more book clubs had been launched, making seven book clubs, with six offers, in four countries....

Mind you, I didn't understand at first. I honestly thought they were pulling my leg. I didn't understand what the company was doing, and I didn't understand what I was supposed to be doing about it. By the time I had figured it out, three more clubs had been launched, making ten clubs, with six offers, in four countries....

In the end there were no less than TWENTY-THREE separate book clubs in existence, each of which was testing offers, in four countries, supplied by two printers....

This was the late sixties, and although the firm had a (what is by modern standards) primitive computer to keep records of its lists and its members, pocket calculators had not really been invented. All the above calculations involved a truly mind-boggling amount of arithmetic which had to be done, as it were, by hand. Later, I was given an assistant, and he did it by hand.

Meanwhile, in the next office there was a young man named Hugh, and his job was with the record club. The scale of his operation was similar to mine, with the extra twist that these were the days when stereo was not standard, and many people had record players which would chew up stereo records. So Hugh's clubs were tripled: stereo, mono, and something called "stereosynch", which was supposed to be compatible with both, but which, the only time I heard it, had mono music and stereophonic hiss. To compensate for this extra bother, Hugh had only twelve clubs to worry about, so it probably evened out somewhat. But at odd times we would look up and see each other through the glass partition wall, each perhaps recognizing in the other's haggard, deranged look a mirror image of himself.

The ladies beyond Hugh were the natural social centre in the office, because they were two extremely jolly and sensible mum-like figures, who always had a kind word and a bit of a giggle. This was possibly because the blankets sold by Emmie were the only really good quality merchandise in the firm, and the pills sold by Martha were, well.... What they actually

were was a harmless mix of vitamins and minerals in a sugar-coated pill, but what they were advertised unambiguously as in third-world countries was a virility treatment. Martha had a drawer in her desk where she kept the letters written by satisfied customers in Botswana, New Guinea, Iran, Sri Lanka. The claims in these letters exceeded even those in the original advertisements. Martha was very proper: she made it a rule never to write back and take up their grateful offers.

And then there was Dave, working quietly away next to me. I wonder what he dreamed about ... and could he ever have imagined that one day he would play the meanest heavy in the Universe? Dave was in a different position from any of us, because not only did he run the office-work side of his product -- a muscle-building and exercise device -- but he also starred in the advertisements. He had already had a bit of fame, having become Mr Great Britain, or Mr World ... or even Mr Universe, for all I know. I got used to his soft, West Country burr, speaking softly into the telephone, but I never really got to know him. I just watched his incredible feet, treading gigantically past me as he went to and fro about his work. The women in the office loved him, but they probably never noticed his feet.

And they never noticed me, and that I was going mad. I maintained an overcontrolled calm as I moved about the building, trying to save myself for reality. Reality in those days was Swinging London, and I was living with Graham Charnock and Felix Dennis in a trendy flat in the Fulham Road. Reality was Sergeant Pepper and flower-power and Jimi Hendrix and OZ and NEW WORLDS and Marshall McLuhan and Jefferson Airplane ... but in my fantasies I saw only consignments of books sailing down the Suez Canal, bursting out of their crates into tiny, overcrowded warehouses. Books, books and more books, each bound in mock-leather and stamped in mock-gold, and inside they were mock-books, photo-offset from better editions, Charles Dickens and D.H. Lawrence and H.G. Wells and Somerset Maugham and Thomas Hardy and the Russian Masterpieces and the True War Stories and the Books Too Dangerous To Hold and Great Heroes and Classic Adventures and Literature of France, one a month, thirty-six times, in England, Israel, Australia and New Zealand. Three times, thankfully, I was fired from the job, but three times they realized what they had done and lured me back with a pittance more ... but I was going into a new phase of my own life, of reality, and in the end I walked out on them, hating their initiative, their scientific and cynical manipulation of people's folly, hating most of all their brilliant merchandising ability. A few years later NATIONWIDE did an expose, and so did PRIVATE EYE. But they missed the real story: Dave Prowse's feet and my madness, coexisting unnoticed in an office in Wandsworth, so long ago.

