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ANN'T (SFB)

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have the Jim Barker and Chris Evans cartoon strip, HALF-LIFE. This came from an idea from Chris for a VECTOR strip; as I didn't feel that this was quite the right sort of material for a serious critical journal, I decided to run it here; to which Chris and Jim were agreeable. If reader reaction is favourable, then you should be seeing more of Elmer T. Hack, the hero of HALF-LIFE. The other major new item is the "Vector People" photos. Some of you may recognise the one on page 25 as having been used on the cover of BSFAN 3; a large number of extra copies of this were printed at that time, as I intended to use the photo in a University magazine. Unfortunately this magazine never got off the ground, so I thought it might be best used here. I should point out that this isn't costing the BSFA anything - I personally paid for the printing of the extra copies. In fact, VP 1 is Sally Worthington, a psychology graduate friend, now to be seen in Greece, who has been of great assistance to me in slogging through the job of editing VECTOR. VP 2 on page 23 is Margaret Ryan, who will need no introduction to those of you who read the small print on the credits page of VECTOR: she is one of two Accounts Advisors to the VECTOR editor, providing invaluable advice. She is presently working as an Accountant in London. The photo of Margaret has been reproduced by electro-stencil, and as it has been quite successful, we hope to produce further photos of people like Tom Jones (who, regrettably, got missed out of the photo-collage done by Sandy Brown for MATRIX 12, the current number) and a number of other BSFA Publications folk - like Phil S-P and Martin Hatfield.

Finally, a word of apology for those whose letters to VECTOR got squeezed out into NEXUS 3: we just had so many letters that there was not space for all of them. We hope that seeing them in print here will satisfy you.

--- Chris Fowler, 18/6/1977

*
* THE DEAD TOAD SPEAKS - being by way of an EDITORIAL
*
* Some of you may be wondering about that title for the editorial: well,
* a rather disgruntled ex-BSFA member described me in a letter to Tom
* Jones, editor of MATRIX, as having "the editorial presence of a dead
* toad". Tom joked that he would head the promised interview with me in
* MATRIX "The Dead Toad Speaks", but it was such a nicely self-deprecating
* title that I've pinched it for this short editorial. Sorry Tom.
*
* This is the third issue of NEXUS, and some of you may be wondering what
* the purpose of this "VECTOR REVIEWS SUPPLEMENT" is. Simply, I receive
* a certain amount of material for VECTOR which is not suitable for
* publication in a Serious Critical Journal; and which is not suitable
* for publication in our BSFA Newsletter, MATRIX (apart from which Tom
* Jones, the editor, has a large backlog of material submitted directly
* to him); as well as a number of reviews which there is no space for in
* VECTOR (to put all these in VECTOR would produce the imbalance that some
* critics complained of in the past). I feel that it is a good idea to put
* this material into print, if it can be done relatively cheaply, and without
* impinging on the work of VECTOR, Tom Jones at MATRIX, or Ian Garbutt at
* TANGENT (our fiction magazine). I hope that you, the BSFA members whose
* subs are paying for the publications, and for whom we are doing all this,
* will agree with this argument. Please write either to me or to Tom and
* let us know what you think. Do you want to see "overspill" reviews/letters
* from VECTOR and MATRIX in NEXUS? Do you want to see odd things like the
* Chris Evans/Jim Barker cartoon strip? Do you want to see what some of
* the people "behind the scenes" (as opposed to the fans like Tom, Keith
* and I) whom you likely know anyway) who help with the BSFA publications
* look like?
*
* Some explanation is due of the material in this issue. First, the cover,
* by Zoe Hesse (outside) and Paul Ryan (inside): these illustrations were
* sent to me for VECTOR, and though I felt the one by Zoe was a good piece
* of work, I didn't feel it to be "right" for V. Thus I asked, and received,
* their permission to put it on NEXUS. The Paul Ryan illustration would
* have had to wait for VECTOR 82 to see print therein, so Paul agreed to
* it being brought into print that much sooner here in NEXUS 3. Then, we

REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***REVIEWS***

SCIENCE FICTION SPECIAL 20: ORBIT UNLIMITED by Poul Anderson; SINGULARITY STATION by Brian N. Ball; THE BEST OF JOHN W. CAMPBELL; Sidgwick & Jackson; London: 1977; 158 + 176 + 278 pp; £4.95; ISBN 0-283-98375-2

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Sidgwick and Jackson bind up surplus pages of their books in threes and sell them as omnibuses, presumably as an alternative to remaindering them. The product is obviously aimed at libraries, but over 600 pages for just under £5 is not a bad deal in this day and age if the contents justify the expenditure. This particular volume has two photocopied US paperbacks plus one of the "Best of" collections which are proliferating like wildfire on both sides of the Atlantic. This one is the UK version published of the best of Campbell, not to be confused with the US version published by Nelson Doubleday. This one has been set in very large type (in the German Democratic Republic) to make it seem long, but it contains only five stories. Four of them ("Forgetfulness", "Who Goes There?", "Out of Night" and "The Cloak of Aesir") also appeared in the US version, but that one has seven more stories plus an article in its 307 pages, whereas the present version has only the weak novelette "The Double Minds".

If the Campbell collection is inflated, the Anderson book here reads as if it were super-condensed. It has four episodes, the first and second fairly long, the middle two short - without much effort the material could have been expanded to make a trilogy of novels, and in its present form it all seems a little truncated and incomplete. It is not Anderson's best work, but it is, as usual, interesting and readable. Brian Ball's novel is an unpretentious space opera which overcomes a certain crudity of planning and execution by sheer verve. It also makes for pleasant reading.

On the whole, well worth borrowing from the library for a weekend's reading.

FADE-OUT by Patrick Tilley; Sphere; London; 1977; 416 pp; 95p; ISBN 0-7221-8514-6

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

FADE-OUT is a contemporary thriller featuring the US political establishment in confrontation with an alien spacecraft which lands in Montana (or perhaps it doesn't land, but surfaces from within - the author develops doubts about that three-quarters of the way through). In fact, the author develops doubts about lots of things - this is a novel loaded with auctorial uncertainty. For very long stretches

it is bogged down while nothing happens and the characters talk about the fact that nothing is happening. When things do happen their significance remains unclear, thus allowing the characters to talk obsessively about the possible meaning of what has happened. They reach no conclusions. Neither does the author. Do not be fooled by the page count - this is not a book crammed with incident. The "confrontation" between human and alien is tentative, to say the least. The probe does its own thing, the people do theirs. When we finally get around to some interaction the question of what the people who make contact actually discover is quickly stifled. The contactees are dispatched rapidly to oblivion lest they should tell their companions (or the reader) what happened to them (and thereby clutter up the plot). The apocalyptic fade-out threatened throughout the book is a bit of a bore as it comes and goes and comes again with only a few off-hand paragraphs concerning its effects. The biggest bore, though, is the long and tedious introductory fade-in, which takes 180 pages just to set up the initial situation.

It is possible that the author/s tentative strategies are designed so as not to alienate the average thriller fan by dragging in material with imaginatively adventurous connotations. Personally, I think that this is an imaginatively adventurous theme, and cannot be defused by a determined refusal to face it. I find the attempt to do so incongruous.

