





"A tompion," A.R. Woresley said, "is a small pellet made of mud and saliva which a bear inserts into his anus before hibernating for the winter, to stop the ants getting in."

--- Roald Dahl, My Uncle Oswald

Thanks to the observant Nebula-Award-winning Lisa Tuttle for the above quotation, which just goes to prove that you may be very nearly the most Norwegian writer in the whole world, but you still may get wrong one of the few words from your language to pass into everyday English. This is most certainly not TOMPTION, but equally definitely is

#### TAPPEN 4

a fanzine edited and produced by Malcolm Edwards, 28 Duckett Road, London N4 1BN, U.K. It is available according to the vagaries of editorial whim. In this issue we answer affirmatively the question posed by Simon Ounsley in MATRIX -- were the first three issues published in quick succession simply to win the Nova Award? Of course. In future the fanzine will carry the expanded title TAPPEN : JUST FOR GLORY. This special Easter issue is commenced on 12th June 1982.

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#### FRONT PAGE DRIVE-IN NEWS

Well, greetings from a nation at war. By the time you receive this the conflict may well be over, at least for the time being, but as I write British forces are still massed around Port Stanley and the Government is still engaged in its subtle ploy to keep up public support for its war effort by refusing to release casualty figures from the HMS Galahad attack until such time as they can be made to seem a relief rather than a disaster. (Let it be known that casualty figures are high -- so high that the enemy mustn't know about them -- and allow newspaper speculation to mention numbers of 200 or more; then, later, when the death toll turns out to be "only" 60 or 70, negative reaction will inevitably be diffused by relief that it wasn't as bad as they had made us fear. The Ministry of Disinformation knows all the tricks.)

You may infer from the above that I am less than wholly enamoured with the whole sorry charade.

The war in the Galklands certainly throws into perspective the absurdity of arguments for keeping politics out of fanzines. Everywhere I've been during the last month and a half it has been the overriding topic of conversation and debate; there's no way I could, or would, stop it spilling into these pages. That would involve a deliberate act of dissociation from the real world which would make this fanzine at least as futile as the war itself.

Of course, what makes the anti-war argument a little more complicated than it might otherwise be is the fact that the Argentinians are so clearly in the wrong. The historical claim is absurd, not just because it's so long ago but also because the Argentinians are, for the most part, just as much colonists as are the Falklanders, having eliminated the vast majority of their native population. There is no natural sovereignty, either, over a set of islands 450 miles offshore: by that logic the USA might claim the Bahamas tomorrow. On the face of it -- and as the Government assure us -- this makes the whole thing simple. We are fighting in defence of a principle. There are two points to make on this. Firstly, not all principles are worth fighting wars over. Second, although the poor buggers fighting and dying in the South Atlantic may believe they're doing so for a principle, that isn't what the war is about.

Because "we" were so clearly in the right I didn't at first oppose the sending of the Task Force: I thought a show of potential force might give diplomacy the edge it needed to succeed. This was a naive error -- not because such a strategy might not have succeeded, for clearly it might have, right up to the point when the General Belgrano was sunk, but because I did not realise (not having directly experienced such a situation before) the inevitable way in which "military logic" takes over such a situation. I first sensed impending doom when Margaret Thatcher, clearly intoxicated with the military adventure, exultantly called on the nation to rejoice at the recapture of South Georgia (an uninhabited and useless lump of rock); the feeling was reinforced with the realization that the retired Admirals and Generals urging all manner of quick military solutions on the news differed only in age from the men who by then were in effective charge of the whole thing, and who were able to scupper any chance of a peaceful solution with a single well-placed torpedo. Let loose the dogs of war and it's hard to recall them.

I sympathize with the Falklanders, but faced with the fact of Argentinian occupation would they really have chosen a response which involved so many deaths when it was clear that the previous status quo could never be restored (or even if it could have been restored). Did they really want or expect hundreds of other people to die for their freedom? The cost of the exercise on the British side alone already amounts to getting on for half a million pounds per islander. Wouldn't it have been easier to give them half a million pounds each to settle elsewhere?

But of course that kind of solution supposes that all the talk about the paramountcy of the islanders' wishes is actually what the war is about, when clearly it isn't. Such principles never helped the rather larger indigenous population of Diego Garcia when the British Government thought it expedient to hand over their island to the Americans for a military base. The Diego Garcians were simply shipped off to Mauritius (nor, a little earlier, did it help the Banabans when we wanted to strip their island of phosphates). People care about principles -- which makes it possible for the government to thrive in popularity in a situation like this -- but governments don't. Now that it's convenient we hear a great deal of moralizing about fascist Argentina, and quite right too; but at the same time we are growing closer by the day to even more fascist Chile. Jimmy Carter was the only British or

American politician in my memory who attempted to conduct a foreign policy based on principle — which actually involved taking some action against the Argentinian junta — and he was derided on all sides.

No, there are two reasons for the fighting. One we have heard a great deal about from Conservative MPs: restored sense of national purpose, resurgent pride in Britain, all that stuff which coincidentally sends the Tories leaping ahead in the opinion polls (though even I wouldn't accuse Margaret Thatcher of fighting a war for electoral reasons ... unless, of course, there turns out to be an Autumn election). The other is a kind of instinctive vengefulness and bloody-mindedness. We may have been about to give Johnny Gaucho our ball, but now he's run off with it prematurely he must be taught a lesson ... and furthermore, now that he's taken it we've suddenly discovered that we want it after all. Diplomacy as an extension of playground argument is not an edifying sight, but that's what this is.

Meanwhile, since I started to type this, the news announces that the battle for Port Stanley is under way. One can only hope it is concluded as swiftly and bloodlessly as possible. For an indeterminate number of soldiers on both sides all the immediate future holds in store is pointless death or injury; for a larger number there will be a hero's welcome back home, and then they'll be quickly forgotten; for the Falklanders the only prospect is that of seeing what's left of their island turned into a massive military base. Still, no doubt they'll accept it philosophically. After all, if they were to protest the government might find it expedient to ship them off somewhere else.

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One or two people have unkindly drawn attention to the irony in the fact that my pious comments last issue about the need for fanzines to be frequent have been followed by a silence of some ~~7~~ months. Do as I say, not as I do. This was not intended, but work intervenes now and again even in a life as carefree as mine, and one problem with freelancing is that when you are working you tend to be working all the time; if you are sitting in front of the typewriter you cannot with a clear conscience start cutting stencils. Life was made rather more difficult when I somewhat unexpectedly started working more intensively for Gollancz, to the point where I am now effectively employed half-time. (Not that I am complaining, you understand, as I now have the degree of editorial autonomy I have wanted for a long while.) Also the little matter of launching INTERZONE was not undemanding of my time... though the same was true of other people who nevertheless managed to pub their ish. I seem to have matters under control now, and hope to maintain a more regular schedule, though probably not quite such a frequent one as I managed for the first three issues. This has been the obligatory boring explanation and apologia.

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The major event of the year in science fiction has, of course, been the death of Philip Dick, which reached even into the heart of fannish fandom, as Dick was one of the few contemporary sf authors most fannish fans read (the

others, in Britain, would probably include Ballard, Moorcock, Disch, Sladek, M. John Harrison and maybe Gene Wolfe). I did one obituary piece, together with Maxim Jakubowski, which appeared in New Musical Express, but while I was pleased with that, especially considering the circumstances of its writing, it by no means said all I would have wanted to say. (Maxim originally got the okay to do the piece on the Friday, with a deadline first thing Monday morning, but uncharacteristically he got stuck on it -- the reason being the same reason why normally ad lib speakers at last week's Dick memorial evening in London had on this occasion written out what they were going to say: the feeling that with Dick you had to get it right. So Maxim phoned me Sunday afternoon to suggest we do it together, and we wrote the piece in a hectic three hours that evening.)

I have subsequently wrestled with what I wanted to say about Dick, whose death affected me more than that of any comparable public figure, more even than Lennon's death -- and not only because I'd corresponded with Dick, and spoke to him on the phone three or four times. I made some desultory notes, but couldn't really come to terms with a vast subject. Then it occurred to me to ask Peter Nicholls to write something, as one of the few people I know who'd actually met Dick. Peter wasn't sure, but he had been invited to speak at the Dick memorial evening (along with Brian Aldiss and Philip Strick), and suggested that if that went okay it might provide an article. It did, and it has.

Peter will be known to all of you as editor of the world-renowned and Hugo-winning ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, a book on which I helped too, honest (actually my connection with it is by far my proudest freelance achievement). Few people know the other side of this intellectual colossus, however: his secret desire to be a Big Name Fan; his reputation as a mean Racing Demon player (the crucial role that frequent hands of Racing Demon -- a viciously competitive patience variant -- played in the compilation of the ENCyclopedia has yet to be revealed); the things Josephine Saxton will tell about him if we can get her drunk/stoned enough; the medical fact that his brain is exceeded in size only by his stomach. These are the essential facts about the man who is to sf criticism what Clive James is to poetry.

### PHILIP K. DICK -- A COWARDLY MEMOIR

by Peter Nicholls

My friendship with Philip Dick was enjoyable, intermittent and alarming. It began around the time at which his recent novel Valis begins -- early in 1974.

I ought to jump ahead here, and explain that as I got to know Phil Dick my feelings about him so disturbed and unsettled me that I was no longer able to read his fiction. I have still not read A Scanner Darkly, Confessions of a Crap Artist and Deus Irae. I have read only the first chapter of The Divine Invasion. On the other hand, just in the last few days, I've read

Valis and I've also read Phil's fascinating introduction to the 1980 short story collection, The Golden Man. And I must have read almost every word Phil ever published up to 1974, often two or three times.

I'm getting to my first point in rather a roundabout way. Now that I've read Valis I am able at last to put what disturbed me about Phil into words. I realize that my relationship, such as it was, was not entirely with Phil. I also had a relationship with Horselover Fat.

Phil, Horselover and myself exchanged 15 or 16 letters between 1974 and 1976. I've managed to locate some of them in a dusty bundle on top of the wardrobe. The rest no doubt lie mouldering in the Science Fiction Foundation archives, that treasure trove of my long and long-forgotten correspondences which no doubt will gather dust until the end of time.

Since the whole point of this article is to give some flavour of what Phil Dick was like -- though nothing like so vivid a flavour as his books will give you -- I'd like to read out a few bits of his letters. The first bit was written to me when I had just broken up with the American lady with whom I had been living for six years. This is Phil on marriage:

"I can still vividly see my then-wife Nancy and my little girl Isa and my best friend who was staying with us walking out the front door and getting into my car and driving away forever. I think it was the fact that they drove off in my car that unhinged me the most, although it may seem absurd. Perhaps you will understand, though. Often our identities are constructed around a marriage, so it can be said that when they walked out of my life my own soul was taken with them, leaving me a kind of empty husk sitting there in that living room. It took me several years to get my soul back; in fact it just now returned this year."

The warmth and wryness here, of course, are very much the same qualities that bring his stories to life.

Before I quote the second bit, I want to reproduce a short passage from an article I published in FOUNDATION 5 in January 1974; I was arguing here -- God knows why -- that no account of the science fiction tradition that ignores Charles Dickens is complete.

"Here is a typical inhabitant of Dickens's novels:

'His cold lashes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white.'

Hard Times, Chapter 2

"And here, for comparison, is another passage:

'The door, meagrely, opened and he saw within the apartment a fragmented and misaligned shrinking figure, a girl who cringed and slunk away and yet held onto the door, as if for physical

support. Fear made her seem ill; it distorted her body lines, made her appear as if someone had broken her and then, with malice, patched her together badly. Her eyes, enormous, glazed over fixedly as she attempted to smile.'

"There is no mistaking the kinship between the two passages. The first has the more concentrated poetic force, but both writers, creating a kind of humanity in the very appearance of their characters, are undeniably using language -- highly charged with feeling -- to a very similar end, and with a similar use of imagery. Both are preoccupied by the less-than-human masquerading as the human, although the Dickens character is only metaphorically an android, whereas the character in the second passage, from Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, is literally an android, though paradoxically described with more sympathy."

Here is Phil's response, in one of the first letters he wrote me, to what I said:

"I'm sure you will be amazed to learn that I, undoubtedly like many other readers but with far less reason, failed to recognize the quote from my writings. It was one of the greater lessons I've learned about my own work to discover that I myself wrote this passage, and indeed a thrill."

I quote a third passage just to show you that Phil's death would have been no surprise to him:

"Really, I do not want to dwell on my troubles, but to make the situation worse, and in a very serious way as I'm sure you will agree, my high blood pressure again fails to respond adequately to the various medications, and in early December I began to suffer once more from dizzy spells ... They've diminished now, but for several weeks I couldn't walk very far. Specific medication for that did help a lot. They prescribe something which affects the balance center of the ear directly. But this is still a dreary indication of the unresponding underlying hypertension. Robert Heinlein told me on the phone in November, when I told him what my pressure reading now was, "It could kill you." Well, I knew that already. But I thanked him, since I knew he meant it in a concerned way."