---- Chris Priest

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Ten or eleven years ago my brother Mike (the same one who is now in Australia -- indeed, my only sibling) decided, for some reason, to amuse himself by responding to lots of Heron Books offers (they being a company whose operations were and are somewhat similar to those Chris outlines

in his article). As each new offer appeared in the colour supplements he would write off in response to it. When the introductory package arrived he would immediately write back cancelling his membership, sometimes returning the books, sometimes not. Invariably the primitive Heron Books computer would prove unable to cope with this, so that as the subsequent months went by further packages would continue to arrive. Demands for payment were either ignored or answered with polite notes to the effect that he had cancelled his membership and would they kindly stop pestering him with their poxy books, which were available for collection any time by appointment. Soon enough he had built up a substantial collection of the things, all bound in identical luxurious Skivertex (these days, I notice, they use still more luxurious Kidron), all fuzzy offset reprints inside, often with large areas blank where the plates were defective. He may still have them, for all I know. Perhaps the Australian warehouse is fully occupied shipping him his monthly fix. Funny lot, brothers.

\* \* \* \* \*

My comment a few pages back to the effect that THE AFFIRMATION was close, in my view, to being the best book of the year so far perhaps deserves amplification. It's a fine novel, easily Chris's best yet. I've given it one inadequate review already -- see STARBURST 36 if you're interested -- and will therefore avoid failing to do it justice here. Good as it is, it's bettered, I think, by another novel I read recently, THE WHITE HOTEL by D.M. Thomas.

THE WHITE HOTEL has become something of a cause celebre in publishing circles because of the extraordinary disparity between its critical reception here and in America. Thomas is a British author, of course -- many of you will have come across his poems in NEW WORLDS (indeed, a poem which forms part of THE WHITE HOTEL appeared in Charles Platt's last small-circulation issue) -- but the book has only taken off in the USA. There it's a sensation -- rave reviews, high in the bestseller lists, six-figure paperback and film deals, the talk of the town -- while here its reception has been mixed, it failed entirely to sell to paperback until Penguin reconsidered recently and bought it for a low sum, and though it has sold very respectably for a literary hardcover novel (in the region of 5,000 copies) it's a long way from troubling the compilers of bestseller lists. Why should this be? Well, there have been long articles in THE BOOKSELLER and, more recently, the SUNDAY TIMES exploring this very point. There seem to be two conclusions. One is that the British reviewing establishment is stale and conservative, more likely to lavish praise on a mediocre novel of a familiar domestic sort than on a book which makes some imaginative demands on them. This is not news to anyone who reads the fiction reviews in British newspapers and magazines, but it's useful to have attention focused on it. (In the case of THE WHITE HOTEL one reviewer has actually publicly recanted, saying the book was far better than she gave it credit for, which is commendable; on the other hand, no more has been heard from the NEW STATESMAN reviewer who commented that "if you write pornography that is what it is and no amount of fumbling with artistic devices and excuses makes it any different".)

So what's it about? Well, put most simply it's the life story of a woman who, suffering from a form of hysteria, is referred to Sigmund Freud for psychoanalysis in 1919. He finds the case particularly intractable, even after she gives him two remarkable documents she has composed: two versions, one in poetry and one in prose, of a dream-like fantasy set at a white hotel in the mountains, in which lurid and violent images of sex and death are conjoined. Freud unravels some of the meanings, but never manages to get at the root cause of the hysteria (which manifests itself as breathlessness and severe pains in her breast and pelvis) he is convinced that she is not entirely frank with him.

The novel subsequently follows the woman's career as a minor opera singer and her marriage to a Russian, moving to a climax in Nazi-occupied Ukraine in 1941. As it unfolds the reasons for Freud's failure to fully understand her case become all too clear.

That's a brief and not entirely informative synopsis. I would not like to spoil it for you by telling you things which you should discover for yourselves by reading the book. But what the novel is about is the ghastly contrast between the two events which Thomas sees as the central ones of our century: Freud's work in psychoanalysis, revealing as never before the richness of the human mind; and the mass atrocities of World War II, in which millions of such minds were clinically and brutally expunged. The juxtaposition of the intensely humanizing and the utterly dehumanizing is achieved with such power that I, at least, found the final pages acutely painful to read. Don't pick up THE WHITE HOTEL looking for comfortable entertainment.

It is also, incidentally, by a long street the best sf novel of 1981 (you'll have to read it to find out why). But, of course, you won't see it in contention for the Hugo or Nebula -- or even the more worthwhile BSFA Award.