DANDELION WINE by Ray Bradbury; Panther; St. Albans; 1977; 192 pp; 65p; ISBN 0-586-04360-8

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This was not really Bradbury's "first full-length novel", as the blurb puts it; that status belongs to SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. DANDELION WINE is more a sequence of integrated short stories (many of them revised from their original printing) plus various link-passages; though it must be said that it presents more of an aesthetic whole than SOMETHING WICKED. Anyway, all the stories are situated in "Green Town", Illinois, which is a transmuted version of Bradbury's home town of Waukegan; and the unifying characters are a twelve-year-old boy who has just discovered the fact that he is alive, and his younger brother. The overall tone is pastoral and rather static, the literary equivalent of Aaron Copeland's music for APPALACHIAN SPRING. It is essentially a series of heightened insights. Of its kind, I'd say it's as good as you can get without dissolving into the nebulousity of Virginia Woolf or the prolixity of a Proust. The effect, on first reading, can actually become a bit somniferous; but after twenty years with this book - it first came out here in 1957 - I can testify that it gets better and better over the years.

Apart from a man who builds a Happiness Machine, there are few of the appurtenances of sf here. But the feel, the wondrous feel, is there all the same. How can I explain it ---?

But no. There's a saying in the apocryphal Acts of St. John: Keep silence on my mysteries. I think I'll take that hint, and keep my mouth shut.

KULDESAK by Richard Cowper; Quartet; London; 1976; 186 pp; 60p; ISBN 0-704-31075-9

Reviewed by David Wingrove

What is the core of this book?

"Analysis of your genetic patterns has proved conclusively that you are unique - that you have been singled out to lead a new advance." Thus the Chief Mentor describes Mankind's prospects. But, if as in this novel, Man has let control fall into the clutches of the machine (by choice and not by war) then is it possible that, once the choice has been made, he can reverse it?

KULDESAK depicts Man in stagnation; steeped in rituals set by a computer, deep in the belly of the Earth. But then there are the Roamers, a genetic safeguard; wild genes to be added to the diminishing pool from time to time. I questioned the validity of the concept: would Man willingly hand over to a computer and subject itself to passive, controlled underground existence just to eradicate human aggression and the reproductive drive? Or is this then just a stage for Richard Cowper to say "I am a man!" as Barney in the book does? Does Richard Cowper believe "Man" to be that part of us that is inquisitive and aggressive? I believe he does, and that the mess into which man has fallen is a metaphoric device and not a literal one. Only then does it make sense to me.

KULDESAK displays Cowper's usual flair for written English, and the reader is involved in Mel's discoveries about the world into which he has been born. Whilst the society might be artificial, it is well-constructed, logically-based and occasionally genuinely intriguing. But there are many such societies within the genre; the strengths of Cowper's book like elsewhere. He handles the fictional device well, thus allowing his characters life within that matrix, and convincing us of their motivations.

Picture this: the computer has replaced Nanny, realising that old maxim "it's best to be cruel to kind". How do you serve man best? You kill off all but 0.1% of Mankind and slowly turn the remainder of them into contented plants. You bury curiosity beneath ritual and contain Man where he can best be watched. Once the false premise is ignored and belief is suspended to a

higher degree this is really an excellent tale. Mel, the young "curious" hero is eventually overshadowed by Frankie, a girl, who, we discover, is a psycho-kinetic prodigy of enormous untapped potential. She is super-woman incarnate, a beautiful Diana, sensuous and sensitive, sensible and complete with sensory shields and vast telepathic abilities. Like all such heroines, she is unbelievable and yet fascinating, and her presence removes the need for a more traditional deus ex machina. The computer leads four kings, but Frankie has four-score aces up her sleeve. Humanity triumphs and strides onward and upward to the galaxy.

Mr. Cowper is, as can be seen, an optimist. Perhaps Man isn't worth much now - he is, quite literally, in a rut when this book opens - but he will eventually evolve.

What else does the book entail? The almost passive alien observers bring an unusual love aspect into the book, whilst a more earthy sexual predilection is noticeable in the social system portrayed. The semasiology is basic: "high yard", "firstfall", "pluck", "firstspill" and "shugger". It all adds to the local colour and acts as a nice balance to the more poignant transcendentalism the story hints at. It is Vance one generation on, exciting and occasionally deep, a book I enjoyed not for its basic idea-content but because the writer can write himself out of the banalities of his chosen topic. With the correct material, Richard Cowper could be writing masterpieces. That is, to me, the core of this book.

IMPERIAL EARTH by Arthur C. Clarke; Gollancz; London; 1975; Pan; London; 1977; 268 pp

Reviewed by Mike Dickinson

For seventy-odd pages we meet Duncan Makenzie (Ah, Brian Clough, thou shouldst be living now) cloned son of Malcolm Makenzie, and watch him watch his friend having an affair with a beautiful Earth girl. After that we move onto a spaceship (for fifty pages), and then watch him wandering about Earth for another fifty pages. Eventually a plot emerges (on page 171) but is all tidied up within sixty pages, allowing Clarke another fifty to tie up the ends.

That's it really. The first seventy pages are just introduction: you may regard seventy pages as a rather self-indulgent length for an introduction - I should not quarrel with you. The second section is completely irrelevant to the structure of the book, offering only red herrings about Mr. Makenzie, the engineer, and a revolutionary engine. Constantly

one gets the feeling that this is where the book starts, constantly one is wrong.

A similar feeling persists on the journeyings around Earth: he meets people, a horse (terrifying), a sea urchin, of appalling significance, a cow and his old vicarious girlfriend, who rejoices in the name Calindy. Through her he meets the resurrected Titanic & allowing for one of his mnemonic coincidences and for a later, clumsy, attempt at image-making. He also finds she is a member of an organisation which again seems significant - but isn't. He has been reminded of her by the taste of real honey, and one worries for a time whether she is yet another synthetic substitute. However, the Earth section does offer Uncle Arthur a chance to set the world to rights. This world has no colour problem - even Duncan Makenzie realises with surprise on page 125 that he is black (surely as memorable a fact of life as being left-handed, which most people hang on to). On this reconditioned Earth, officials are chosen by random computing from those qualified. Technology has now taken over food supply, releasing wide acres of farmland. Population is rigidly controlled. Pollution is unknown. Earth is now a spacious, partially forested Eden, and to permit people to view it, houses are now "melted" into the ground and equipped with "viewscreens better than any conceivable window".

Duncan, coming from the arid Titan, is stunned; as Clarke remarks memorably - "He was as a new-born child, seeing the world for the first time" (page 133); which of course he was. Clever, isn't it?

Yet another dumb plotline emerges when he tries to get himself cloned to continue the Makenzie dynasty. Not that the real plot itself is any better: there is no whiff of danger or real tension. It appears and is tidied up. Duncan is left unstained, unchanged except that he now has a mission. The fact that the cost of the mission is immense and its aim somewhat less than hypothetical does not dim the glory of Duncan's purpose. You can't keep a good NASA man down.

This novel must have been planned at some stage since Clarke salts away little coincidences (Duncan's image of this doomed friend's career to the "Titanic", Titan etc, etc.) of which he is sufficiently proud to include them in an appendix. Indeed the whole book gives off an air of self-indulgence. In addition to pat solutions to current problems we are given a wealth of mostly superfluous gadgetry and a vision of self-perpetuating benevolent aristocracy that must lie close to the man's heart - watch out Sri Lanka!

In tone it reminds me of nothing so much as one of the poorer Heinlein juveniles (say PODKAYNE OF MARS) where the characterless protagonist visits alien places, goes "Ooh!", does cute things, faces up bravely to responsibility and disinfected danger, then shoots off home a better person. Technical wizardry no

longer makes any book worthwhile - some psychological veracity is desirable. This book also fails by long-established criteria of plot and content. It sucks!