So far, so good. The man revealed in the bits I've quoted so far is sensitive, vulnerable, generous and self-absorbed. By and large he isn't Horselover Fat, however. I've lost most of my correspondence with Horselover Fat. Malcolm Edwards was corresponding with Horselover at about the same time, and he probably has some letters too. Horselover was paranoid, slightly hysterical, hyperactive mentally, and much given to fear and to conspiracy theories. He talked a lot about how Richard Nixon's "dirty tricks" group -- the same group that pulled off the Watergate raid -- twice burgled his house; he spoke of the voices in his head; at the time he was getting a number of messages from St Paul; he saw strange portents everywhere, and his life was

a patchwork of meaningful coincidences; the death of his cats had powerful metaphysical implications, as did the illness of his son Christopher. You can get the flavour of Horselover's thinking at that time, 1974, by reading the piece he wrote for the book I edited, Science Fiction at Large, which was entitled "Man, Android and Machine". He began writing this essay in September 1974, knocked it off when God told him about his son's illness, and completed it in March 1975. If you read it now, you will instantly recognize that it is an essay about the writing of the first draft of Valis. And, of course, Valis itself is the chronicle of Horselover's thinking, though its tone is a little cooler than that of the stuff that came hot off the presses from Hoselover himself.

I've lost Hoselover's more extreme letters, but the following will give you something of the edgy tone of his voice.

"I read "Man, Android and Machine" over the other night ... it is sort of nuts, but also thought-provoking. I still stand by what I said, except that such matters, being so difficult to communicate, sound sort of -- to be blunt -- irrational when set down in black and white. I think that Dionysos had me at that time, to some extent (I read a recent very interesting article about "Dionysus in America", and in all truth, he certainly did rattle and break down the prison walls here, and not in mere metaphor but actually. I guess I got drawn into the battle on his side, as witness the somewhat intoxicated quality of the speech).

"My collaboration with Roger Zelazny (Deus Irae) will be released here in June, I understand. It is not going to be popular: a funny mystical theological novel. But my solo novel about drugs and the watchful police, A Scanner Darkly, which Doubleday will release as a mainstream (!!!) novel next January should do very well...

"I am proud of Scanner and I hope you will like it. It's not like my other stuff ... "a breakthrough", Doubleday told me on the phone, after they had read it. On the bad side of the news, I was in hospital in February in the Intensive Cardiac Care Unit for a mild heart attack, so it's a good thing I declined to come to the U.K. I am told now that it is my heart which is in most serious jeopardy, that I've got to lay off and take it easy or I may croak (as we say here). I'm not sure how one goes about taking it easy. My psycho-therapist with a furious and grim expression on his face, yelled at me, "You're to draw up a list of your wants, AND I MEAN THAT SERIOUSLY!" I said, "Yessir, yessir," meekly, and have been drawing up my list of wants. One of them is to not have people yell at me to draw up lists.

"But -- I am still at work on my in-progress novel, To Scare The Dead, trying to make my religious vision/revelation into something which I can communicate, and becoming more and more frustrated every day. One perhaps cannot express these things in words. I feel as if I have an aphasia, actually, a speech block. I try to tell people orally, or write about it, and what comes out appears nonsense. I know what I saw, but I can't name it.

"Ah well. It's as if the gods were sitting around and having nothing better to do they said, 'Let's see old Phil get THIS down on paper. And then revealed all the mysteries of the universe to me and sat back laughing. Gods must have the same kind of sense of humor as cats. I appreciate the vision, but I wish I had also been given St Paul's gift to express it."

This is not wholly Horselover, of course — a lot of it is Phil's ever so slightly sceptical observations of Horselover.

My relationship with Phil was not restricted to letters. I finally got to meet him when he was Guest of Honour — one of the four or five guests of honour — at the Science Fiction Festival in Metz, France, in 1978.

I was in the hotel lobby when he arrived, and I recognized him at once from his photographs. I wasn't ready though for his sheer size; he was bulky, tall, overweight and generally bearlike. He came through the door with a peculiarly terrified look. When I approached him and said "Aren't you Phil Dick?" he literally shied away like a startled animal, and seemed about to deny it, or to run. I said "I'm Peter Nicholls" and he looked at me completely blankly for what seemed a very long time. It was probably around ten seconds. Suddenly his face, which had been frozen, became warm and animated and he gave me an enormous bearlike hug. I was to learn later that these lightning transformations of mood, which outwardly resembled the transitions from android to human, were typical of Phil.

The great event at Metz was the confrontation between Harlan Ellison and Philip K. Dick, which I'm proud to say I set up deliberately myself, thus ensuring for myself a minor niche in fannish history. Harlan had already told me that he had been furious with Phil for years — it was something about a girl — and that he refused to speak to him. (But Harlan had also said to me, "Didn't you get my letter saying what a shit you are and how I'm not speaking to you?" No, Harlan, I said. "Oh well, that's good," said Harlan, "then I don't have to worry about contradicting myself by being friendly now." Harlan's like that.) Phil had also told me he wasn't speaking to Harlan.

Anyway, I thought it was pretty silly that these two grown men, one very very big and the other very very small, should go on avoiding one another for three days, so I invited them both, independently, to join me for a drink in the bar at 6pm, told neither that the other was coming, and sat back to await the action, which exceeded my wildest dreams. Couteously, and by turns, as if it were a formal duel, they abused one another in the vilest and most abusive language. It went on for exactly an hour. Nobody was listening at first, but by the time the hour was up there was an audience of 60 or 70 puzzled French people. I've never seen two people enjoy themselves so much.

It was the most proficient, colourful, prolonged and non-repetitive trading of invective that I have ever heard, or ever will hear. Harlan was a shade faster on the draw, Phil was a shade funnier; it was Harlan's New York versus Phil's West Coast hip; it was elaborate Jewish curses versus metaphysical lethalties. It was pure magic. Only yesterday I read for the

first time Phil's introduction to The Golden Man. He says of Metz: "It was the best week in my life. I was really happy for the first time."

Yet all was not entirely well. The first really bad sign was Phil's Guest-of-Honour speech. It had nothing of the verve and sanity and humour of his fight with Harlan. This is how Phil described it, retrospectively, in The Golden Man: "I delivered a speech which, typically, made no sense whatever. Even the French couldn't understand it, despite a translation. Something goes haywire in my brain when I write speeches. I think I imagine I'm a reincarnation of Zoroaster bringing news of God."

This is an understatement. The speech was disastrous and embarrassing, delivered in a strange metallic voice accompanied by a glassy stare. He couldn't stop talking, and went on for over two hours, by which time most of the audience including myself had panicked through embarrassment and sneaked out of the theatre. It honestly seemed as if Phil had lost his marbles.

The following morning, too, I had an enigmatic exchange with Phil which left me more disturbed than the occasion seemed to warrant. Phil beckoned me to his breakfast table, where he was eating with the woman he'd arrived with, and about whom he is so dismissive in Valis. He was beaming, relaxed and cheerful and then suddenly, before my eyes, he changed into -- who was it? I don't know. Perhaps it was Horselover Pat.

"I have something vitally important to ask you," he said. "Did you successfully undertake sexual intercourse last night? I need to know how it's done."

I wasn't sure what he meant, or why he was asking, but even then, it's difficult to say why the question seemed so alarming. It appeared so irrelevant, so inappropriate to anything we'd ever talked about, and it was delivered with a profoundly enigmatic, glazed expression. I've got quite a few crude mates, perfectly capable of asking the same question with startling vulgarity, but never, I think, with such an affectless intensity. It was all very mysterious.

I never saw Phil again,\* and I don't recall getting or sending any letters, either. This had nothing to do with any lack of affection, on my side at least, or with our embarrassing conversation over the hot croissants. The whole history of Phil's friendship with many people -- and perhaps of mine too -- is rather jerky and staccato: long, elaborate letters out of the blue, a sudden burst of activity, and then silence for a couple of years. It was my fault, too, that the correspondence lapsed. It was partly laziness on my part, both intellectual and emotional. To make further contact with Phil on any level other than the completely trivial, I would obviously need -- to work out what the hell was going on in his brain, particularly after I'd met him, and seen how very strangely he often acted. Here was a great writer who had honoured me with his friendship, and I backed off because I was too

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\* It was at this point that crude mate Brian Aldiss interrupted Peter's talk to ask, "But what was the answer?" TAPPEN's vulgar readers will be disappointed to learn that no elucidation was forthcoming.

lazy and too cowardly to make the attempt to get through to him. This feeling was just as dishonourable as the everyday feeling that makes you shift uneasily away from those people one meets on tube trains who mumble to themselves. With one part of my mind I thought, "Phil is a loony, and I can't handle it."

This brings me to my final question. Was Phil Dick sane? The question has no absolute answer, of course. Madness is a relative term, as R.D. Laing and others have shown us. Madness in one situation may be perfect sanity in another, and it may be that Phil Dick read the situations of life a lot more accurately than I do. But, of course, there is an answer to the question. The answer is in Phil's books, from the first in 1955 to the last in 1982.

I'm not quite finished yet. The May issue of LOCUS contained a great many reminiscences of Phil Dick by his friends and fellow writers. I want to quote a remark John Brunner made in his short piece. Clearly John was also disturbed at that same Metz festival by the way Phil appeared, but his conclusions were not identical to mine. John writes:

"I asked myself, how come a creative spirit of such brilliance is living in such an unhappy body? He was one of the saddest people I ever met. He was incapable of helping someone else to happiness except by giving orders ... the process of erosion had started before his death ... but in fact, it must have begun decades ago, and long before I met him it was half past repair."

Phil Dick himself had worries about his mind, but he expressed them with rather more humour than John Brunner. Of one of his stories in The Golden Man, Phil Dick writes: "Either I've invented a whole new logic or, ahem, I'm not playing with a full deck." In that same book, incidentally, Phil makes a passing remark that suggests a counter impression to Brunner's:

"Brunner, like me, has gotten stout. We all had endless meals together. Brunner made sure everyone knew he spoke French."

My hackles rise at John's obituary for Phil. Was Phil Dick really half past repair? In that case, who wrote those books? Were they the work of a man who wasn't quite right in the head? On the other hand, what right have I to criticize John for being too dismissive when, as I've just explained, my own worries about Phil Dick run parallel to John's.

Yet surely John is wrong. The man he describes, whether he is Horse-lover Fat or Philip Dick himself, is not the whole man. He is certainly not the man who will come to be recognized as one of the greatest science fiction writers in history, and one of this century's most important writers in any field.

Phil saw himself more clearly than John sees him. He spells it out in Valis, where Horse-lover Fat, the crazed ex drug-taker and sometimes institutionalized mystic has to be reconciled with the quiet, sensitive, watchful, observant Philip Kendred Dick -- they have to become one person again -- before their mutual redemption is possible. For most of Phil's writing life, though not in his baroque and painful personal life, this reconciliation took place.

Phil Dick, science fiction's foremost chronicler of schizophrenia, paranoia, affectlessness, depression and the shifting labyrinths of the mind's perceptual mechanisms, often took madness as his theme. But his books themselves were not mad, not even Valis. Valis does lack some of the saving humour of Dick's earlier work, and it will not be remembered as one of his greatest books. But it is a book of the most incredible courage, as are all of his books.

Philip K. Dick confronted, and made his friends confront, many of the areas that most of us shy away from or pretend do not exist. He kicked away the props of consensus reality and confronted subjective worlds and series of worlds of the most vertiginous, deliquescent complexity. Yet he did all this coolly, compassionately, wisely and un sentimentally, and he never just abandoned himself to the subjective, to pure solipsism. If I were being a literary critic here I'd want to talk about the tone of Dick's writing; it is warm, conversational, and clearly addressed to a reader. The point here of course -- and I'm not just splitting hairs -- is that if you evoke the presence of a readership by your very tone of voice, if you attest to some kind of common humanity outside yourself, then you are not just a solipsist, you are not floundering alone in a solitary universe. The thing about Phil Dick's intimate understanding of madness, in his books at least, is that he is so transparently sane about it.

Think how amazing Phil Dick's story is! The man could hardly get through the week without some kind of disaster -- financial, moral, marital, medicinal or mental. He had giddy spells, he got into fights, he hallucinated, he alienated his friends, in the 1960s he used to drop acid and take large numbers of uppers and downers, he cancelled firm arrangements, he made silly political gestures. (Do you remember the fuss when he opposed Stanislaw Lem's honorary membership of SFWA?) Phil Dick's life was a mess.

That such a man could publish 38 books in 27 years is incredible. That his books should have such wisdom and depth, such humour, colour and sharpness, is nothing short of a miracle. This is not just the conventional miracle of genius; it was a personal triumph of courage and dogged tenacity. He was one of the bravest of writers.

Phil thought that God had reached into his mind. To this day I am not sure whether he meant this literally or metaphorically. In older times, to call somebody mad was not done. One called them "touched by God" -- we still say mad people are "touched" -- like the wise fools, the innocents in Dostoyevsky's novels. I speak as an unbeliever, but there is no doubt in my mind that Philip K. Dick was a man who, in one sense or another, had truly been touched by God.