\* \* \* \* \*

I've also been reading the latest American cause celebre, John Kennedy Toole's A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES. No shortage of acclaim for this, either: it's a Pulitzer Prize winner. The point of interest, though, is the circumstances of its publication: author commits suicide in 1969, depressed by his failure to find a publisher. Mother continues to have faith in the book and eventually persuades Walker Percy, writer in residence at Louisiana State University to read it. At first reluctant, he is overwhelmed by it, and in due course the State University Press publish the book. Plaudits follow from all sides. It is rather as if North East London Polytechnic published a widely-rejected sf novel which then won a Hugo.

I'm not sure of the exact circumstances surrounding this. I read somewhere that one (unnamed) US editor kept stringing Toole along for months, or even years, with the promise of a contract if he made changes. Toole revised, and revised again, and revised some more, but no contract was ever forthcoming. His mother threatens one day to reveal all.

It's odd, though, because although A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES is some way

from being the masterpiece certain reviewers have claimed it to be, it's certainly an enjoyable, well-written comic novel, with a gallery of well-observed larger-than-life characters participating in a well-organized farce. You would not have thought it would have had any difficulty getting published.

The only problem with the novel, really, is its central -- and largest -- character, Ignatius Reilly, an obese, gluttonous, slobbish, snobbish, intellectual buffoon, who waddles his way through New Orleans, disapproving of everything, patronizing and insulting everybody, and acting as the (often unwitting) focus for the novel's events. He isn't its best character -- that distinction belongs to the brilliantly realized, witty and streetwise Negro, Jones, who is (particularly for a white writer) an outstanding comic creation -- but he's the most important, and in the end the novel fails to resolve him. Otherwise everything is tied up neatly and appropriately, but at the end Ignatius simply takes off, rather like Yossarian in CATCH-22. But Yossarian is a fairly neutral character, the single sane person in a world of lunatics, and when the events which we've observed through his eyes are resolved, there's no reason for him to remain on the scene; Yossarian is not of any particular intrinsic interest as a character. Ignatius, on the other hand, is largely his novel's subject, and its ultimate failure to deal adequately with him leaves one feeling unsatisfied. Well, maybe Toole intended to return to him. We shall never know.

For all that, though, it's well worth looking out.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so ends that TAPPEN Review Corner. If I have time to reread it, next issue we may attempt to go fifteen rounds with John Crowley's LITTLE, BIG. But for now I guess it's time to get on to the lettercolumn, which will not be of noticeably greater dimensions than that in the previous issue, owing to a slight dearth of material for inclusion. I'm at least half-inclined to junk the whole thing this time, and hope for a better response in time for no.3, but I've been won over by my minority faction, which favours printing at least a couple of letters, pour encourager les autres.

LOC. CIT. (the lettercolumn)

Pete Lyon  
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It's nice to see that entropy can be reversed; BNFs don't get so large that their edges lose all definition and they merge imperceptibly into the background hum (21cm) of the universe. These Pickerskettles are little more than names to be remembered for me, although I have a dim recollection of being introduced ... still and all they come across as fine crazy iconoclasts, which I approve of. As you know I'm relatively new to this

game (Fandom Ludens?) and am intrigued by reminiscences ... because I'm over 30 and I like to figure out what these "big fish" were up to in bygone days as they swam around their pond. I parallel this historical information with my own life and find that Nervous Breakdowns, addictions, divorces etc are not the things a fan proper publicized. ((But see elsewhere in this issue, Ed.)) Not witty or light enough ... no references to beer. Hepatitis or bad road accidents can't really be used as a hook for puns and sexual innuendo. But that's my life, all the drama has been low ... but it's looking up!

As you noted, rock music plays a key role in a lot of people's lives, but it is curious how their involvement seems to stop just before punk. This is the case with virtually all of the rock references I've come across recently. I'm sure the individuals concerned are aware of at least some of what has happened but don't regard it as being of any significance. This is a shame as popular music at the moment is wide open and throbbing with many impulses. I would be too embarrassed to publicly dwell on my favourite discs should they turn out to be so dated. Don't get me wrong, NEW ~~IS~~ GOOD necessarily, but personally I can't listen to the same rock music over and over again -- I get so bored. "Classical" or "jazz" yesss! because of their intricacy; but rock's great value is in its immediacy and vitality which is diluted by repetition.