INCUBUS by Ray Russell; Sphere; London: 1977; 237 pp; 75p; ISBN 0-7221-7550-7

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Ray Russell may feel that he missed out on a lot of money by writing his exorcism novel, THE CASE AGAINST SATAN, ten years too early to catch the Hollywood horror boom. He is, at any rate, determined not to be left out. His new novel is slanted directly at that megabuck market, reflecting its priorities and preoccupations with cynical commercial expertise. It is crude, nasty-minded, lurid, semi-pornographic and sick. It is sure to be a big hit.

There is something about the present generation of supersuccessful Satan movies that I find rather disturbing. It is not difficult to understand the appeal of the horror story *per se* - fear is a stimulant, an adrenalin thrill. It can be experienced pleasurable if it can be experienced vicariously and safely. The old-style horror film is clearly geared to a standardised set of expectations: the audience is expected to identify with the victim, who is frightened, threatened and ultimately saved. All very cathartic. The pitch made by the more recent films is, however, subtly different. They are designed not so much for identification with the victim as for identification with the menace. (It is, when all is said and done, the devil's child, or the vampire, or the incubus, who has all the fun.) The new horror films ~~more~~ engage a much wider spectrum of stimulation: they stimulate not merely fear and horror but also the sadistic pleasure of vicarious rape and maleficia. This is confirmed by the structure of the plots and the nature of the endings with which the present generation of supernatural thrillers is equipped. He who takes pleasure in INCUBUS no longer expects the traditional ending. He expects, instead, that the hero will be proven impotent to cope with the menace, that the innocent will be slaughtered and that the diabolical menace, even if temporarily thwarted, will prove indefatigable and unvanquishable.

Even without the rather disgusting sexual aspects (which have nothing to do with the actual mythology of the incubus) this novel would be obscene. I recommend you to read this novel in case you should find yourself able to enjoy it. If you do, start worrying.

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD BEGINS by J. T. McIntosh;
Corgi; London; 1977; 205 pp; 70p; ISBN 0-552-10432-9

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

This is a world-saving novel. Earth has been shipping out everyone who shows the least spark of enterprise for centuries, thus populating the galaxy with good, healthy, stock and reducing itself to a backwater populated by ineffectual idiots. The hero sets out put this right (I'm not sure why, and neither is he). His methods are absurd, and the author's attempts to cover up their absurdity are distinctly weak. The plot lurches along (apparently aimlessly - I suspect that this is a make-it-up-as-you-go book) from a kind of interstellar Butlins to a package tour of Sahara and the Shetlands, then via a brief encounter with decadent Scotland to a galactic stock-market swindle. Every step is unconvincing, but it would all be less painful if the hero weren't such an unpleasant character (a bully, a braggart, a rapist & the last is "excused" by his conviction that what all women really want is to be raped).

Sometimes I wonder what kind of image the average publisher has of the average reader.

WEIRD LEGACIES edited by Mike Ashley; Star Books; London; 1977; 157 pp; 60p; 0-352-39657-1

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This is fun to read, with no damn nonsense about Artistic Respectability. It spans WEIRD TALES from 1929 to Sam Moskowitz's ill-fated attempt to galvanise the corpse of the old magazine in 1973; indeed, Mike Ashley's anthology shares Moskowitz's ambition to keep the Weird torch burning, being the first of a projected series. On this present showing, Mike Ashley is doing a good job,

The two outstanding items are "The Distortion out of Space" by Francis Flagg (1934) - a very good piece of Lovecraftiana that really stays in the mind - and "Eternal Rediffusion" by Eric Frank Russell and L. J. Johnson. L. J. ("Les") Johnson, a leading Liverpoolian fan of the post-war era, may have been short on writing ability, but he was - sorry, Les, iss - very strong on ideas. "Eternal Rediffusion", which was slated for appearance in the doomed second issue of Les's OUTLANDS (December 1946), finally surfaced in Moskowitz's WEIRD TALES of 1973. While owing something to Wells and Stapledon, it is quite unique in my experience & a five-and-a-half-page-long meditation, rather than a story, with a strange, awkward, but completely fascinating structure. It is an attempt to invoke a sense of (and here I use the words of C. S. Lewis in another context) "The realissimum - the Centre - that which lies beyond the sensuous curtain: (compared to which) the world and all that is in it,

and the visible heaven, are but painted things - appearances on the outside of the wall whose inside no one has seen".

The attempt is successful.

The best of the rest are "He That Hath Wings" (1938) by Edmond Hamilton, a good flying-fantasy with an unforced symbolism; "The Black Kiss" (1937) by Robert Bloch and Henry Kuttner (in which Bloch was presumably responsible for the Lovecraftian goings-on, concerning a femme fatale from the subconscious oceanic Deeps, while Kuttner laid on a smooth-taking psychologist, and a nightmarish sense of ontological insecurity reminiscent of "Dream's End"); "The Survivor" (1954), a necromantic Lovecraft fragment completed by Derleth (it's really surprising how they could re-cycle the Cthulhu Mythos again and again while somehow keeping it fresh - if that's the right word); and Ray Bradbury's "The Ducker" (1943), which is totally unsophisticated in technique and uses a battlefield situation in which John Wayne would not be out of place, but which is recognisably Bradburian in its nostalgia for childhood.

Of the other stories, some people might enjoy Mary Elizabeth Counselman's "The Three Marked Pennies" (1934) - which is like an efficient O. Henry story turned nasty - more than I did; Robert E. Howard's "Skulls in the Stars" (1929) is pure melodrama; while "The Utmost Abomination" - a Clark Ashton Smith fragment, completed by Lin Carter - I found too predictable, and a bit too reminiscent, in its polysyllabic vocabularianism, of our Very Own Leonard Sachs.

Robert Bloch contributes a foreword, and there is an introduction, and interpolated material from Mike Ashley. Most of this is interesting and in to the point - mainly because the subject is WEIRD, rather than the personalities of its contributors. On the whole, in this anthology bears witness to the fact that, in the related fields of fantasy, horror and sf, artistic progress is all very well, but will prove in vain if we ever lose the crude zest of the pulps. It's good to look back and realise that.

THE SPECULATIVE POETRY REVIEW, Vol. 1; edited by Greg Bear; Massachusetts; 1977; \$1.50; 40 pp

Reviewed by David Wingrove

Poetry and sf are, I believe, well suited. Sf thrives on the image, and is, in essence, poetic in form. Where the two forms coincide there is often a denser, tighter use of imagery which can result in highly imaginative poetry of the first order, opulent and startling. John Fairfax's volume,

FRONTIER OF GOING (published by Panther in 1969) should have opened the floodgates, but unfortunately did not. NEW WORLDS promoted the works of poets such as D. M. Thomas, but only managed to influence a sympathetic minority. Aldiss and Harrison in their yearly BEST SF collections have encouraged SF poetry, as has FOUNDATION, OTHER TIMES and the literary periodical, BANANAS. Tom Disch has had a volume of SF poetry published and Brian Aldiss used a quasi-futuristic poetry in his acid war stories. But despite these reputable attempts to encourage the form, it has not yet achieved a proper place in the SF pantheon. Bearing this all in mind, I am thankful for any further attempts to encourage the form and breath life into it. THE SPECULATIVE POETRY REVIEW is a follow-up to the semi-professional fiction magazine ETERNITY, and is composed solely of SF poetry. Thirty-two poets are represented, among which are a few distinguished SF authors; its worth as a showcase of SF poetry does interest me, however, rather than its value as a collector's item. Strange to say, I was both amazed and disappointed. First my disappointments. Each poem is illustrated and hand-printed by the editor. The illustrations are rarely better than poor and the hand-writing, whilst mainly neat, occasionally becomes difficult to read. As far as the selection of poetry is concerned I felt that there were several inclusions that marred the whole impact of this small volume. Peter Dillington's "Hologram; Skototropic Universe" and Jessica Salmonson's "The Gentle Gods" were the prime examples of this, lacking the most basic elements of good poetry. But against that I must set those poems that were more that SF themes dressed up in strangely punctuated prose; those that sparkled and forced my attentions.