--- Peter Nicholls

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Peter raises, almost in passing, a critical point which I haven't seen mentioned before, and which future critics of Dick should really take heed of: that the recurring theme in his work, the distinction between android and human -- the subject of his speeches as well as his novels -- was not so much derived from observation of external reality as it was a reflection of a

long struggle going on inside Dick's own head. The distinction Peter draws between Phil and Horselover is a useful metaphor, but as he points out the two are always blended to some degree; there seems, in Peter's and others' accounts of Dick in the flesh, a much more clear division between androidal Dick and human Dick.

As Peter mentions, I too was corresponding with Phil/Horselover, chiefly in 1974/5, with the same eventual end. Peter fell out of contact after a disturbing meeting; I did so after receiving a series of letters (three, written on successive days and totalling 12 pages, maybe 7,000 words) which were simultaneously so formidable and so crazy that they rendered any satisfactory response impossible. I've always regretted that, and now always will.

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"The thinkers of antiquity did not regard death per se as evil, because death comes to all; what they correctly perceived as evil was premature death, death coming before the person could complete his work. Lopped off, as it were, before ripe, a hard, green little apple that death took and then tossed away, as being of no interest — even to death."

--- Philip K. Dick,  
The Transmigration of Timothy Archer

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It seems that one of the pleasures each new year brings, now that I am freelance, is the opportunity to attend the creditors' meeting of some company that has gone into liquidation owing me money. In 1981 it was Pierrot Publishing, and it was hard to raise much of a smile at the time as they owed me over £4,000, not a penny of which will I ever see; 1982 was somewhat easier, as I'm down as a creditor of Dark They Were and Golden Eyed to the tune of a mere (!) £338.95, though since I'd managed to take three fairly substantial boxes full of stuff out of the place to offset the debt I probably didn't finish too far down.

The main purpose of a creditors' meeting seems to be for everyone to agree philosophically that there is nothing to be done save liquidate the company. Most of the attendees are creditors' accountants, so they have little personal interest in exposing the incompetence and/or venality of the people running the company. It is all too British and civilized. Derek Stokes of DTWGE did get something of a roasting, however, largely through the persistent questioning of his erstwhile associate Colin Campbell (who runs the Dangerous Visions mail order business), who was owed about £4,500.

Stokes's business collapse is interesting, not least because he was the first specialist sf dealer, and for a long time claimed to have the largest such shop in the world. Those who always thought he was basically an idiot who had one good idea at the right time would have their opinions

confirmed by the manner of his downfall.

The figures on DTW's business since it became a limited company in March 1977 were, to me, startling. Turnover in the year ending 31st March 1978 was £142,264, and in the three years following was £193,660, £286,166 and £257,975. Profit in the four years was -£2782, +£4030, +£5031 and -£20,355. It was that final year's loss that led to the shop's closure.

How do you make a loss of over £20,000 out of a gross of more than a quarter of a million, and with a gross trading profit of fractionally over £100,000? A hundred grand ought to be enough to pay your overheads and come out in front, even when your rent is £26,000 per year. The question was never satisfactorily answered, because like every other question directed at the financial affairs of his company it left Stokes mumbling vague inanities. In the end the shop had liabilities of about £100,000 against essentially nil assets, figures which lead one to suppose that behind the scenes it had been in a bad way for a long time, despite its takings of £5000 per week.

The final proof of Stokes's utter unfitness to run such a business came with the half-price sale that preceded the shop's closure, to the great joy of many London bookbuyers. Stokes's explanation was that they wanted to raise cash to help reorganize the business and relaunch it on a healthy footing ... fair enough, perhaps, but as was pointed out, the bulk of what was being sold was stock which had come from wholesalers at around 40% discount (and had not been paid for), so that by selling it at 50% discount, all he was doing was increasing his indebtedness.

Stokes's final stupid act was committed just a couple of weeks before the creditors' meeting. After the shop was shut it was left with a stock of about 150,000 comics, with a book value of around £50,000. He decided to hold an "auction" to dispose of these and raise money for the creditors ... but as it emerged this auction had only two participants, who between them bought the lot for £3000 --- that is, 2p per comic. One would suspect some foul play were it not for the fact that the bulk of the stuff was bought by his rivals at Forbidden Planet, who were in no way friends. They must have been laughing then; and with Stokes's business largely going to them by default they must be hard pressed to stifle a chuckle to this day.

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Time, I should say, for another article --- and specifically, I think, time for something from TAPPEN's foremost chronicler of schizophrenia, paranoia, affectlessness, depression and the shifting labyrinths of the mind's perceptual mechanisms. Yes, it's our literally resident contributor Chris Atkinson, still puzzled by the way many fans, particularly Americans, insist in letters on calling her Christine, a name which nobody uses except her father when they're having an argument. (Others -- we won't mention Simon Ounsley -- who address things to "Malcolm and Chris Edwards" are still more difficult to fathom.) Chris has been understandably inhibited by the thought that people would almost inevitably be disappointed by the following, unless it was the most brilliant article in the history of the universe, but

speaking as an unbiased editor I think it's come off just fine.

In the publishing biz it's considered bad form to have a single trailing line at the top of a page. The only purpose of this paragraph is to avoid that situation.

## LIFE WITH THE LOONIES, PART 2

by Chris Atkinson

If you want to meet a real live loony, one of the best places to look is your local Social Services Department. I've met some very eccentric social workers in my time, and tend to believe that the accepted folk wisdom about all psychiatrists being a little mad probably applies to social workers too.

When I started my first job in the Social Services I had an image of social workers as being tweedy middle-aged ladies who were pillars of the community. The first colleague I met, Eileen, fitted this picture perfectly, until I discovered her fascination with bestiality. Every day, after going the rounds of numerous frail old ladies in need of bath mats, Eileen would settle down behind her desk and give us a graphic description of how to screw mountain goats. Any mountain goat was better than none, but the most covetable, apparently, were the ones with bells round their necks.

As time went by, Eileen was clearly tiring of the idea of goatish lust, but was unsure whether we were ready for her true obsession. Then one day, pulling her tweed skirt modestly over her knees, she finally admitted it. Eileen was into fish. What the rest of us saw in Robert Redford, Eileen saw in skate, which apparently were preferable to other fish because of their shape. I have entered the fishmonger's a shade more cautiously ever since, lest people should imagine I was indulging a fishy fantasy. However, despite covert glances in the direction of the fresh skate, I remain unable to fathom the method whereby one would consummate one's lust. Eileen never told us. Perhaps it was too shocking to contemplate.

I also once knew a West Indian social worker who became convinced that I was black. He went round the whole office telling everyone this news in strictest confidence, which really rather puzzled people, because being black himself you'd have thought he was in a good position to spot the difference in our skin shades. Unfortunately this particular man did become rather too loony to tolerate in the office, as he took to crawling around the floor and grabbing at women's ankles on the pretext of catching mice. He was given extended sick leave after that.

Although occasionally this sort of eccentricity could get a little wearing, on the whole I was glad of it, as it made my fuzzy hair and occasional befuddled mornings pale into insignificance. While in previous jobs I had frequently been in trouble for my appearance -- and had actually got the sack from one place for going in drugged up to the eyeballs -- among social workers

I was merely another eccentric who had her off days. I was so pleased to be accepted that my drug use dropped dramatically, in an effort to prove myself capable of doing the job well.

It was quite some time before I was allowed to meet the really loony clients. They start you off on the easy ones: the depressives, subnormals and senile dementias who are unlikely to cause too much trouble apart from taking up space. Possibly because of my own difficulties I felt very drawn to mental health work, so when I had gained a little more work experience I decided to volunteer for night duty, which -- I had been told -- was the surest way to meet a really bizarre loony.

I soon learned the truth of this at first hand. Although my first period of duty was completely uneventful, on the second night it was only five minutes before the telephone rang. It was the daytime social worker, who was just about to leave for home. During the afternoon he had received reports that a young Spanish woman, Consuela Ortega, had gone insane and barricaded herself into her rich boyfriend's pied-a-terre in a fashionable area of London. Because no psychiatrist had been available, the case had drifted on until it had conveniently become a night duty problem.

"I'm really sorry to land you with this one," said the social worker unconvincingly. "It does sound rather nasty. She's been locked in the flat for three days without food, and has told her boyfriend that not only has she killed the cat, but also she's discovered animal matter in her knickers. Oh, and by the way, don't go alone. The last time she was ill she attacked the psychiatrist, and he had to be hospitalized."

I replaced the receiver with a rather shaky hand. The last thing I wanted was to be disfigured by a cat murderer.

Having recovered my nerve somewhat, I telephoned the hospital to arrange for a psychiatrist to visit. When he discovered who the patient was, however, he became rather less than cooperative.

"Isn't she the one who attacked Dr Tetlaw?" he asked, suspiciously.

"Well..." I said, trying to think of a more attractive way of putting it.

"Can't you go and assess the situation first, and then let me know if you really need me? That's what the duty social workers usually do. You're new, aren't you?"

Luckily my fear of going along outweighed my usual subservience to the medical profession. I insisted he should accompany me, and he finally agreed. His condition was that I should arrange for a police escort, which in the circumstances seemed a sensible precaution. We arranged to meet at the caretaker's flat in half an hour.

At the appointed time, Dr Drain and I arrived at the block of luxury flats where Consuela was making her last stand. The kerb outside the flats was lined with Rolls-Royces and Daimlers; every few minutes an Arab would stroll past in flowing white robes. This was hardly the sort of area where social work visits are an everyday occurrence. Inside the lobby the carpet was soft underfoot, and the brass stair rods were obviously polished daily. Next to a potted palm the caretaker's wife waited to meet us. It was clear

that she did not share the privileged background of the other tenants.

"You from the 'ospital?" she asked, smoothing down her floral apron. "She's still at it, you know."

I wondered what made her so confident that we were mental health workers rather than tenants or even visiting interior designers, but I could find no acceptable reason. While I pondered, Dr Drain took over the introductions.

"Ah yes, now, you must be Mrs Field. This is Miss ... er ... from the Social Services Department, and I am Dr Drain from St John's. Now tell me, Mrs Field, what exactly has Miss Ortega been up to?" His tone was slightly patronizing but Mrs Field, obviously flattered by the doctor's attention, smoothed her apron again and smiled knowingly.

"Well, of course, Doctor, she's been like it before, you know. I don't know why 'er boyfriend puts up with 'er. Funny in the 'ead ... you know," she said, evidently trying very hard to be helpful.

"yes ... well," said Dr Drain, "perhaps we'd better..."

"Oh, now you be careful," said Mrs Field. "Don't go rushing in there, just the two of you. That poor doctor the last time, you should have seen his face, poor devil. All scratched, blood everywhere. If I 'ad my way she'd be locked up for good, but these days, well ... you can get away with murder, you know."

We paled slightly.

At this point, thankfully, our police escort arrived. There were six of them, all big, burly rugby-playing types, looking as if they'd be more at home breaking up a pub brawl than pacifying a lone female in a luxury flat. I wondered if we should have coped with it ourselves after all, rather than risk scaring Consuela with this mass of brawn. The policemen, however, seemed ready for action, and one in particular, evidently destined to be Chief Constable one day, had worked out an ingenious plan of campaign. He divided us into two groups. One group, including Dr Drain and Mrs Field, was to gain access to the flat via the balcony, which could be reached through the caretaker's flat. Mrs Field had a master key which fitted the French windows, and the plan was that they should enter this way and catch Consuela off guard. The second group, of which I was a member, was to be stationed in the corridor outside the flat, in case she tried to escape through the front door.

"As soon as we've gone through the caretaker's flat, you lot in the corridor mustn't move a muscle, in case she hears you outside," said the policeman as we prepared for action. "If she hears you she might feel trapped, and then she'd panic." This seemed sensible. I felt quite glad that I was in the corridor group; with any luck the raiding party would find her and calm her down without us needing to get too involved. We hung around for a minute or two while Dr Drain notified the ambulance service; then the two groups got ready for action.

"Okay," said the policeman, "now you lot in the corridor freeze where you are. No moving, no talking." The balcony group moved off, leaving me rooted to the spot in the corridor, along with three policemen. At first I

concentrated on the noises the other group made on the balcony, then I strained my ears to catch sounds from within the flat. I slowly became aware of scratching and dragging noises behind the door. I tensed for action.

It was then that I noticed our positions in the corridor. One policeman was stationed at the top of the stairs. Another stood by the lift doors. The third was over by the window, presumably to forestall a suicide leap. All very sensible, very practical ... except that it left me in splendid isolation immediately outside the door, in the direct line of assault if someone burst out of the flat. The ominous scrapings beyond the door continued, and I began to experience at first hand the meaning of being in a cold sweat.

Then suddenly the door burst open. Fighting down panic I stood my ground, readying myself to duck or flee. But the figure who emerged was disconcertingly familiar.

"Oh, hello," said Dr Drain, his hand still on the doorknob. "Do come in. There seems to be no one at home."