\*\*\*\*\*Couldn't agree less, actually. You aren't the only person to react in this way; weaselly Phil Palmer says something not dissimilar in between taking this fanzine to task for not being what it isn't intended to be in his THE CHOCOLATES OF LUST. He says, "...to my mind, what fandom needs like a hole in the head is more wallowing in slushy appreciation of bygone rock eras. This deification of Great Men and Great Records and Great Records of All Time marks both a deadly ossification of what should be a spontaneous, living, adolescent medium and forms the attitudes that led once to the hypertrophy of rock ... Rock is not something to be assessed of itself but is something to go out and dance to, and I don't think this is just my opinion or a matter of my taste but is an objective truth."

What this seems to add up to is the argument that because rock is a) a popular medium and b) tends to direct effects, it is therefore c) ephemeral, and reminiscing over old rock records is about as sensible as waxing nostalgic over last year's episodes of CROSSROADS. Well, I think this is nonsense. Quality is quality is quality. To take an example from before my time, Presley's early records remain as good as they ever were, and although one might regret the primitive recording standards they still live. As to rock being something you dance to, not something you assess ... well, unless you're Gerald Ford or Phil Palmer I don't think it's necessary to turn your brain off just because your feet are tapping.

As for the records tending to be a bit old (obviously I'd dispute "dated") -- well, if you've been listening to stuff for 15 or 20 years, clearly your well-loved favourites are likely to be ones that have been around for a year or three. Some of what you like this year does sound dated in two years' time. Time sorts the good, enduring

stuff from the ephemeral chaff. But equally, if someone sends me a well-done piece featuring only records from the last four or five years I'd use it with pleasure, not least because I'll freely admit that I have become more than a little isolated and alienated from what's going on at present.

\*

Linda Pickersgill  
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London W5

I can remember when I attended my first con in '76, which was that year's Worldcon in Kansas City. I got the information, mailed off my membership fee and got back a program book with a Hugo ballot in it. I was absolutely shocked.

Prior to this I knew of the Hugos only as some Big Deal award handed out to sf in the same way as Oscars were handed out to films. I never really questioned who was in control of giving this honour but I assumed it was some body of qualified persons. When I realized that any little snot with the money for a con membership like myself was in control of the proceedings I suddenly began to doubt the validity of things. Being a neo and all that I figured it was mandatory I vote so I did what everybody cringes at ... I looked at the nominations and since I hadn't read most of the material nominated (not to mention having no idea what a fanzine was) I voted for the authors I was familiar with and had liked previously. Even then I felt there was something essentially wrong about this method of selection. The next year I didn't feel qualified to nominate anything but when the list of nominations came out I tried to read as much of the material as possible before voting. This was a tedious task and I soon dropped it in favour of asking other fans who was worth voting for. By my third Worldcon I caught on that voting was not mandatory and only voted in those categories I felt qualified to say something about (i.e. films). By my fourth Worldcon I realized it was all a joke and didn't vote at all. Subsequent Worldcons have proved that it is a joke and I have since taken to your suggestion of scrapping the Hugos altogether.

\*\*\*\*\*Well, I've often wondered whose fault it was that the Hugo results were as crappy as they are. Now I know -- it's all your fault. You haven't heard the last of this.

\*

Hmm. Calculations suggest that if I want to wind this up inside 30 pages then that will have to be it for letters. It almost was anyway, but commiserations to ARNOLD AKIEN, part of whose letter might otherwise have got in. We Also Heard From, as the saying goes, Pat Charnock (with the interesting, if unsubstantiated, information that Malcolm McLaren changed his surname from Edwards ... but why should he want to do such a silly thing as that??), Steve Green, Rob Hansen, Dick Howett and Peter Pinto.

\* \* \* \* \*

Time for gossip again and, yes, Kettle did make it back from the USA, looking bronzed and fit despite spending the whole time in New Orleans bars and phone booths....

OPEN FLIE (the column that lets some of it hang out)

by Leroy Kettle

The well-known Plattophobe and Max Bygraves of sci-fi conventions Graham Charnock, and his lovely wife (the one with the big marraccas at Yorcon), have given birth to tribblets. OPEN FLIE looks forward to the day when Isaac, Roberta and Arthur C. Charnock attend their first convention, drink their first pints of Guinness and throw up for the first time over ex-TV bore and unintentionally funny person Peter Weston's precocious brats — or preferably over ex-TV bore and unintentionally funny person Peter Weston himself. With the offspring of bloated doctor Robert Jackson squishing mightily from ever-open orifices at every convention and competing desperately with her internally-bizarre father for Poot of the Day and barf-night — and upstart from the fannish third eleven Graham James's baby reeking havoc — the example is there for any other decrepit fans to enter into desperate reproduction before menopause or womenopause hits them. Even sex-thimble Ian Williams is apparently considering cloning, but he's worried he might have to drown himself when he turns out to be a runt.