Gustav Hasford's "Mother of the Moon" with its cold evocation of the vacuum is excellent. So too is Ursula Le Guin's "Equinox 75" with its defence of participatory reality, and displaying Ursula's usual impeccable use of words. But my own favourites (forgetting momentarily thought-provoking pieces by Michael Bishop, Bruce Boston, John Brunner, Grant Carrington, Robert Frazier, Leroy Gorman, Gene Wolfe and Roger Zelazny) were "A Day Like Any Other" by James Tiptree Jr., and "Stamens" by Gene van Troyer.

Tiptree's poem evidences a surrealist disregard for explanation as we see the world through five perspectives. Tiptree (he or she) uses humour in the manner of Vonnegut - darkly...

"During the night he was a hamster. He ran 15,924 revolutions of his 45 cm exercise wheel. About 24 miles; too much for a male hamster. Tired, he debated the anomaly, finally let it "

Van Troyer's "Stamens" is a quite astounding poem about the lost innocence of a cloned humanity. This is the densest, most moving image in this collection;

genuinely beautiful:

"shadow folk who I become
in
frozen
motion
faces lifted to the sun
bright boy-girl faces, jewels strung
by a ray of burning life
through facing mirrors:
these children have my face
(both sides)
and weave my youth a-new
through old memories
I breathe into them,
weaving shining webs I must believe
will not some day
flashing in the sun
hang them. "

Which, I feel you must agree, should be encouraged.

THE DEEP by John Crowley; Berkeley; New York; July 1976; \$1.50; 186 pp; ISBN 0-425-03163-2

Reviewed by David Wingrove

"A pattern"

"Part of a pattern."

Crowned men with red tears running from their eyes held hands as children's outcrops do, but each twisted in a different attitude, of joy or pain he couldn't tell, for of course they all smiled with teeth. Behind and around them, gripping them like lovers, were black figures, obscure, demons or ghosts. Each crown had burning within it a fire, and the grinning black things tore tongues of skin and organs from this king and with them fed the fire burning in the crown of that one, tore that one's body to feed the fire in this one's crown, and so on, around, demon and king, like a tormented circle dance."

(pages 29/30)

THE DEEP is an evolving pattern, a gradual revelation of truths from fantasies. Like THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS there is a rarified atmosphere to the novel that stems from an economy of style; a knowledge of the right phrase, description and gesture at each stage of the drama. The quotation above reveals something of the nature of the world that sits upon the pillar that reaches up from The Deep. Here is a world "unchanging", a society structured as a chess game, a tarot reading, an unending, repetitious existence.

"What was their desire?"

An end to Change. What other desire is there? 'Take us away,' they prayed, 'to a new new world, like

the one our ancientest ancestors lived in, a small world where the sun rises and hastens to the place where he arose, where we can live forever and where nothing runs away."

(page 164)

This is the rationale for this amazing book. Here is a fantasy world of knights and kings, the brave and the treacherous - pages from MACBETH set in a land alien. But here also are The Visitor, the Just and the Leviathan, the monster curled around the base of the world itself. It is not fantasy, it is the grim truth; and the exposition of this truth is, in essence, the tale.

It is a drama, and Crowley plays it as such; giving us three acts and a set cast. It is an apt means of presentation, for this is indeed a spectacle for the Gods; and the enigmatic figure of The Visitor (later to be The Secretary and then, The Recorder)) is the literal manifestation of this deific observation.

THE DEEP is a beautiful book, rich in human insight and overflowing with symbolic resonances. Throughout the book there is a sense of "awareness", but of what we do not know until the very end - and even then the tale does not end. There is an ambiguity to the book that is contrasted against the solidity of the characters.

"... and as he waited now in the garden for the interview he had asked for, he felt himself giving over to an unaccustomed sweet nostalgia, a multiple sense of self and season, composed like a complex harmony out of the afternoon, the garden, the fountains - and himself, a boy, a man, in this same season but other years, with other selves in the same skin. It made him feel unreal, rich yet illusory."

(pages 39/40)

The houses of the Reds tussle with the houses of the Black for ephemeral Power whilst the Just, a ritualised anarchist element, use Guns (which only they possess) to prune the ranks of the Great. Mutatis mutandis - but here the more things change the more they are the same; and in the end only the faces change. THE DEEP tells how the pattern is broken and how Man rejects his unequal bargain with the Gods. But first John Crowley builds an edifice of a world, one that we can believe in, a world of medieval and basic, selfish motivations.

"Why one would wish to plot and strive to rise from the quiet pool of the Folk to be skimmed from the top by war, feud and assassination was a question all the poets asked and none answered. The Protectorate was a selfish martyrdom, it had never a place mepty. The laws and records of inheritance filled musty floors of the Citadel. Inheritance was the chief business of all

the courts of the Grays. Inheritance was the slow turning of this still world, and the charting of its ascendancies and declinations took up far more of the world's paper and ink than the erratic motions of its seven moons."

(pages 23/24)

There are fantasies that tell of worlds and intrigues; that chart this static existence. There are, however, few that analyse it, and thus analyse a part of us that wants to return to it. This, I feel, is the importance of THE DEEP. Crowley has created a world inhabited by genuine people - rational beings awakened by circumstance. The circumstance is the arrival of The Visitor, a being "made" and not born. His search for self parallels society's search for reasons. He breaks the rules and leaves others to wonder why. Their wondering is the act that frees them from the pattern.

"Down on the floor of the old Rotunda as the king and his retinue went through; the patient Grays were still at their cleaning work. They had accomplished much since Sennred had first noticed them, that day Red Senlin had come to the City to be King. The tortured circle dance of kings he had seen them uncover then had proved to be not a circle but part of a spiral, part of a History they thought, emanating from a beginning in the centre to an end - where?"

(page 185)

The question is posed, at the end. But it is inherent in the story from the start. THE DEEP has an organic structure that lets characterisation, plot and setting grow in due proportion throughout the novel. That is its major strength. But the power and craft of the writing marks it out as a unique contribution to the genre, something as startling as anything Le Guin has produced in this vein.

"Done. Sunset has come suddenly, the room is dark. Her little world with a grateful sigh shuts up small, smaller than a fist; it draws to a fine point and is gone.

And yet, and yet - strange: even when she is cool on the white-clothed bed, still the sunlight enters soundlessly in at the casements, the wind still lifts, the corners of many papers on tables. In the garden, trees still drop blossoms on the paths that go their ways; Learned Redhand at the casement can see them, and can feel on his face the hot, startling tears, the first he has shed since he put on Gray."