Sagging with anticlimax we all tumbled into what had once been a luxury flat. The Liberty print furniture had been ripped open; the velvet curtains had been pulled from the rails and lay on the floor, covered in scorch marks. Charred paper and spent matches were everywhere. In the hallway a disembowelled duvet lolled out of a bedroom door, disgorging its feathers on to the parquet floor. The kitchen walls appeared to have been liberally smeared with food and excrement. I noticed that the cooker was turned fully on, but when I opened it, fearful for the cat, I found within only a beautifully roasted copy of the Financial Times, distinguishable solely by its uncharred pink interior. The flat was unbearably hot, the heating being set at maximum despite the sunny weather outside. I threw windows open everywhere.

The nine of us gathered in the living room, wondering what to do next. Two of the policemen started to search through drawers and cupboards in a desultory way. Mrs Field wandered round the place, making exclamations of disgust. Dr Drain looked at his watch and commented that if he left now he might have time for some dinner. I walked over to the window for a breath of air, to be greeted by the cat, returning in search of food. It looked thin and sorry for itself, and had clumps of fur missing, but it was certainly very much alive. I delivered it into the care of Mrs Field, who bore it back to her own flat for a welcome bowl of fish.

It began to seem as though the cat's return would be the high point of the evening, and we began to drift slowly towards the door, relieved at our reprieve from violent confrontation, but disappointed that there hadn't been more excitement. On the way through the hall I wandered into the bedroom, where the two policemen were completing their cupboard search, adding to the general chaos by emptying the contents of drawers to join the charred paper on the floor.

"We're nearly through in here," said one of the constables as he began to check through the fitted wardrobes. I started to leave, but then a surprised exclamation from the policeman brought me to a halt. As he pushed the rack of clothes aside they revealed a naked female figure huddled at the back of the wardrobe, looking very angry indeed at this intrusion into her solitude.

"Bloody hell," said the policeman, his eyes widening at the sight of naked female flesh. "Hey, Jim, look what I've found!"

The other constable turned. By this time Consuela, having realized the game was up, had stepped haughtily out of the wardrobe and stood by the bed. She was extremely attractive, small, slim, and deeply tanned all over.

"Oh my God," said the second policeman, looking quite embarrassed. "I Think you should put some clothes on, miss. The doctor wants to see you."

"I am not seeing anyone until I have telephoned to Prince Charles," said Consuela, looking at us contemptuously. She walked over to the phone, tossing back her hair, apparently unaware of the effect that her naked body was having on the two rather youthful policemen. She dialled a number and began a very convincing conversation, first with "the Palace" and then with "Charles".

Meanwhile the ambulance crew had arrived at the flat and everyone crowded into the small bedroom, hiding their interest in Consuela's attributes by pretending to look in every other direction. Consuela surveyed the scene with a rather detached manner then, covering the mouthpiece of the telephone, informed us quite calmly that if anyone came too near she would scratch their eyes out. She flexed her free hand, showing us her long, pointed fingernails. They were painted a menacing scarlet.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Dr Drain take the admission forms out of his pocket. "Quite definitely in need of treatment, I'm sure you'd agree, Miss ... er. If we leave her here she'd burn the place down before very long."

I nodded, hoping that if we moved quickly a violent scene could be averted, and if I'd kept quiet then, maybe things would have gone smoothly. But a humanitarian voice deep inside reminded me that it was only fair to tell Consuela of our plans and so, taking my courage in both hands, I spoke up.

"Miss Ortega," I said nervously, "the doctor thinks you might be helped by coming along to the hospital. Will you come with us?"

Consuela focused on me, her eyes narrowing slightly. Then she drew herself up to her full height, threw the telephone to one side, and, uttering an unnerving growl, sprang towards me, her fingernails poised for the kill.

If it hadn't been for the ambulancemen I dread to think what would have happened, but as she raced across the room they moved still faster and caught her by the arms, holding her securely. All she could do was glare at me.

"Okay, time for the restraining stretcher," said one of the ambulancemen, and they lowered Consuela on to what looked like a giant straitjacket on the floor. But Consuela wasn't going quietly.

"Stop it, or I shall cry rape," she warned.

"Go on then," said one of the watching policeman, unfeelingly.

"Rape, rape!" she screamed, again and again. It sounded pretty convincing.

"Come on, love," said the ambulanceman, "you don't want all the neighbours to know about this, do you? I tell you what -- if you lie quietly we'll

get you into the ambulance quick as a flash, and no one will know a thing about it."

Consuela looked up at him, suddenly silenced. Then she gave a slight nod. As good as his word, the ambulanceman got her into the ambulance before anyone knew what was happening. My admiration knew no bounds.

After the ambulance left we stood in a little group on the pavement, the policemen, the psychiatrist and me.

"I wonder if she'd taken her clothes off because of the animal matter in her knickers?" said one of the policemen, who knew the story. We never did find out about that. I did discover later that the cat moved in with Mrs Field and, as far as I know, lived happily ever after, except for a slight tendency to neurosis. It probably got a better deal out of life than Consuela, whose "boyfriend" sold the flat while she was in hospital and refused to see her again. I suppose she got too expensive to clear up after.

I've talked a lot about the more bizarre aspects of mental disturbance, including my own colourful experiences. However, mental illness is obviously not just about dramatic experiences and shattering crises. Remembering what happened to me, it wasn't the hallucinations or the voices that bothered me so much as the intolerable emptiness of day to day existence. My excessive drug use at the time was partly due to an inability to cope with life in any other way, and whether it then made matters more complicated is in some ways beside the point. My consciousness that I had an archangel on my side was certainly a comfort to me too, although I can't say the other delusions helped much. The depression lasted much longer than the delusions, though, and along with it came an unreasonable fear of everyday objects and situations. You name it, I was probably scared of it. Dead end streets, underground car parks, gasometers -- the list sounds ridiculous now, but it was very difficult to live normally when I was in terror of what might be lurking round the next corner. Believe me, there are an awful lot of dead end streets in London.

Being afraid of everyday objects was a good neurotic way of avoiding the outside world. I kept functioning better than many do, managing to get enough temporary work to stay off social security. But all I really wanted to do was stay at home, keep the curtains drawn all day, and huddle on the bed. I did this as much as I could. I felt pretty hopeless and lacking in self-worth then, but I can recall those feelings now without them becoming too threatening, because I have learned how to survive them. I'm not so sure about archangels.

Getting into social work did help me to find some purpose in life. My days were more interesting, my clients depended on me to come in to work, and I had a qualification to work towards. I remember in those early days my supervisor told me that I might be able to use my own past mental difficulties in my work with other people. I couldn't understand how, because my experiences were still too close to think about. Some years later, however, I consciously tried to take his advice when working with one of my clients. Her name was Mrs McEnroe, and I met her because her daughter, Sharon, was doing worse and worse at her special school. There was some debate as to whether this was solely due to Sharon's subnormality, or whether she was also being neglected. While the doctor was sure that Sharon's brain damage was wholly to blame, she felt that Mrs McEnroe, as a lone parent, needed some social work support.

I took to Mrs McEnroe immediately. She was young, intelligent, articulate and proud. She was an auxiliary nurse at a local hospital, and had worked hard to give her daughter as good a life as possible. When I met her, she was studying for 'O' levels at evening class so that she could apply for training to become an SRN. She had great determination to succeed.

As I got to know her better, the story of her life gradually emerged, and it was pretty bleak. Her mother had died when she was 13, leaving her to look after her two younger sisters with her authoritarian father. When she was 16 she went to a party and had intercourse with someone she did not know. She got pregnant. Her father threw her out, saying she was a bad influence on her sisters. She drifted into London and, after the baby was born, became a nightclub hostess, doing a bit of prostitution on the side. She married, but when it became obvious that Sharon was mentally handicapped her husband said he did not want that sort of responsibility and left. Mrs McEnroe decided that she was going to have to make it alone, so as soon as Sharon was old enough for school she got her nursing job and made her plans. She had been coping alone now for five years.

A few months after I met her, Mrs McEnroe told me she had not a new boyfriend. Although at first she was very happy, difficulties soon started to emerge. Her boyfriend was a gun-runner to the Middle East, and apparently made huge amounts of money. Despite this, when he moved into Mrs McEnroe's flat he refused to pay a penny towards his keep. He was selfish and violent, but he was also attractive and charismatic. Mrs McEnroe was miserable when he was with her, and despairing when he wasn't. Together with Sharon's continuing problems at school, the situation began to get Mrs McEnroe down. Her boyfriend treated her like a slave and told her she was a bad mother; she began to believe him. Her life, which she had started to build around Sharon, began to seem pointless. When I visited her, Mrs McEnroe would talk to me for hours about how she felt, and I really thought that having been through similar feelings myself I could offer her some valuable support.

Then one day I started to have peculiar phone calls at the office. The first time it happened I picked up the receiver and said my name, only to be greeted with silence. Whatever I said, the silence continued. Finally, after about 30 seconds, there was a click and the line disconnected.

The call had come through on my direct line, so there was no way of checking the caller's identity with the telephonist. Most of my clients knew the number, but I could not think who would want to telephone without speaking to me. I checked out a few people but was no wiser. The following day I had two more calls, exactly the same. I was mystified.

On the third day there was another call on the direct line. First of all came the long silence. Then, just before the line went dead, a woman's voice said my name. I recognized the voice. It was Mrs McEnroe.

My first thought was that she must be feeling pretty desperate to make those phone calls, as she was usually so articulate. I think I was also flattered that in her desperation she had chosen me to contact. Full of good intentions, therefore, I leaped into my car and rushed round to her house, ready to help out with my vast store of empathy and insight.

When I saw Mrs McEnroe I was rather worried by the change in her appear-

ance. She had bits of blanket fluff in her uncombed hair, and her eyes looked strange. Still, she sounded okay, if a bit tired, so I sat down with her and prepared for our usual session. Now I could really do some deep casework.

It was at about that point that I noticed the telephone. I use the word loosely, since whatever it may have been previously the dismembered heap of dials and wires was certainly not a telephone any more. Assuming that Mrs McEnroe had become distressed about her inability to communicate I asked gently how it had happened. She immediately looked guarded.

"They keep telephoning me," she said.

"Who?" I asked. Mrs McEnroe stared at me blankly. A moment ago I had felt poised on the brink of some tremendous breakthrough, but now I seemed to have lost her.

I tried again. "What do they say?" I asked. Another blank look. Then Mrs McEnroe walked over to the television. It was covered by an orange blanket. This was rather unusual, I had to admit, but perhaps she was expecting the decorators, or the chimney sweep, or....

She removed the blanket and turned the set on. This was odd behaviour in the middle of an interview, but I had got so hooked into the idea of case work that I had forgotten to look for more basic communications. The picture came on. It was Reginald Bosanquet reading the news. We sat watching, while he regaled us with the latest trade figures and a smattering of world crises. A few minutes passed, then Mrs McEnroe sat forward in her chair.

"There you are!" she said triumphantly. "They're at it again."

I stared at her, mystified. She had never shown such an interest in the state of the Australian dollar before. She glared at me impatiently.

"They do it all the time. It's me they're talking about, you know."

I couldn't avoid the truth any longer. It looked as though Mrs McEnroe was not entirely in touch with reality.

"And the telephone?" I asked.

"The same thing. They accuse me of being evil. It's happening all the time."

I found this whole situation rather difficult to grasp. I had met a number of loonies before, but I had never before experienced someone I believed I knew quite well changing from rationality to paranoia. Whilst my own episodes with Leonard might have helped me understand how Mrs McEnroe was feeling, I could not relate these to the present situation, partly because I was not fully convinced my experiences were delusions, and partly because I did not really want to understand too closely how Mrs McEnroe was feeling, for fear it might be catching. Another reason for my discomfiture, if I am really honest, was that I had prided myself on my work with Mrs McEnroe, and I now felt that I must have overlooked a hundred clues that she was about to have a breakdown.

The only thing I could think of was to get Mrs McEnroe to a psychiatrist as soon as possible. That this solution had not worked for me seemed irrelevant.

At least if I had a second opinion and she had some pills I could stop feeling quite so guilty. That was the theory, anyway. Oddly enough, Mrs McEnroe seemed to accept quite readily the idea of calling in at the hospital, so having arranged for a neighbour to look after Sharon we got ready to leave.

As we put our coats on I realized that I would have to visit the lavatory. Having asked permission I made my way upstairs. To my surprise Mrs McEnroe followed me up. I felt a bit hemmed in, having someone I suspected of being mentally ill blocking my escape route, especially as it was getting quite dark upstairs. However, I pushed this to the back of my mind, reasoning that I knew Mrs McEnroe quite well, so there could be nothing to worry about. I reached the landing, and saw that the bathroom door was partly opened, but the curtains were drawn shut. I could just make out the shape of a ventilator brick high on the wall. It was towards this darkened rectangle that Mrs McEnroe was pointing when she started to scream.

"Oh God! Oh no! It's there again!" she shrieked, staring wildly past me. I froze to the spot. I don't know which I was more scared of, Mrs McEnroe or the ventilator brick. She didn't give me long to decide.