\* \* \*

Unfortunately OPEN FLIE has no news of the determined Andrew Stephenson for him to ring up and refute this issue.

\* \* \*

However, it is time for OPEN FLIE to refute the wicked rumours about albino gollywog Chris Atkinson and J.G. (little Jimmy) Ballard, so we can positively confirm that they are having an affair. Nothing too casual, of course. However, the man after whom the bland American snackerocs in the phallic containers (now available at Sainsbury's) are aptly named, David (Aptly Named) Pringle, was not at all jealous, even though his interest in — er — J.G. Ballard is well-known.

\* \* \*

Having chickened out of the yoke of TAFF, RSN Master Greg Pickersgill can now devote all his fannish energies once more to being rude to those "fat boring slobs" in America, except for those few who don't fit his description, at least one of whom he promised to love and honour anyway. Meanwhile, Alan Sardine has refused to be a salt-water TAFFy too, both he and Greg relinquishing their places to tall, slim and hairy Roger Peyton of Birmingham. Roger was nominated not because he is a man of

substance and stature who can stop strangely-unmarried accountant and partially-cured leper Kevin (moderately loathesome) Smith from winning, but because every sensible fan knows what a great representative Roger will be in the States, even without the elocution lessons. But OPEN FLIE, with all its influence, cannot be seen to be playing favourites, so go out there and make your own choice between dead toad molester and friend of Ian Maule, Kevin (Bluurrrrrgh!) Smith or that fine upstanding pillar of Brutish, sorry, British fandom, Roger Peyton.

\* \* \*

There is no news this issue of Robert Holdstock's latest exploits, because he says he will sue.

\* \* \*

Fannish sex, apart from Garry Wobb's perpetual grotesque mating dance, used only to take place at conventions, where we would all hear about either Greg Pickersgill's conquests of tail on many floors or Rob Holdstock's many flaws in his tale of conquests. Now it's spurting out all over the place, with cradle-robber Chris Donaldson leading baby-face Paul Oldroyd astray in Northern happenings even more degenerate than D. West feeding his stoat clad only in his Damart thermal jockstrap. Sci-fi buffoon Malcolm Atkinson was seen to be snatching the wrong (though it depends on your viewpoint) Chris from the mass of extraordinarily stick bodies writhing on the Oldroyds' plush Brinyton lounge carpet, secreting her quietly in a corner, then forgetting to clean up. Graham James pranced around naked except for a pair of Roz Kaveney's knickers on his glistening head. Alan Dorey did things smelling of fish which can't be mentioned in any fanzine, even one which Ian Maule is unlikely to read, nor in the limited space available -- though that apparently didn't stop him at the time. D. Langford's need for physical aids apparently stops at his ears. Our unnamed reporter did unnamed things. Paul Oldroyd farted, which says Chris he does at moments of great excitement and all other times too. Then, so OPEN FLIE hears extremely reliably, the real fun started, and our unnamed reporter's sexual and mental organs failed him at roughly the same time.

\* \* \*

A fun trip to the USA brought to the notice of OPEN FLIE's roving correspondent a device called a Roach Motel (local interest in the beasts having recently been increased by an influx from the greasy wops next door). This is a superficially attractive little cardboard construction into which the vile monsters march with remorseless stupidity, then stick together in a shapeless, repulsive and tacky mess until they die gurgling in vast quantities of their own secretions. It's incredible how many countries seem to have their own version of the BSFA.

— Leroy Kettle

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Cover by Rob Hansen



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\* \* \* \* \*

TAPPEN 2 should be out in time for  
Novacon, though that rather depends  
on one or two people converting  
promises into words. Contributions  
are welcomed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thanks again to John Harvey for  
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Last stencil typed 24th August 1981,  
though most copies probably won't  
go out until mid-September as I'm  
off to Holland the day after to-  
morrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

TAPPEN supports Peyton for TAFF  
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