(page 88)

THE DEEP is a beautiful book, a meaningful book and a fascinating book. I believe Gollancz are to publish it over here later this year, and when they do, I recommend you to buy it. There are few comparable experiences you could purchase for the same sum.

WONDERWORLDS by William F. Nolan; Gollancz; London; 1977; 192 pp; £4.50; ISBN 0-575-02248-5

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

William Nolan's name became a saleable commodity with the long-delayed release of the film based (very loosely) on LOGAN'S RUN, which he wrote in collaboration with George Clayton Johnson. It is only natural that a publisher might want to cash in on that saleability, and the one compliment I am able to offer Gollancz in respect to this book is that at least they passed over SPACE FOR HIRE, Nolan's excruciating solo sf novel. In point of fact, WONDERWORLDS is almost as abysmal, but seems far more tolerable because it consists of short (often very short) stories, and thus has variety. Every time one realises that the story one is reading is weak, flat and trivial it expires like a soft fart and one can move on in the hope that the next one will be better.

It isn't.

CAUTION! INFLAMMABLE! by Thomas N. Scortia; Bantam; New York; 1976; 60p; 270 pp; ISBN 0-553-02580-5

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Only a small fraction of Tom Scortia's literary output has been sf and this is his first collection - contains twenty stories written over a span of as many years. The earliest stories show a lean, terse style which brings each of them neatly and economically to its conclusion. The more recent ones are more relaxed, but they are filled out with muscle, not with fat, and they remain models of good composition. Most of the stories are casually readable, though only one or two are liable to stick in the memory. The best of them combine a strong sense of irony with sentimentality in a way that is characteristic of a whole tradition in American short story writing. My favourites are the very brief romance "When You Hear The Tone", the bizarre comedy "The Bomb in the Bath-tub", and the brilliant novelette "The Weariest River", which puts the predicament of Iithonus into a near-future setting, but this is a collection which will suit all tastes to some degree.

MUTANTS edited by Robert Silverberg; Corgi; London; 1977; 65p; 204 pp; ISBN 0-552-10387-X

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

I've learned from experience not to expect too much from Robert Silverberg's reprint anthologies. This one on the theme of mutants - is nothing to write home about. The editor contributes a short, scientific introduction (rather basic) and a creaky story from 1957; in fact eight of the eleven stories here are twenty years old or more. While age is not necessarily a reliability indicator

of an sf story's quality, this anthology is certainly let down by most of those early stories.

The outstanding contribution is Brian Aldiss's "Hothouse" the first of the stories which won a Hugo and made up the novel of that title, just as enthralling and original today as when it appeared in F&SF sixteen years ago. The world is covered with vast banyan trees - one per continent - on which live an incredible array of mutated plant species (many of them mobile and dangerous), four types of giant insects and man (who doesn't at first sight appear to have changed much). Now I feel I must re-read the rest of the novel.

"The Conqueror" by Mark Clifton is new to me; it's a fairly simple but unusual story about dahlias. Terry Carr's "Ozymandias" is also good, with an intriguing background slowly unfolded during a robbers' raid on futuristic tombs. Then there's "It's a Good Life" by Jerome Bixby, which has been so frequently anthologised that I expect most people will already have read it. (But if you haven't you should do so forthwith.)

There are mediocre contributions from James Blish and R. A. Lafferty. The remaining stories are best forgotten.

For a newcomer to sf who doesn't really know what a mutation is, this would be an interesting and informative anthology. (I wonder if it was originally designed for a juvenile market?) For the devotees it has little to offer.

THE JONAH KIT by Ian Watson; Panther; St. Albans; 1977; 192 pp; 60p; ISBN 0-586-04385-3

Reviewed by Chris Evans

Ian Watson is a writer in the great science fictional tradition, boldly going where no man has gone before. THE JONAH KIT is the product of a powerful and inventive intellect, filled with metaphysical speculations, international intrigues, dollops of hard science and a sprinkling of romance. Sitting in my armchair turning its pages, I felt like an Epicurean at a lavishly prepared banquet, and when I finally closed the book I was richly replete, with only a hint of indigestion.

For once, the blurb is sufficiently accurate to provide a plot resume. "In the Mexican mountains," it says, "Nobel Prize-winner Paul Hammond has made the shattering discovery that signals received by his radio telescope show that our Universe is no more than a ghost of reality. Meanwhile, in Japan, a young Russian boy is found who appears to possess the mind of a supposedly dead Soviet astronaut.

And in a remote Russian research unit, a way of communicating with intelligent whales has been invented."

In addition to chapters set in Mexico, Japan and Russia (these locales are convincingly portrayed) we are also taken into the mind of a sperm whale which has had the consciousness of a blind Russian imprinted on its brain, and we see the world through the perceptions of a creature that does not perceive objects as such but congruences, or, in the author's words "states of being". A difficult enterprise to attempt to describe such a world, but accomplished with splendid skill. Equally convincing is the description of the method of imprinting human brain patterns on the minds of children and cetaceans, and the account of Hammond's discovery that what we consider to be the Universe is in fact composed of black holes left behind after the real matter vanished into another continuum following the explosion of the Primal Egg; the plausibility of the technical details is impressive. These two apparently disparate elements (the psychological and the cosmological) are neatly dovetailed in the closing stages of the book, with the details of Hammond's discovery being transmitted to the imprinted whale in order to monitor its impact on the whale population at large (periodically, the whales gather together in a star formation, exchanging information and functioning as a kind of biological computer). On the evidence of his first two books, it seems as if the author favours the radially converging plot format.

Originality of theme would be sufficient reason to recommend this book, but Watson has also populated his fiction with very credible characters. I especially liked (or rather disliked) Hammond, the supercilious, absolutely soul-less astronomer, and Enozawa, the somewhat sinister Japanese who hovers on the fringes of the action, bristling with an ill-concealed hatred for the Americans and longing for a return to traditional Japanese values. For the most part, the characters interact in a believable way, although I balked at one scene where Ruth, Hammond's wife, when discovered by her lover in bed with another man (yes, that's right) reacts rather affectedly, as if she knew she was being written into a book.

Whether THE JONAH KIT is an advance on THE EMBEDDING is difficult to say. Thematically and structurally both books are quite similar, but I think THE JONAH KIT has the edge overall, with a more definite sense of unfolding drama, and a clever juxtaposition of the various narrative threads. I must raise issue with one element of the plot, though: Hammond's pronouncement that the world is not "real" precipitates riots and mass demonstrations in various parts of the globe. I think the author over-estimates the impact of scientific discovery on the public at large. A milkman's strike is of greater relevance to the average person than a new theory on the nature of the universe (I am not being disparaging here; pure science is remote from

everyday life, and there is no reason to suppose that new theories on the nature of the world would have any immediate impact on society at large). My other quibble concerns what I can only describe as the profusion of background detail which accompanies the narrative. In a review of THE EMBEDDING in FOUNDATION 5, David Masson remarked ^{on} that the author's tendency to over-adorn his prose with similes and allusions; this tendency is still in evidence in THE JONAH KIT and it creates difficulties for the reader because it interferes with the task of getting to grips with the plot. Luxuriant prose does not mesh well with the discourses on the nature of matter and the mathematical encoding of sensory data. A minor point apposite to this is that the author is loathe to use the verb "say". His characters "snap", "concede", "insist", "protest" and even "adjudicate" (all these from page 86); it may seem as if I'm nitpicking here, but small things like this can have the cumulative effect of giving the prose a slightly laborious quality which it would not otherwise possess. These faults, however, are the product of an excessive attention to detail rather than a lack of care. An author must, I believe, allow the reader to do a little of his own visualisations, interpretations of voice tones, and so on, otherwise there's no sense of participation.