"Get out of here!" she yelled at me, swinging me round and pushing me downstairs with a strength that I could not resist for fear of losing my balance. At the bottom of the stairs was the front door, through which she propelled me before I had a chance to argue, slamming it shut behind me.

I was now feeling even more confused. Had Mrs McEnroe suddenly identified me with Them (I point of view I would have found it hard to blame her for), or was she trying to protect me from the Thing in the Ventilator? Whatever her motive, I felt that my efforts at being Social Worker of the Year had been a resounding failure. As I trudged to the nearest public lavatory I thought over what had happened and decided that Mrs McEnroe had looked sufficiently frightened by the ventilator to warrant getting a doctor to visit.

Half an hour later I was joined at the house by Dr Greenbaum, a psychiatrist for whom I had a fair amount of respect. No amount of knocking or letter-box therapy, however, would persuade Mrs McEnroe to answer. By this time a little knot of neighbours had gathered, fascinated by our attempts to coax a response from the other side of the door. Most of them seemed well aware that Mrs McEnroe had been behaving peculiarly for some time, a revelation which depressed me even more. Apparently she had thrown her boyfriend out of the house with his suitcases three days ago, and he had not been seen since. This sounded like a fairly sane move on her part, as far as I could see, but I kept my opinions to myself. Dr Greenbaum asked the neighbours a couple of questions, thought about the situation, and decided that Mrs McEnroe was probably not ill enough yet to justify having the door broken down. We were to go away and wait to see how things developed.

We did not have long to wait. As soon as I reached the office the next day a neighbour telephoned. In the early hours of the morning heaps of furniture and clothing had come hurtling out of Mrs McEnroe's upstairs windows, followed by billowing smoke from the bathroom. The fire brigade had been called and had had to break down the door to gain entry. Mrs McEnroe, however, was still there. "She looks very peculiar, love," said the neighbour.

Her call was closely followed by another one, this time from an angry

Gousing Department official, demanding that someone should do "something" immediately, or Mrs McEnroe would be evicted for damaging council property. I therefore telephoned her GP, who agreed to visit that morning, and alerted the hospital. Dr Greenbaum was now off duty.

When I got to the house the doctor had already arrived, and was in the sitting room. Mrs McEnroe was with him, standing regally by the window dressed in the orange blanket. A sheet was swathed round her head like a giant turban. From the vicious look she gave me it was obvious she had decided which side I was on. This made me feel even more as though I had betrayed her trust as I completed the hospital admission papers. Realizing that her fate was decided, Mrs McEnroe courteously agreed to accompany the doctor to hospital and swept past me with a glare. Rather feebly I told her I would make sure her home was safe while she was away. She ignored this, but turned to the doctor and told him that her house had been taken over by the devil.

After Mrs McEnroe had left I went upstairs to survey the damage in the bathroom. Although the fire had been in the bath it was obvious where her attention had been directed. From the ventilator brick hung lumps of charred rag which had obviously been poked into the holes to prevent something from entering. A shattered Marmite bottle lay on the floor, its contents still clinging to the side of the ventilator. A stream of shampoo had run down the wall from where its container had impacted, just by the Marmite. I eyed the ventilator brick with suspicion. It was all too easy to imagine an evil entity oozing in, and Mrs McEnroe waging a lonely last battle against the forces of darkness ... With a shudder I retreated downstairs, remembering how I used to be terrified of ventilator bricks as a child, and wondering what it was exactly that made them look so menacing. Perhaps Mrs McEnroe found out.

A few months later Mrs McEnroe was pronounced cured and discharged from hospital. By this time, however, she was completely changed. Although she had stopped glaring at me, she now answered everything I said with "whatever you say, Miss Atkinson" in a depressingly flat voice. When Sharon was returned to her she would not have the child in the house. Sharon went back to the children's home, where she was to become a permanent resident. Mrs McEnroe seemed to spend most of her life sitting blankly and passively in an armchair, any ideas of working having been abandoned completely. On one rare day of communication she made me a cup of tea, only to spoil things afterwards by drinking it herself. I continued to feel guilty and responsible in some way. It all seemed very demoralizing, and very far from the excitement I had found in the less personally involving night work. It's probably far nearer the reality of mental illness, though.

It's my belief that Mrs McEnroe's passivity was caused by her medication rather than her illness. At other historical moments people like Mrs McEnroe or Consuela might have been hailed as oracles or prophets of God, rather than being diagnosed as schizophrenic, drugged up to the eyeballs, and left to vegetate. On the other hand, it's 20th century society that the present-day loony has to cope with, and certainly in my own case I would have found it much harder to survive without drugs -- both prescribed and otherwise -- because they screened out the worst symptoms and allowed my mind some time to cool down a little.

However, I was lucky. My glimpse of insanity was short-lived, and for

most of the time I had some sort of grip on reality. Even so, I too was diagnosed as schizophrenic (it says so on my medical record, so my GP tells me) and I remain grateful to the friends who "rescued" me from the parts of the mental health services that were likely to do me more harm than good. I remain far from convinced that the mentally ill are given the best possible service; I suspect drug treatment of being a chemical straitjacket which, while giving welcome relief, could well be superseded by a less debilitating and more positive alternative, if only the mental health services were given more money for research and treatment, or if we as a society changed our reaction to those designated as mentally ill. But these changes don't happen, do they, so presumably we're happy to keep things as they are, just so long as the loonies give no trouble to all of us sane mortals. I mean, after all, they're very different from you and me, aren't they?

Although my experience with Mrs McEnroe did not have a happy ending, I still think my supervisor was right -- it is easier to communicate with people who have psychiatric problems if you have been there yourself. It's also true, though, that you can only use your own experiences once you have come to terms with them yourself. Mrs McEnroe stirred up bits of me I would rather have left alone. However, since writing the first part of this article a number of people have talked to me about their own strange experiences, and they probably shared with me the relief of finding out that they are not isolated freaks. I even met someone else with an archangel; hers was called Marie. I'm beginning to wonder, in fact, whether people who have had this sort of experience are much more numerous than we are led to believe. Why is this knowledge being kept from us? Perhaps we are all members of an emerging super-race, and our insecurities are merely problems of adjustment to a world run by evolutionary dead-ends. Maybe I should have a word with Leonard again, to see whether he'd give up the idea of Armageddon in favour of leading a Loony Revolution....

In case you're wondering, back at the Social Services Department, I finally decided to give up Mental Health work about a year ago. I was afraid it might drive me insane.

--- Chris Atkinson

\* \* \* \* \*

The usual words of explanation apply to the above: names and situations have been changed sufficiently to protect the innocent.

While this fanzine has been slowly and inexorably expanding, events in the outside world have gone on. The Falklands conflict is over -- at least pro tem. If it's possible to admire anything associated with a military campaign, the British assault was certainly carried out with admirable skill and efficiency. But all the objections remain. Nothing has been solved. And all the talk of heroism and medals tends all too easily to obscure the fact that a large number of people -- mostly very young men -- who were alive a few weeks ago are now dead (and others are permanently maimed or disfigured) to no sane purpose.

\* \* \* \* \*

Great moments in modern sf:

"Indeed, my phallus now ached with thwarted desire under the bleak and lonely stars. Soon it would be time to make my way down the corridor to Dominique's cabin, where this thirst would be slaked. Or would it? For while any thoughts of protoplasmic impotence were banished by the evidence within my own trousers, under the pitiless truth of the void, I could not deny that I suffered from an impotence of the spirit."

---- Norman Spinrad, THE VOID CAPTAIN'S TALE  
(to be published early next year)

And in blurb-writing:

"Michael Bishop customarily is categorized as a scrivener of sociological science fiction, and yet the stories in this collection will attest to the almost stupefying range of stylistic and thematic expression at his command. In addition to a prismatic display of literary/intellectual excellences, Bishop's work is informed with a profound humanity and compassion that triumphantly transcend extrinsic genre-trappings. Several of the tales in Blooded on Arachne take place on other planets; all of them occur within the canons of distinguished modern American literature."

--- BLOODED ON ARACHNE (Arkham House)

And in lit-crit:

"All of Jacqueline Lichtenberg's books are marked by an extraordinary density of thought."

---- Susan M. Schwartz, in 20TH CENTURY SCIENCE  
FICTION WRITERS, ed. Curtis Smith

\* \* \* \* \*

Time for that TAPPEN mainstay -- no issue would be complete without one, apart from the one that was -- a convention report. Not the last convention, I fear, but Novacon. My fault, of course, for not doing this sooner ... but we all know that a good convention report's timeless, don't we? Our trusty reporter was unavailable, so we had to resort to the well-known scrivener of unfounded gossip, malicious lies, and brilliant paragraphs which don't mention me at all, Dave Langford...

THE NOVACON RECORDS

by Dave Langford

To write the one true convention report you must evoke the stark reality of it all -- hypnotically regress yourself to that pre-civilized state of mind, and call the Convention Spirit from the vasty deep. I concentrate on the trigger-words: Novacon 11 ... Royal Angus Hotel ... Angst ... Paracetamol ... Shimmering and numinous, the vision of Novacon takes form. I have only to re-enter this

vision, relive the convention —

— and once again I find myself too plastered to write a report. There still seem to be a few bugs in this method. Besides, what new things can you say about a Novacon? Secretly I am hurt that Edwards lumbered me with this arid topic instead of letting me list the eight favourite records I'd take with me to a desert island. Nay, stare not so: we deaf fans have record collections too. We merely fail to play them very often. Or at all.

Here's the box, covered in those filthy cobwebs that look so much less realistic than the exquisite draperies in horror films. Here are the records, and I know right away which ones would follow me to the remotest corners of the South Seas: all eleven of the damned things, plus five flexible free-gift discs which don't really count. Each time I've moved house I hoped to lose them in transit, but no: they pursue me with the inexorability of the Ruim in that skiffy story, mocking my inability to hear them or -- since Hazel dropped the turntable — to play them. Actually I can't even remember what they are ... let's have a look.

Ah. Alone among what Martin Hoare would call the floppy discs, The PRACTICAL ELECTRONICS Record of Electronic Sounds and Effects ("You are now about to hear a Pure Tone at One Thousand Cycles") represents a one-time interest. In those long-gone days I built my own turntable out of endless little bits, not suspecting what fate the future held for it: I think I even had vast audio-visual plans based on teaching myself to recognize musical notes on the oscilloscope screen. Now, old and tired, I leave all this media stuff to John Collick; or try to: it seems unfair that the second appearance of our "Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid" slideshow, at Novacon, should have caused even more worry than the first. Were we really expected to perform to the bleary, jaded, and above all non-existent audience at 10 am on Sunday? "Yes, Well, maybe 10.30. Well, suppose we schedule it for 10.30 and you start late..." Were there enough carousels for all the slides? "Yes." "No." "Maybe..." Would J. Collick go into meltdown as his fevered brain envisaged slides springing apart to jam the projector, a maddened yet nonexistent crowd attacking him in a frenzy of boredom, the script catching fire, the hotel collapsing? At least the hotel failed to collapse, being cunningly held up by that off-centre pillar in the con hall — whose alarming asymmetry always suggests the N.I.C.E. and their sinister Objective Room. Possibly this hotel too is designed to strip away the decent values beloved of C.S. Lewis: quite likely, really, when you consider the end results.

At last the not very describable "Sex Pirates" performance was over; I'd barely had time to murmur "Never again" when Naveed Khan confronted me and said, "Good stuff, bwana." (He has been addressing me thus ever since I accidentally did it to him. This is very demoralizing and all Alan Dorey's fault.)

"Never again," I said feebly.

"In two weeks' time, at Cymrucon," he told me firmly.

The strangled sound emanating from my throat bore a surprising resemblance to Effect No.2, Square Wave at Four Hundred Cycles.

Next from the box are a couple of floppy Reader's Digest Free Audition Discs, parental discards. I wonder what's on them? If there were any Sinatra

stuff it would conveniently lead me to GoH Bob Shaw's bet with Rog Peyton: handing over six Sinatra biographies, Bob wagered that the whole batch couldn't be auctioned for more than a quid. "Done," cried Rog, only to find the books were in Japanese. Rallying his forces with many a quip he made an all-out assault on the bemused audience and -- as anyone might have expected -- ended up with more than ten pounds for six utterly unreadable books.

Hurling the Reader's Digest Free Audition Copies aside, I suddenly remember the Omni Book of the Future Free Audition Copies. Andie Burland was handing these out dispiritedly, explaining between times that her girlfriend Jane had been kept from Novacon by an urgent need to take the budgie to the vet. All the long Novacon lounge was littered with BotF samples discarded by bored fans (Greg Pickersgill): I took tighter hold of my own copy when I found the almost smiling face of Langford inside, listed as a contributing editor. "Why did they keep it a surprise till now?" I wondered. "Nobody ever told me I was a contributing editor."

"Nothing would surprise me about this thing," said Andie wearily.

But I was prancing towards the bar shouting, "Fame! Power! Money!" I bought people drinks for several seconds, and the Glasgow Bob Shaw made up a badge from a cut-out Langford photo, and Hazel insisted on wearing it. Andie, slightly miffed by this desecration, would not be mollified until provided with a companion badge showing Bernard Dixon. It takes all sorts. (I am reliably informed that there is no picture of David Bowie in the BotF, Dixon being but a second choice.)