These criticisms aside, THE JONAH KIT is a fine book, zestful, eloquent and stimulating - much like the author himself, in fact. Required reading, but then you've all got a copy haven't you? Any writer who can rebuild the universe in only his second book must be worthy of an audience. Trouble is, what do you do for an encore?

BUZZBUGS by Bruce Carter; Dent; London; 1977; 119 pp; £2.95; ISBN 0-460-06787-7

A children's book; I therefore asked the opinion of an eleven year old who's been borrowing my juvenile Heinleins for the past few months:

"The story of BUZZBUGS takes place in a village, in the Cumbrian Valley and is about some giant blood-sucking insects.

The first person to see one was Lucy, the daughter of a botanist. At first no one in the village believes Lucy and her friend John when they say they have seen an insect dive down and kill a horse. Later, as more and more people see them, they are believed. As the insects spread more and more animals and even humans are killed. People all over England try to think of a way to kill them, then one day Lucy mentions an idea to her father who, with some of his friends, thinks he can find a way to kill the insects.

I found the book very enjoyable to read. I thought there is only a small bit of science involved as to how the giant insects grow and as to how they

are killed. The story is a good idea and is explained clearly and one day might even become reality. It is set at the age of 10 and over.

--- Claire Knook

There's little I can add; the stock boy and girl save the world situation. There is a slight sub-plot dealing with a villainess living in the village and the method by which the insects obtain their foothold. Ideal for a present for your young (10 or 11) nephew or niece...though I'd search out an old Heinlein juvenile in paperback.

--- Keith Freeman

DOUG BARBOUR...DOUG BARBOUR...DOUG BARBOUR...DOUG BARBOUR

There are as many reasons why an sf novel can go wrong as why it should go right. The present batch of books provides us with examples of both extremes, plus the middle ground of harmless light entertainment, the kind you can turn your mind off for.

Although it's been argued that since sf is a "literature of ideas" style is relatively unimportant, I must reply that when "style" is seen to include characterisation, the ability to structure and pace a narrative, as well as sensitivity to the proper language to best express speculative ideas, style is of central importance. For example, we are told on the cover of William John Watkins and Gene Snyder's *THE LITANY OF SHREEV* (Doubleday; Canada; 180 pp; \$6.95) that we are about to read a "mystic revelation that transcends time and space". Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? and indeed a version of Taoist thought informs this narrative of an aristocratic Healer with Psi-powers caught up in revolution and in love with two powerful women. But the novel cannot live up to its billing because the authors are unable to transcend the clichés of the genre (the whole context of a crumbling interstellar Empire is too lightly sketched in to be anything more than the most superficial background, depending for its reality on a hundred other similar stories). Nor can they transcend the more complex clichés of Eastern mystic thought; rather, whenever they attempt to deal with the Taoist spiritual background of their novel, they descend to the most purple of prose. This is a philosophically pretentious book that utterly fails to live up to its pretensions.

Richard C. Meredith's *NO BROTHER, NO FRIEND* (Doubleday Canada Ltd; 210 pp; \$7.95) is a better novel, if only because it's not as pretentious. It is a follow-up to an earlier book, *IN THE NARROW PASSAGE* (the epigraph for both books is the Akadian proverb, "At the narrow passage, there is not brother, no friend", and one is forced to wonder what the title of the third book will be; for there will be a third book; the ending of this one demands a sequel).

Meredith once wrote a powerful novel about alien contact, *WE ALL DIED AT BREAKAWAY STATION*, but his recent work indicates that he has opted for easy entertainment, nothing more. So Eric Mathers, a heroic soldier-of-fortune from an alternate Earth, where Alexander the Great established an empire lasting centuries, tells us how the continuing adventures of his travels across the time-lines to discover the truth behind the manipulations of humanity in a myriad alternate universes by the alien Kriths and the even more alien Timeliners.

By the end of the second novel, Eric has a few more answers, many more questions, and is safely ensconced on an out of the way Earth with his true love, Sally. Yet we know he must venture out into the time-lines once more to try to discover the elusive truth behind the war to control all the parallel universes. There are a few truly interesting ideas-in-embryo lurking behind these stories, but Meredith has chosen to write James Bondage style adventures rather than any really profound speculation. This novel is light entertainment, no more.

So, in its superior fashion is Larry Niven's *A WORLD OUT OF TIME* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 243 pp; \$9.25). Actually, this is unfair to Niven, for he is one of the most rigorous "hard" science fiction writers around, and in *A WORLD OUT OF TIME* he seeks to invoke our wonder at the physical universe by exploring its vastness - both spatial and temporal.

Jaybee Corbell begins his odyssey as a frozen "corpsicle" in 1990. His brain patterns and personality are transferred into the "mind-wiped" body of a criminal in 2190 and he is trained to be a rammer pilot, to take an interstellar ship on an exploratory mission to ten stars designated by the State. Corbell, however, a loner and rebel, heads instead for the galactic core. His computer, loyal to the State, tries to argue him out of it, in vain.

Corbell never reaches the galactic core, however; it's too far away. Instead, he and his ship try to return to Earth by entering a black hole. They do return - three million years from now: to an Earth orbiting Saturn in a terribly changed Solar System. Well. Major changes are to be expected in three million years, and Niven comes up with some dillies for Corbell to contact upon his return. Though less intelligent than the humanity he finds, Corbell is lucky and plucky, and he survives everything, even gaining immortality in the bargain.

Corbell's adventures on Earth are exciting fun, but the most exciting ideas - concerning the many changes Earth and humanity have gone through - can only be presented in synopsis, as ancient history. The awesomeness of it all is partially obscured by the weakness of the presentation. In many ways the most exciting writing of the novel occurs in the first half,

as Niven describes what happens as the rammer approaches light speed and the galactic core, all in a manner that is true to the scientific facts as we know them. Here Niven is writing real science fiction, and on its own terms it's fine visionary writing, indeed.

In SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE (Bobbs-Merrill Co, Inc/ Thomas Allen and Son Ltd; 245 pp; \$10.75), Robert Silverberg also writes sf in which the science is rigorously extrapolated, but more than this, the social milieu, the world in which it occurs, is rigorously thought out as well. This may be Silverberg's last sf novel; it is also one of his best: a glorious final bow to the genre he has served so well.

The year is 2012, on an Earth whose population has been cut by three-fifths by the various natural and unnatural disasters of the final quarter of the twentieth century, most especially by the Virus War, which has planted "organ-rot" in the genes of all humanity. There are limited supplies of an antidote to the virus, and the antidote, like the whole world, is controlled by the Permanent Revolutionary Committee; and the PRC is controlled by Chairman Genghis II Mao IV Khan. Genghis Mao, already a very old man, rules from Central Mongolia a world in which the airplanes are at least thirty years old by Surveillance Vector One, with its myriad spy-eyes in satellites and buildings everywhere, monitors the world. Medicine is another science which has continued to make great advances, especially in the area of organ transplants. Genghis Mao has lived so long partly because he has had so many transplants, and he intends to live and rule for a long time to come. The man responsible for his health is Shadrach Murdecai, the protagonist of this subtle, thought-provoking tale of high intrigue.

Silverberg is an accomplished stylist and a master of the craft of science fiction. SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE the deliberate coolness of the style, the rationality it proposes, is continually undercut by the neurotic, even psychotic, desperation of most characters' behaviour. The novel takes us through a number of pure sf changes: the various forms of psychic entertainment in 2012, the glorious lists of scientific terms (especially those of medicine) which achieve a kind of rarefied poetry, the careful creation of a believable future world only fifty years away, with a recent history that seems only too horrifyingly plausible. Yet behind all this, focussing everything, is the charged narrative of a man seeking to comprehend his world and himself.

The story turns on Shadrach's discovery that his body has been chosen to be the receptor of the Khan's mind and persona in a new experimental attempt to provide the Khan with something like immortality. Shadrach chooses not to try to hide but to seek a way to subvert the plan. There's plenty of potential narrative tension here, yet Silverberg refuses to exploit it for he is after something deeper, something more important. As Shadrach, the Khan, Shadrach's two lovers, and the other important

figures interact, Silverberg creates a brilliantly lit black social comedy of errors, errors of human emotional commitment mainly, and he shows how the personal and the political intertwine at every level of our lives. SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE is masterful entertainment, yes, but it's also a brilliantly edgy study of human behaviour under stress.

--- Douglas Barbour/University of Alberta

THE VELDT - A play by Ray Bradbury

Reviewed by MERF ADAMSON

Hessel Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society.
Director Geoff Annis. At the Library Theatre, Albion Street, Hull; 28th April to 1st May, 1978

It seems that THE VELDT has never been performed in this country before; Hessel Amateurs experienced some difficulty, I believe, in obtaining a licence to perform the play. Having never seen it, I wonder why the play has never been presented.

Sf hasn't done too well in the theatre. Literary sf (I mean written/printed sf) and cinematic sf haven't done too badly; more sf is being published now than ever before, and there is now quite a list of good sf films, with more in the pipeline. But sf on stage is non-existent. There have been a few attempts, but they have been notable failures - for example, there was that Swedish sf opera, ANIARA, in the early sixties, which has sunk without trace, and then VIA GALACTICA was a flop on Broadway. Both these were musicals; straight plays don't even get a look in. Why this should be, I don't know. But perhaps there's a clue in that film and TV sf. The majority of sf on TV and in the cinema is effects sf: science fiction is regarded as a genre which relies on technological tricks for its stories and effect; people expect expensive, futuristic sets with lots of dials and flashing lights, or weird monsters from "outer space". The image which people outside sf have of the genre is thus limited, and they cannot believe that say THE SURVIVORS (on BBC TV) or CLEARLY (the film) are sf, simply because they don't have a lot of fancy tricks or flashing lights. So, on stage, people again expect lots of expensive effects, otherwise the production doesn't live up to their expectations and they become bored with it, and pretty soon it's a flop. Generally, only musicals can indulge themselves in expensive sets and trick effects, and that's why the two examples quoted were musicals. Then, when the directors and producers come along, they hire song-writers who know sod-all about sf, and as soon as outsiders are brought in credibility is lost. There is an art in writing sf, and there is more in making it visually presentable. The people who produce sf on stage/TV/cinema generally don't have this. There is no way you can put on a

successful sf musical. A straight play doesn't have the huge budget that a musical has; effects-sf is out. And because there aren't any effects, people don't like it and it's a flop. So no-one puts on "straight"sf plays.

Which is a pity, when there are excellent plays like this one around.

I don't know why HAO&DS chose THE VELDT; but it is certainly a better choice than the Pinter play which was put on in front of it (THE COLLECTION: a poor idea poorly written, poorly acted and produced). Apparently it was originally written for TV or the cinema; and certainly it could be more effectively produced there. But Hesse Amateurs have done credibly well.

The time is 1999, and George has just had a new play-room installed. Computer-controlled, it can generate 3D images of other times and places, and effectively takes over the tasks that a kid's imagination normally does, when he imagines he is hunting big game in Africa, say... Unknown to George and his wife Lydia, Peter and Wendy are psis, and can influence the room. Lydia soon becomes suspicious of them when she notices that they have set the room to the African veldt, and that they never change it. There is alienation of parents and children, and eventually George calls in the family psychiatrist to see the kids and inspect the room. He advises that George should switch off the room; George goes one better, and smashes the control console. Peter and Wendy resent, and rebel; they recreate the veldt, and lock George and Lydia out in the room.

The play deals with the destruction of the family unit by modern living, and the way that convenience gadgetry comes between parents and children. Bradbury adds another factor by making the kids talented, and builds to quite a horrifying climax. Admittedly, the climax is predictable, and inevitable, but interest is maintained to the end. This is good sf, and although the horror does reflect Bradbury's non-sf writing, it succeeds.

There were faults in production and direction of the play, naturally; and an amateur group can't hope to build impressive sets. So, realising their limitations, HAO&DS made the best of what they had. The set was simple to the point of extinction: a raised area to the left, with a pair of white plastic-covered boxes to suggest futuristic seating, separated from the play-room (the rest of the stage) by an empty white doorframe; and a small, free-standing control console, painted white with a few lummy knobs and a couple of flashing lights on it. The family wore all-white coveralls, and the serviceman who installed the room wore blue. The acting and direction were good; everyone knew their lines, and were confident, and the play ran smoothly. Characterisation was good, too, though the children tended to be a bit shallow, and the reason for their surliness wasn't made very apparent.

I would question the wisdom of giving the actors American accents; the only justification for it in the play is a line "That room cost me five thousand dollars",

which could very easily have been changed to read "pounds" (or the units could have been dropped completely) to enable the actors to use their more natural voices. No attempt was made to show the images which the room created; sound effects only were used to suggest places, along with the descriptions of the actors ("That sun's hot; look at those vultures!" "Isn't that a lion by the waterhole?"). It would be impossible to create the veldt on stage, and no attempt was made to do so. The build-up to the climax was only spoiled by Lydia's tenseness, which began and reached a high plateau too early in the play - a slower advance to hysteria would have been better.

Apart from these few quibbles, a good production of a good play; another attempt, by someone with a bigger budget, would be welcome some time, too.

(13/5/76)

SUSPENDED ANIMATION by Chris Evans

They move about me in the vast, sterile silence
Whispering platitudes like novice priests
White-coated, learned, impassively concerned
They try to comfort, but I crave release.
Here I lie, encased in cryogenics
Machine tuned, electronically sustained
Absolutely frozen to uncertain degree
Disease halted, but still the unabated pain.
I cry out in the darkness, see them come
I hate their smiles, their hollow laughter
Let me die, I sigh; oh no, they reply
Your body's a stake in the hereafter

Enclosed:

AND..

In paligenetic caverns of the sky
I turn
In the aching beauty of star centre
I spin
Holding still lest I fall from grace
Holding still lest I awake
And find you gone
And find you
And find
And

--- Dave Wingrove

A POEM

As promised..

Healing strands of yesterday,
Topaz mood shades, reluctant luminaries.
Tintinnabulation of the soul's flower,
Reticent inner somnambulist,
I breathe your silhouetted scent.

As promised I come soul-baked in genuflection,
Will-stripped, in compromise
And confusion..

These are my promised predications,
The orchid oratory of despair.
Again the somniferous narcotic life
Drifts in imprudent clouds
Of impotent dust,
The sonorous tolling,
The ganglion of option.

As promised I come cloaked in riddles,
Innocuous as the silent sound,
The high spectrum colours of delight,
The far odours of the quasars,
The inquisitorial shrine of hope.