Still two Private Eye floppies left. Teach Yourself Heath is the sort of educational disc you do not need to cope with Novacon's "University Challenge", where the long-undefeated Surrey Limpwrist crashed to ruin before (a) some dark-horse team of neofans,\* and (b) hard questions like "Who wrote The Shadow of the Torturer?" or "What does the R in Gordon R. Dickson stand for?" To me Rupert Bear will never seem the same again. Roz Kaveney and I sat sneering at the back of the hall, swigging whiskey and intoxicated not so much by that as by our ability to answer all the questions long before the struggling participants.\*\*Except when they were too quick on the button. "In which book did ---" Bzzzzt! "The precognitive Joseph Nicholas will now answer my uncompleted question..." "Er um well..."

Unable to bear very much of this reality, I presently slipped away -- forgetful of the whiskey bottle. Some time later, an infinitely pathetic figure might have been seen crawling about the con hall wailing, "It was there, I know it was there..." Kindly hands restored the bottle to me just before an embarrassed Stan Eling could page it over the hotel tannoy and bring down the wrath of corkage upon us all.

Hullo Sailor: ah, another Private Eye freebie, and sure enough I did go out one night to the "Caylord" Indian restaurant, there to find to my mild alarm that Roz knew the plots of all the obscure detective stories I drivelled on about. "You two are on the same wavelength," said a helpful David Pringle; but

\* Believed to be a reference to M. Edwards, P. Kincaid and J. Barker. (Ed.)

\*\* A likely story. (Ed.)

I was worrying about the fact that in addition to the incredible amount of trivia in my own mental archives, Roz also seems to have read everything else, including millions of morally sound and socially triffic works whose mere mention causes me a dull pain in the temples. Must scan that copy of GENERAL RELATIVITY: AN EINSTEIN CENTENARY SURVEY (not available on record) and gain some kind of moral advantage. Real soon now. If I can understand it. Sometimes I wake up early in the morning firmly convinced I'm still essentially a fifteen-year-old and that all these hard subjects are Strictly For Grown-Ups, the title of a Paddy Roberts EP which once boosted my ego by the clarity of the singing: I could actually hear all the words. This was not true of Bob Shaw's Novecon speech. Normally I can follow him by sitting right at the front if not more so, leaning forward with ears ludicrously cupped, and screwing up my eyes (which for some reason seems to help), but this year time and chance and the Novacon PA system combined to defeat me.

The Roberts title suggests a vague and spurious naughtiness which may or may not have been present at the great Pickersgill Halloween party, where (according to this notebook) somebody called Pringle was being fingered by somebody called Atkinson even as somebody called Edwards was fingering Chrissie Donaldson, now the spouse famous Novacon chairman Paul Oldroyd, who failed to comment. Is "fingering", in this notebook's context, a euphemism? Answers on a plain envelope, please, to me c/o TAPPEN. The Pickersgill bash was also noted for ruthless bouncing of cretins as the night wore on -- or so I am informed by several reliable cretins -- which brings me neatly to the private party that again disposed of my occasional dreams of fame and power. Through its open door I caught a glimpse of Andrew Stephenson: I waved; he waved; our two hearts beat as one; but as I moved forward there arose an obstacle called Marsha Jones who firmly closed the door in my face. Relegated to mere cretin-dom, I slunk away.

Now this record, Ravel's Bolero, still arouses a feeling of real guilt. I borrowed it, you see, back at college -- inflamed by those descriptions of its compulsive and maddening beat, descriptions possibly written by Robert A. Heinlein. The actual sonic experience was something else again, muffled and fuzzy and not all that dissimilar to Practical Electronics Effect No.4: Unfiltered White Noise. Perhaps it isn't a very good recording; perhaps, like the electricians of the Royal Angus, I never managed to build a very good amplifier. (Some people say that with a claimed 5-watt output, even I shouldn't have had to press my ear against the speaker to hear anything at all. Can this be true?) At Novacon I naturally avoided the compulsive, maddening beat of the disco -- which in any case tends to silt up inside the famous hearing aid, filling it with waste noise which needs to be cleaned out after even a short exposure. Must give that record back sometime: if only I could remember who lent it to me....

Here are some LPs, that great technical innovation foretold in 1939 by James Joyce. (This feeble attempt at cultural credence results from the fact that like everyone else I've looked at the first and last pages of FINNEGANS WAKE -- if only to check that Joyce lifted at least one narrative cliché from DHALGREN -- and sure enough, the last sentence but three reads "Lps." This proves it.) Marty is a compilation of Marty Feldman sketches, leading subtly enough into Lisa Tuttle's firm refusal to repeat her Big-Mouthed Frog impersonation.

ation — the talk of this year's Milford conference. Oh, those rolling eyes, that almost dislocated jaw! It is as well that Lisa remembered the vows of marriage before reiterating such blandishments. In similar vein we have a couple of Monty Python records, one of which I was awarded for the unlikely achievement of second-best performance in a sponsored Silly Walk from St John's to Magdalen College (first prize being voted to the six-foot-nine policeman who had paced this dubious procession along the High). I was the one on the left whose academic dress was supplemented with sunglasses and a smallish stuffed crocodile. Alas, despite the genuine John Cleese signature on that particular record, the whole thing now leaves a faintly rancid taste in the mouth: pleasant sums may possibly have reached the charity in question, but this and similar events proved to have been organized by a tedious student called Nick Field-Johnson for the very tedious purpose of advancing his political career. Once he'd achieved notoriety and a position on the legendary Oxford Union Library Committee, all such Pythonesque activity ceased. I do not draw any fanciful parallels.

Meanwhile, prime sillywalker D. West failed to do anything memorable this year. "You know nothing about anything," he told up-and-coming fan Phil Palmer, who happily added these words to his collection of such dicta as "You're quite sensible really" (D. Langford, or so Phil insists at the most embarrassing moments.)

But it was time for incorruptible Langford, Bell and Nicholas to lock themselves away in heady isolation -- of this record of Hubert Gregg as Jerome K. Jerome reading Three Men In A Boat another one I've never played. It was time to count ballots for the Nova Award. Behind the closed doors, Joseph unbelievably read out the foolish choices of each voter while I totted up points on a cleverly provided calculator and Harry did his famous Harry Bell impersonation. The victories of a certain fanzine and its lady-fanwriter-in-residence will doubtless be chronicled at great length elsewhere, but just for the record I'll mention that Pete Lyon snaffled the fanartist category.

At this point the record collection gets a mite surreal. Who will believe that I have here the second and third sides only of the Trinity Choir in Processional to Calvary? This is the real thing, I tell you: "His Master's Voice" 78 rpm with that dyspeptic dog wondering how to get the fudge out of the gramophone horn, and sleeve ads for The Greatest Advance Ever Made in the Science of Musical Reproduction (endorsed by Sir Edward Elgar, OM) -- something to do with the improved handle on the side of the pictured player, it would seem. This might reflect the gorgeous ceremony of religion (cf Bob Shaw's home-made stained glass windows in the art show -- no joke, I had to carry one home for forgetful buyer Garry Kilworth), but somehow I imagine a certain grim and Calvaroid austerity, as when John Brunner proposed with a straight face that one possible venue for his 1984 British Eurocon might be an out-of-season holiday camp. Big Butlin is watching you.

Ah! Moon of My Delight, I very probably overheard the swiftly-consoled Rob Holdstock saying to someone, though not to Katie Davies, who this year favoured us with a Servalan outfit displaying an interesting yet somehow anaphrodisiac cleavage at lower rear. Rob, meanwhile, pretended great outrage at having been quoted in ANSIBLE yet again on the subject of his all-encompassing

love life. I can't think why this happens to him. With some fervour he explained why you should paste a white dot on the dashboard of your car. It seems that you then take some unsuspecting lady on a country drive, and she asks you why you have this bloody silly white dot on the dashboard of your car, and you come back about how it stands for cleanliness and purity, and after many more highly formalized moves in what we shall call Holdstock's Gambit Declined you are in a position to ask, "Are you a virgin?"

Rob didn't say what happened after that.

Oh, sorry: Ah! Moon of My Delight (Tudor Davies, whoever he may be) is another inexplicable 78, and on the flip side we have On Wings of Song from the same shap. Manifestly this should have won a Hugo.

Next comes a bit of slapstick, for my third and last 78 is nothing less than the celebrated Goon disc My September Love, whereon "Miss Freda Thing" -- a thinly disguised Jakcie Lichtenberg -- attempts high notes only to be pitilessly interrupted by the famous Eccles, a thickly disguised Chris Priest. (Chris's anarchic prowess was also well shown by his crashing of a Novacon games machine -- whose screen threw up endless rows of incomprehensible text, like an automated Barry Malzberg.)

Merely recalling the scratchy screeching of this disc is enough to bring on a nosebleed, latest in the new succession of Langford leakages which began literally over breakfast on Novacon Monday. That particular attack was dealt with by ever-sympathetic Arnold Akien, who seized my nose in the crushing grip known only to third-stage initiates of John Collick's obscure Oriental discipline "Clin Eastwū". The ensuing scenes are better not discussed, like this Benny Hill single (bloody hell, Benny Hill!) which my parents once acquired by the simple expedient of presenting a record token and then advising their bewildered son what to spend it on.

Novacon finished on the usual note of gentle euphoria, enlivened by that lad Collick's vivid account of the lost video epic Bollardes, occasionally based on 2001. "You see this primitive D. West emerging from the sewers, and in the road there's this Significant black bollard ... and he touches it and strokes it and fondles it in ecstasy, and then he starts to evolve ... And the vasectomy scene, that was good, he's chained to a lamp-post and this woman comes at him with a sickle. I wanted just a tasteful trickle of blood on the ground, -- but everyone thought that was too tame and instead this great mound of stuff comes splattering out, meat and bits of plastic and disgusting things all covered in tomato sauce, heaps and heaps of it. And he does the Astral Pole to the tune of Also Sprach Zarathustra ... In the ending he's an aged aged man in the hotel room just like 2001, eating chips, and we got him to take his teeth out for the last scene where he's lying there and the mysterious Black Bollard appears at the foot of the bed, and painfully he reaches out his withered hand to it and gasps 'Fuck off'...."

Perhaps inspired by this, by Jean Colique's forthcoming video project of a fannish Christmas Carol, and by the shooting at Novacon of Clintō (a Japanese Noh play, featuring many stylized gestures such as the pushing of cigarettes into Joseph's mouth and the grinding of a Collick boot on his instep), several other fans muttered of audiovisual projects. Could this be the end of fanzines

as we know them? Could this be how we crowd stuff like Superman II off the ballot for the BSFA Award (Dramatic Presentation category)? One shudders at the thought.

One shudders, too, at the end of each Novacon, remembering the horrors that must inevitably follow it on the calendar. Yes, the last of my desert-island collection to go back in the box is indeed Marty Feldman singing Christmas is a Joyous Time of Year. Up the creaky steps once more, to thrust this unmusical assortment away for another five years, or ten.... The advantage of a nice stable record collection like mine is that whenever the time comes to go through it again, you can be certain of getting the mixture as before. Just like Novacon, really.

-- Dave Langford

\* \* \* \* \*

I expect Mr Langford thought he was being Jolly Clever by combining his convention report with the deaf cretin's version of "Desert Island Discs", but in fact he was playing right into my hands. The observant among you may have noticed that there is no genuine "DID" in this issue. There is a reason for this. It is that I have become bored with the feature. There will be no more for the foreseeable future. I will not even inflict my choices upon you. Let joy be unconfined in some corners of fandom; let others -- chiefly those whose own choices will never now see the light of day unless they print them in their own fanzines -- wail and gnash their teeth.

Apologies to the latter, of course ... but at least their contributions were unsolicited, so any guilt I feel over letting them down is limited in extent. But it's my fanzine and I'll change my mind if I want to....

"DID" served a useful function for me in getting this thing off the ground: it was an easy regular topic which many people were only too happy to write about. Also, it's something I was interested -- and not just from the point of view of the anecdotes particular records inspired. I'm interested too in why people like the music they like, just as I'm interested in why people like the books they like. Some responses indicated that people felt the latter to be an okay fanzine topic, but the former to be somehow improper. I do not share this view.

But times move on and so, eventually, do fanzines. Maybe spending much of this year compiling THE COMPLETE BOOK OF SF AND FANTASY LISTS with Maxim Jakubowski has exhausted for the time being even my interest in such things. Maybe it's nothing whatever to do with that. Whatever the reason, I shall be looking for new ways to fill the pages henceforth.

(Oh all right, I couldn't resist it. This is my 8 for today. 5 LPs: The Doors, STRANGE DAYS; Marianne Faithfull, BROKEN ENGLISH; Steely Dan, KATY LIED; Talking Heads, FEAR OF MUSIC; Television, MARQUEE MOON. And 3 singles: Dobie Gray, "The In Crowd"; Steely Dan, "Rikki Don't Lose That Number"; the Temptations, "Just My Imagination". Tomorrow's may be different, particularly

if I should happen to notice the absence of FOREVER CHANGES and anything by Neil Young.

This fanzine is, once again, defying my best endeavours to keep it down to around 30 pages. Already it threatens to extend as far as the last, unless I can be particularly vicious with the letter column. Speaking of which...

LOC. CIT. (the audience is permitted a few words)

Bob Shaw  
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I see that your personal statement on the Philosophy of Fanzines has quickly become a sort of rallying call for the more dedicated faneds who are now active. I'd like to second everything you said, with the minor quibble that I go further than you in this business of the desirability of excellence in writing. I don't differentiate between fanwriting and any other kind of writing on this point, which means that I can't think of any form of writing in which the practitioner is excused the responsibility of always doing his best. I would also say that the best way to encourage good writing in fanzines is by example. What we need is more lovely stuff like Chris's "Life With The Loonies" and less tedious analysis of what is wrong with some fanzines.

\*\*\*\*\*You are obviously a paragon of virtue, Mr Shaw. Of course in a theoretical sense I accept what you say. In an ideal world we would all do our best all the time. But most of us can't manage that in practice. If one is doing a piece of writing for money, as one sometimes tries to do, one may occasionally find oneself doing the amount of work necessary to maintain professional self-respect (and reputation) but no more. As the writer's equivalent of time-serving or clock-watching this may be less than desirable, but it's understandable. On the other hand, fan writing is purely a hobby activity done, one supposes for the love of it, which is why it's difficult to imagine why people would want to approach it with similar attitudes.

Your Desert Island Discs department is a nice idea, even though -- probably because of my age -- rock music, which is all that fans seem to care about, is a closed book tome. I'm sorry about this, because I would really like to be in on this extra level of communication enjoyed by many fans. I like to think that the so-called "generation gap" doesn't exist among people who maintain imagination and fight off prejudice, but in the world of popular music it is a stark reality. And the thing which made it real is that awful stuff -- money.

I was born on the last day of 1931, which means I'm one of the last of generations who shared one characteristic which makes them totally incomprehensible to later waves of young people. That dominant characteristic was that we had no disposable income whatsoever. In my first year as an apprentice draughtsman I earned 15 shillings a week, of which I had to contribute 12 to the household. Then I did a second year at £1 a week, giving my mother three

quarters of it. Even in the latter half of the 1940s, three or five shillings a week did not buy much. Frequently I was broke by Saturday lunchtime and had to get through to the next Friday without spending any money at all. I feel really sorry for today's school-leavers who can't find jobs, but I can never make them understand that with their dole money they can live like princes compared to my lifestyle when I was working a  $5\frac{1}{2}$ -day week. My son is a rockabilly fanatic who publishes a fanzine on the subject. Every now and then he comes to me, having discovered another early great, and tells me how lucky I was for having the chance to buy the original releases for only a few shillings each. I keep explaining to him that I couldn't have bought those early records because I couldn't afford a few shillings for such things, and even if I had scraped up the money it would have been a wasted effort because I was even further from being able to afford a record player. Out of say 50 school friends or acquaintances that I had, not one had a record player. My son listens to all this, playing an imaginary violin accompaniment to what he regards as a grossly exaggerated sob story, and goes away shaking his head.

The reason for going into all the above detail is that it led to the aforementioned generation gap. The music might appear to exist so that young people can express themselves with their own kind of music, but -- as is the case with any other industry -- the real reason for its existence is to make money for some people. A teenager in the 1940s had no money, and therefore as far as Tin Pan Alley was concerned he simply did not exist. All popular music was produced for the benefit of adults, because they were the only ones who had cash to buy records, and teenagers had to be content to listen to what their parents liked. When I switched on my parents' wooden-cased, wet-battery, thermionic-valve radio I heard Flanagan & Allen and Deanna Durbin. I accepted what I heard as a reasonably pleasant sound, but quite naturally music never became important in my life, and it still isn't.

\*

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The three issues, though they contain some interesting material indeed, have (for me at least) a rather oppressive quality about them, a mood of emotional greyness, a certain tranquillized state, as though feelings conveyed in the pages are under constraint. I can't explain this entirely. Sometimes it is the feeling I get from other British fanzines. (In some American fanzines there is the opposite feeling -- of emotions of a banal kind spilling willy-nilly off the page in all directions.) The new issues of the Hansen and Maule zines have some of the feeling. Yet they are both good fanzines. So is TAPPEN. But TAPPEN had that feeling for me, pronouncedly so. I don't think it is the physical package. It is just something about the mood of the writing, and behind the writing the tendency towards emotional constrictedness that the cliché has it that British people possess.

I think it is important to try to dig down beneath this convenient assumption making. Surely not all British people are cold and reserved. It may even be that most of them aren't. Just as surely not all Americans are heart-on-their-sleeves sentimentalists who will tell you at great length the most intimate and embarrassing details of their lives at a moment's notice.

Things are not as simple as that.

\*\*\*\*\*Indeed not, but I have an awful suspicion that you have a point, and that it's largely to do with editorial personality. (I don't think, for instance, that you would find Chris Atkinson's contributions to this fanzine emotionally constricted.) I've been told often enough that people both inside and outside fandom tend to find me cool, aloof, remote, intellectual, intimidating, at least until they get to know me. This always amazes me, knowing as I do what a bundle of terrors and neuroses I actually am. But I wouldn't be surprised to hear that TAPPEN had something of that quality. But I think it's certainly true that British people on the whole are brought up to regard excessive talking about yourself as both boring and boorish, while Americans on the whole are not. I was talking about this to Chris Priest just the other day, apropos of the Nebula Awards, and we were agreeing how impossible it is to make Americans understand why Britons feel the kind of promotion and lobbying that goes on over the awards to be crass and just Not On.

Chris Evans's article is kind of stomach-turning, but in a funny way. I'm not about to cast the first turd or snotball, though. It is all too easy for the reader to say to himself as he eyetracks Evans's nauseating paragraphs, "He farts. I never do. He pulls snotballs out of his nose. I never do." We all do. It's just a matter of how often we do, and whether we tell about it in great detail in a fanzine article. I suspect Chris Evans farts more than most people.

It's a funny conreport, or bodyreport. His candor is nearly masochistic. Yet he has touched on some truths: the inner feeling of being at a convention, especially when the mind gets wrecked on booze and/or drugs (and eventually the body — fo not after the first convention then surely after the thirtieth). Also, the piece has levels of irony that I find more often in British fanzine writing than in American fanzine writing. (But PONG, SPACE JUNK and TELOS, for example, have levels of irony just as complex and multilayered as I can find in some British fanzines. Just that the irony is American in nature, not British. Let it not be suggested by Joseph Nicholas or anybody else that American fanzines are completely devoid of irony.)

Why does Joseph take himself so seriously? Is it because he doesn't think other people take him seriously enough? Sometimes it seems as though he takes the dynamics of fannish revolution more seriously than Lenin could possibly have taken the idea of a Russian revolution.

Fannish generations as a satirical idea is fun to play around with, but it is a crock of Chris Evans turds to take it seriously. Agreed. I will have been in fanzine fandom 25 years as of March 1982. Guess that makes me an Elder Patriarch. Yet I am not all that unimaginably old — 38. Just that I got into it early. A pity that I haven't made much reputation for myself over the years. The idea of fannish generations is just the kind of conceit to appeal to Nicholas's big-frog-in-a-small-pondism.

I am just beginnig to notice how much Joseph changes his mind from letter to letter, article to article. He has made a god out of arbitrariness and capriciousness. But his writing entertains me a lot, and has some really

intriguing ideas in it, so on the whole I'm glad that he's around stirring things up.

I think one of Joseph's greatest fears is of being thought bourgeois. He seems to take his fannish image very seriously. He spends most of his writing wordage discussing it, directly and indirectly. I mean, really seriously, as though what people think of him in fandom is a matter of life or death. That's kind of ridiculous, and is the main reason people find it so easy to make fun of him; they realize how supersensitive he is to criticism. He wants to be thought of as a sort of theoretician of fandom. Trouble is, there is something intrinsically absurd about devoting yourself to being a fannish theoretician. It's such a lot of intricate brainwork expended on such a trivial subject. Yet it can be seductively fun to indulge in such dialectical hijinks. I find myself doing it in more than a few of the letters I write lately.

It may be true that much of the stuff in fanzines is childish, even the good stuff. It probably is true. I just hope that Joseph doesn't think his own writing is not childish. It is, really. Its "one day this, next day the opposite" method of presenting his ideas ensures that it will have the capriciousness associated with childishness.

Yet there is something Napoleonic about Joseph, as though he is searching for kingdoms beyond fandom to dominate. That may be true of many of us, though, not just him -- whether the kingdom is music, literature, visual art, social success, etc. We can all dream, though few of us dream as publicly as Joseph Nicholas. But I think fandom is more fun with him than without him.

\*

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It has been said, in Eve Harvey's WALLBANGER, in Chris Priest's DEADLOSS, and in your own editorial, that the "Old Guard" is not trying to impose standards upon fandom again, but is merely producing good material so that the younger fans can see how to produce fanzines, to give a "role model" for the young buggers if you like. Given that, TAPPEN is a grave disappointment -- there is little in it to stir the imaginations of young fanwriters, or even to stir old folk like me into activity. If no.3 represents the same standard as the previous issues then I must say I am baffled by the praise that people have been heaping on the zine. It's a reasonable read, amusing in part, but largely inconsequential, transient and even bland.

\*\*\*\*\*I find it hard to believe that you can have read my editorial and then have me say exactly the oppsite of what I did say, or thought I said. In a general sense one would of course hope that all good writing serves to a degree as a role model to the reader, if the reader is an aspiring writer. Certainly I continually examine writing I admire to see what makes it tick. But to set out to provide such a model would be an insufferably arrogant thing to do, and is in no sense a motivation for producing this fanzine.

The worst bit by far was Chris Evans's con report, which successfully suggested that a fan is solely concerned with the way his body functions (or doesn't, as the case may be), which is rather a narrow frame of reference to say the least, and in no way suggests to me that a con is a place where I should be in attendance — to the contrary, in fact. I almost found myself agreeing with Joe Nicholas over something (I survived the shock -- just!) in relation to his statement on fandom: "If fandom is to consist of nothing more than a bunch of drunkards rolling around laughing at each other's jokes and ignoring everything that happens beyond the confines of the bar then I'd rapidly lose interest in the whole thing." That's what the man said, and having written it down I must confess that I do agree with him, especially in relation to such travesties as the Evans con report.

\*\*\*\*\*I don't think any of us would find too much difficulty in agreeing with that particular piece of Josephese, so don't worry too much. I suspect that if you've never been to a convention — which is what your letter suggests — you must find it difficult to read convention reports (or at least convention reports like those in this fanzine) properly. Recording the formal side of what happens is very much secondary, as there's rarely anything particularly new after you've been to half-a-dozen. What convention reports are, I think, are a particular kind of formal structure against which a fan writer can test his or her skill in constructing an article which is different from all the previous reports we've read. They're in some sense the fannish equivalent of the 12-bar blues: apparently extremely limited but in practice inexhaustible in the hands of talented practitioners. Chris's Unicon piece succeeded admirably, I thought, but if you read it looking for a rounded account of what that convention (or any sf convention) is like, you would be — and evidently were -- missing the point.

\*

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In a letter to EPSILON I speculated that the tendency of new fans to see criticism of their work not as criticism of its quality but of their failure to Conform to the Old Ways, could simply be latent paranoia. However, now I have time to

consider it, it seems more likely to be a simple defence mechanism. Despite what you might think, I can empathize with these new fans; my earliest -- and even a number of my later — fanzine efforts were invariably (and in most cases justifiably) reviewed as crudzines. I particularly remember a long letter of criticism I received from Redd Boggs on my first effort -- not because it was unmercifully cutting and devastating (although it was) but because it was honest coin. Quite some time later, I was in a nonfannish writer's group which required one to say something nice when saying something critical about someone else's writing. While the honest criticism I got in fandom made me strive to improve, the praise I received in that group was always suspect and therefore meaningless. I've always felt, if I wanted to receive unrestrained praise for every creative effort I made, I could send it to my mother. She's perfectly willing to assure me every line I write is a deathless work of genius which is quite likely to put in the shade the works of everyone from William Shakespeare to Valdimir Nabokov. This despite the fact that my mother has never

read anything by either of these gentlemen. The truth is, my mother is quite a remarkable woman and is fully capable of reaching this conclusion about what I write without either receiving or reading it, which would make for a tremendous saving on postage.

\*\*\*\*\*My parents warned me when I was a teenager that reading so much sci-fi would rot my brain. Though they never say as much I'm sure they look at me now and say to themselves, "I told you so." On the other hand, they do seem impressed by the occasional appearance of a book with my name on the cover. My mother even went so far as to read some of the Holdstock/Edwards opus TOUR OF THE UNIVERSE and expressed wonder at all these terrific ideas we had. Since she has only ever read one sf novel I felt safe in claiming them all as original.

I share Chris Evans's inability to remember names whenever I have a hangover -- and even frequently without such an excuse -- but can't offer advice on how to overcome the problem. At a recent Disclave, for example, I recall I was sitting in a bar talking with ... well, I can't remember. Anyway, I suddenly realized I couldn't think of his name, so asked rather sheepishly, "Uh, why don't we reintroduce ourselves." He gave me his name and, as I remember, I said something like, "Oh, right! Of course! And I'm, uh, I'm, er-- Damn. I know it as well as I know my own..."

\*

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Actually, even though I thought the only thing more fab and gear than the first issue was the second issue there's not an awful lot I can find to say about 'em. Guess I got my money's worth for that lobotomy. Did enjoy the listing of the more or less Desert Island Discs and the reasons why they were thought to be so. I suppose my listing would share certain elements contained in both lists (mainly vinyl). But this talk of choices that have to be explained points my brain in the direction of guilty pleasures, you know, thrills you gotta keep in the closet because those other creeps just wouldn't understand. I was in San Francisco this last summer and I mooched some space in little Richie Coad's apt. We were sitting around one night (and it was night, believe me! Rich Coad gets home from work at fucking 11 pm! Which is OK because it leaves the mornings free for watching Midget Wrestling.) watching FORBIDDEN PLANET on cable TV and sucking down Dos Equis beer when, oh oh, the movie ends. So Rich decides to put a record on and hauls out, of all things, a Gary Glitter record. See, I've never listened to anything by Gary Glitter mainly because I'm put off by anything I can buy in a K-Mart for the price of a pack of cigarettes that isn't a pack of cigarettes. The LP was a good deal more listenable than I expected it would be although that was somewhat aided by watching Rich do what he called a "boot-boy dance" which I'm still a little fuzzy about, titillating as it was. Rich got all touchy when I pointed out that the picture on the back of the album cover made old Gary look a lot like Benny Hill. Ian Maule gave me a hard time the summer before last when he was in town. We sat around at Tarry Hughes's place sucking up Molson Ales by the dozen when I finally trotted out my Guilty Pleasure. Which, of course, turns out to be that I like Benny Hill. I was made to understand that this was on a par with coming over here from over there, lusting after old reruns of MY MOTHER THE CAR (even worse

than it sounds). Oh well. At least I don't go around getting paid for putting suppositories in my mouth. Not before I've had a coupla dozen Molson Ales.

\*\*\*\*\*I was thinking, as I read your letter, that maybe Americans -- some of them, anyway -- do know about having fun after all. Then you blew it with the stuff about Benny Hill. Tough.

The end of the fanzine beckons, so it's time to restrict things to some

#### COMMENTS IN BRIEF

Ted White: You say that giving Susan Wood the Hugo "insults the other nominees -- Dick Geis, Mike Glyer, Arthur Hlavaty and Dave Langford." As far as I'm concerned only Langford is undeserving of the "insult" Geis not only has a bookshelf full of Hugos, his "fanwriting" in recent years has been journeyman at best (although ten years ago he was more deserving). Mike Glyer has never risen to Geis's current perfunctory level; he simply writes functional prose for a newszine, and was nominated solely because of the circulation of FILE 770. Arthur Hlavaty writes turgid post-hippie profundities which strike me as sophomoric. Only Langford has a legitimate claim on the award -- but lacks the mass (relatively speaking) exposure necessary to win it. Each and every contributor to TAPPEN is a better fanwriter than Geis, Glyer and Hlavaty.

\*\*\*\*\*You may be right on the latter point, but I was deliberately trying to avoid value judgments on the other contenders who, insofar as they are active fanwriters, clearly all enjoy a legitimate claim on the award. You and I might agree that it's an absurd claim, but that's another matter. Nearly all the Hugos are absurd.

\*

Mike Glicksohn: I have to agree with your comments about Susan's Hugo. When the Denvention committee wrote and asked me if I'd accept on her behalf should she win I agreed, even though I told them at the time there were others who would have been more appropriate. As the con approached I found myself wondering whether or not I'd need to prepare a speech (I do not speak well extemporaneously). Logically, for the reasons you gave, I shouldn't have need to. But when I considered the emotional factors, and thought about fans' track record in the past there seemed a good chance I'd be called on. At the con itself, I wrote out a few ideas, just in case. And, of course, it turned out to be a good thing I did .... I hope people will remember Chris Priest's name when Hugo nomination time rolls round next spring. Although his output hasn't been too prolific, each piece has been a standout.

\*\*\*\*\*To my surprise none of Susan's friends who wrote disagreed with my remarks. Chris Priest's article in TAPPEN 3 was uniformly well-received, though the letters printed don't really reflect that as the comments were largely of the "It was great" sort.

\*

Dick Howett: It always amazes me that people should constantly remark on my youthful appearance. So what is my secret? Nothing less than

a rigorous regime of constant pipe-smoking and no exercise plus, of course, the usual monkey glands and hormone injections. Indeed, and here is the real secret, the aging process can be halted completely by abstaining from science fiction conventions! There, it's out now. No, no, no need to thank me. Consider it a gift from Doctor Dick.

\*

Alexis Gilliland: Joseph Nicholas should have a great future in the bureaucracy, once he learns to clean up his prose a little. There are many times when you do not wish to make yourself clear. In grade school this might have been done by smudging out the "c" and replacing it with an indistinct "a" when one was insecure about the spelling. In the bureaucracy there are a myriad of techniques, ranging from deliberately imprecise wording to resonant ambiguities, and Nicholas displays great aptitude for all of them. That is, he just dashes off the sort of thing that some untalented administrative assistant might labour over for days.

\*

WAHF: Dan Steffan, who wrote at some length, and was one of several people to respond to Chris Evans's article with a farting anecdote of their own, which I've spared you in an effort to keep the air around the rear end of this fanzine relatively pure. Dan is looking for 1970s British fanzines, as also is Richard Bergeron. /// D. West: "Has Chris ever tried using powdered liquorice in her confections? This provides the unforgettable experience of leather fudge. Eat it, wear it, tie yourself to the bed with it --- oh, I tell you, it's unbelievable the things that can be done. /// Leigh Edmonds: "I don't know about British conventions, but if some strange hairy character turned up at an Australian convention wearing, say, a caftan, we'd rightly think he was a pooftah. Either that or he'd gone troppo." /// Abi Frost, who wrote me a poem about how I'd misunderstood her. Actually, folks, I wasn't intending to hold Abi up as an evil example, it was just that her quote encapsulated -- though she may not herself have embraced -- the attitudes I was commenting on. /// Eric Mayer, whose anecdote was if anything more revolting than Dan Steffan's. I mean, Persian cats with diarrhoea! /// Darroll Pardoe, who made sensible comments about elitism and people taking fandom too seriously. /// John D. Berry, who wrote twice, and got so carried away as to start his own fanzine again. /// Ving Clarke, who offered an interesting perspective across 20 years culture gap. Joyce Scrivner, who informed a surprised editor that TAPPEN was an anagram of "Pet Pen". /// Jim Meadows III, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Gerald Smith, Alun Harries, Dave Piper, Arnold Akien, John Jarrold, David Redd, Bernard Earp, Colin Fine, who picked up a copy at Novacon ... okay, own up, who left it there??? /// Kevin Williams, Lilian Edwards, William T. Goodall, Leanne Frahm, Richard Kennaway, Eric Lindsay, who sent a computer-printed form fan letter. Usually it's the READER'S DIGEST which does this kind of thing. /// Jeremy Crampton, Pat Charnock, whose letter was spiffing and would be printed except that she got cold feet and begged me not to. /// John Bangsund, twice, once when evidently pissed. /// Marc Ortlieb, who sent a list of desert island rock stars, Paul Stevens, more letters from Dick Bergeron, Jean Weber and Derrick Ashby. Lots of Australians there, mainly unavoidably late responses to the first two issues; hence the lack of any substantive extracts from their efforts.

OPEN FLIE (the colum that fails where all else succeeds)

by Leroy Kettle

Blonde convention supremo Eve Harvey's live-in husband John has at last found real employment, to give him welcome relief from those tiring little sewing jobs around the house. However, when asked what he will be doing, pretty secretary Eve said, "Much the same as he did in his last job." So it looks like it's curtains for John again soon.

\*

HOLDSTOCK MOCK COCK ROCK SHOCK

Ronald Holdstock, well-known sci-fi writer and fantasist, was humiliated recently by well-known female Eve Harvey at her convention, when awarded a giant stick of rock for services above, beyond, and quite often between the call of duty. Roger, who dislikes his surname being changed in any of the obvious ribald ways -- or reference being made to his colossal dong -- was doubly disappointed because he had expected to win a Huge and Nobbly for his extremely well-received novelette: "Just A Little Thing I Ripped Off From M.R. James"; soon to be a major parody. Roscoe, sci-fi's Mr Big, is currently working on a new project, although OPEN FLIE does not as yet know who she is.

\*

When meek, mild-mannered draughtsman Rob Hansen suddenly disappears into a nearby party and rips off his inhibitions to become Supermaniac, not everyone is happy. After rescuing Sheila Holdstock from a perfectly ordinary good time she was having and thrusting his Tongue of Steel down her sliken throat, he then saw arch-feminist Chris Atkinson (Mrs) secretly enjoying herself, and in one of his frenzied dance attacks thrust his leg sensuouslessly between her silken thighs and threw up in her ear. This was extremely successful, and Chris's furious blow with her handbag would have felled him had he not already sunk to the floor in a drunken and long overdue stupor. Rob, who claims he only drinks when he's awake, can be booked for the parties of people who you dislike intensely by phoning 552-4405. As Supermaniac he fears only one thing, and you can often find him at parties drunkenly screaming in imitation of his mentor, "Bloody hell, I ain't gonna take no crap tonight."

\*

Sci-fi entrepreneur and layabout Malcolm Edweeds is soon to give up his lucrative position of being totally dependent on the salary of female wife person Christine Atkinson for his huge lager bills, and return to the world of publishing as the man who cleans up after Robert Hale. Mr Edweeds, whose new contract includes time off for drinking, attending conventions, watching cricket, pursuing outside interests and occasional good behaviour, is expected to edit a page or two of sci-fi

a year and have overall responsibility for the executive cocktail shaker. Mr Edwards is said to be "pleashed" with his prospects.

\*

Although your correspondent had a wail of a time at Channelcon, one or two carping criticisms have been heard about that convention. Therefore the great Open Flie Channelcon Inquest Competition is now open for entries. First prize is a short, incisive criticism of your style of dress from the Mary Quant of fandom, the man with the eraser-sharp mind, Joseph Nicholas, truly wonderful human being and intellectual potato. Second prize is two short, incisive... (oh dear, some of these old jokes just ooze out of the typewriter before you know it). Simply answer any of the following questions correctly or incorrectly or even not at all and one of these rilly triffic prizes may or may not be yours.

1. Which Robert Jackson made his baby a member of the committee and demonstrated her overuse of orifices at every committee meeting? Was it:

- a) Dr Robert Jackson, child psychologist and axe-murderer
- b) Robert Jackson Square, New Orleans fruiterer with the bloated stomach and ill-wind
- or c) Roberto Jackson, South American dictator and fanzine editor (retd.)

2. How many Eve Harvey robots were responsible for any of the convention? Were there:

- a) Five, all of which were badly programmed
- b) Two, both of which blame everything on their manufacturer
- or c) Six hundred and four, but they all went to the wrong hotel and had fun

3. Which Chris Atkinson spent more time practising dance steps in front of the mirror than being vice-chairpersonwoman? Was it:

- a) Christine Atkinson, person, feminist and Mistress of Deviancy
- b) Mrs M. Edwards, violent psychotic and trouble maker
- or c) Ms Christine Kettle, social worker and fanette

4. What was the hotel's definition of reduced bar prices? Was it:

- a) prices reduced to above normal
- b) prices reduced to greatly above normal
- or c) prices merely doubled

\*

Christopher Proust's writer-in-residence, Lotta Bottle, struck a blow for femininity recently and gained a place in the GUINNESS BOOK OF PARTICULARLY OBSCURE RECORDS by being the first American lady SDP sci-fi writer living in South West England and wearing glasses to reject a Huge and Nobbly after the permitted rejection period and without using the official rejection form. Mrs Bottle's claim that her rejection of the award in this manner would gain her far more publicity than actually accepting it like a gentleman is clearly above contempt. More plausible is the claim that anyone living with Mr Proust already has quite enough huge and nobblies to cope with.

--- Leroy Kettle

This is TAPPEN 4, brought to you by Malcolm Edwards  
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Cover by Dan Steffan

\* \* \* \* \*

TAPPEN 5 should be out for Unicon (a flyer for which is enclosed in UK copies). Be there.

Usual thanks to John Harvey, who printed the cover, and Rob Hansen, who didn't just help but actually took over the duplicating so I could watch England play West Germany. Last stencil typed 30th June 1982.

I'm cutting the print run next time. Inactive readers be warned.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* TAPPEN supports AVEDON \*  
\* CAROL for TAPP in 1983. \*  
\* Go and do thou likewise. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

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