These are my promised predications,
The maculate macerations of misalliance.
Look for me in autumn.
As promised,
I will come.

--- Dave Wingrove

The following communication has been received from Victor Gollancz Limited; it is reproduced without comment:

"BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION AWARD: Gollancz are delighted to announce that BRONTOMEK! by Michael Coney has won this year's British Science Fiction Association Award for the best SF novel published in Britain in 1976."

GOLLANZ AND PAN/PICADOR £3,000 FANTASY COMPETITION

There is a growing demand for novels and stories that escape the intractable muddle of daily life and take off into the dark or utopian yonder of fantasy. Defying exact definition, the genre is best represented by some of the work of writers like Swift, Poe and Lovecraft, and in our time, Peake, Ballard, Marquez, Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and Le Guin.

To stimulate writers, both new and established, to venture beyond the here, the now, and the known, Victor Gollancz Ltd and Pan Books Ltd are offering

£3,000 for the best novel or volume of stories submitted. The prize money will take the form of an outright payment of £1,000 to the winner and, in addition, two sums of £1,000 each to be paid as advances against royalties on contracts for publication of the winning entry by Victor Gollancz Ltd (in hardcover) and Pan Books Ltd (in softcover). The conditions are as follows:

1. The competition will be run in collaboration with The GUARDIAN, and is open to any writer provided that he or she is free of any contractual commitment that would preclude publication by either Victor Gollancz Ltd or by Pan Books Ltd. The stories must not have been previously published.

2. Pseudonyms are acceptable, but real names must be given when submitting entries, and will be treated in confidence.

3. Entries must be addressed to:

Fantasy Competition,
Victor Gollancz Ltd, 14 Henrietta St, London WC2E 8QJ

and should arrive not later than 31st March, 1978. Scripts should be typed in doublespacing and postage enclosed for their return. They must not be less than 50,000 words or more than 100,000 words in length.

4. The competition will be judged by W. L. Webb (Literary Editor of the GUARDIAN), Liz Calder (Editorial Director of Victor Gollancz Ltd), Sonny Mehta (Editorial Director of Pan Books Ltd) and Caroline Lasalle (Editor: Picador). The judges' decision shall be final and no correspondence will be entered into with regard to it.

5. The name of the prize-winner will be announced in the GUARDIAN on 28th September, 1978.

LETTERS...LETTERS...LETTERS...LETTERS...LETTERS.....

((Many of these letters are not directly on NEXUS/ VECTOR REVIEWS SUPPLEMENT nos 1 & 2, but relate to VECTOR itself; unfortunately, pressure on space pushed them out of VECTOR 81 into NEXUS 3 - Ed))

Simon R. Green: 37 St. Laurence Road, Bradford-on-Avon

...reading your piece in the non-existent Lead-In. For the record: VECTOR has rapidly risen to being one of my favourite zines, and an integral part of my enjoyment were your informal chatty openings. To hell with the knockers, (put them down and listen to what I'm saying), bring back your into. Okay?

...Let's jump in at the deep end: The Infinity Box. The reviews seem to me to be of a singularly high quality, and taken with NEXUS and PAPERBACK PARLOUR, provide a very good coverage of what books are available and forthcoming. BUT: in this issue (80) I had already read 11 out of the 18 books reviewed. I know a bi-monthly schedule must put some of the

reviews back a bit, but surely these reviews were a little dated even when you received them? (Just to cheer you up, I'd already read over half the books reviewed in PP)

"A Song In The Depths Of The Galaxies": I am very impressed. David Wingrove has already shown his wide knowledge and interest in sf and its interface with music in his own KIPPLE piece on Peter Hammill, but this is even better, I suppose everybody will write in with their "why didn't he mention...", so I'll just content myself with mentioning a few groups I think should have perhaps been granted at least a mention: Camel, Caravan, Eno, Fusion Orchestra (Skeleton In Armour), Steve Hackett (Voyage of the Acolyte), If, Isotope, Jethro Tull, PFM, Renaissance, Wolf, Edgar Winter Group, Zebra Slack Alice, Pavlov's Dog, Curved Air ... I could go on, and probably will unless forcibly stopped.

However, those groups David dealt with have been examined with sympathy and deep understanding, even when the results have been noble failures rather than obvious successes.

Fruup, Arthur Brown, Kingdom Come, Third Ear Band, dammit, I'm off again.

Although I might disagree with some insights David took from instrumental tracks, I have to say (again) that David has done a marvellous job with this article. Thematically, I'm tempted to call it the definitive work. But given the ever-expanding state of the music field, and its interest in sf, I think we can expect more articles in due course. I look forward to them.

The Michael G. Coney interview I'd already read in KIPPLE. I enjoyed it, and am glad to see it reaching a larger audience. Mr. Coney is a writer to watch: he keeps getting better!

Judy Watson's "The Original Sex Machine" was brilliant! The items in the last VECTOR didn't do much for me, but this ... I'm still chuckling. (What do you mean it's not funny; it's a terrific satirical attack on male chauvinism and their manipulation of the female role/image/function in society? Shaddup, I laughed.)

The letters: with regard to the Elwood phenomenon, I think we can finally say that Elwood and his ideas of what make good sf are on the way out. ODYSSEY has died with the third issue, and the Laser series of books has been cancelled. The reading public has taken a good look at what Elwood has to offer and rejected it because they were for the most part, juvenile fiction, in that adult themes and subjects were banned from work he edited by his own prejudices. (Let's face it, when you can't talk about religion, sex and use bad language, the result is hardly adult. And now, I don't equate adulthood with the using of those three subjects for debate. Simply, their lack shows a world-view that is full of holes.)

Back to the reviews for a moment, as a thought has struck me: I know we are the British SF Association,

but why are there rarely reviews of American books, by which I mean the books which appear in the American edition, as they often appear up to two years before a British edition.

((We can only review books of which we are sent review copies. At present none of the American publishers send us them. But we are working on them - we intend to send the BSFA Hit-men round New York to make them "Offers they can't refuse" regarding free copies - Ed))

And shouldn't there be standing reviews of the prozines as and when they appear? As of this moment, including the few norder cases, there are 15 prozines for sf and fantasy: F&SF, ANALOG, AMAZING, FANTASTIC, GALAXY (there was a March issue), NEW WORLDS (not necessarily dead), VORTEX, GALILEO, ISBAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, COSMOS, CHACAL, PHANTASY DIGEST, WHISPERS, and the forthcoming (May) FANTASY TALES. And UNEARTH (not yet available in England). To anybody who might argue that some of these are hot prozines, my definition of a prozine is one that regularly pays the majority of its contributors. Okay?

Considering the vast amount of material appearing in these magazines surely we ought to keep up with what's happening?

((It is true that there may be a place for reviews of prozines, but that place is in MATRIX. Some of the prozine reviews from M12 have been pushed out into this issue of NEXUS, but I don't intend to use up valuable and costly space in VECTOR for prozine reviews - I feel that the place for reviews of regular magazine publications is in M. And I'm afraid that I'd dispute that some of the magazines which you mention are prozines, in any case - Ed))

Jumping back to The Infinity Box for a moment; David Wingrove's review of EVIL EARTH has some unhappy remarks about Henry Kuttner's "The Time Trap". The reason this story was so bad was simple: that story was submitted to a new magazine, MARVEL TALES, whose editor wanted to "spice up" science fiction, and demanded that Kuttner thoroughly rewrite it to his (low) standards. As the first attempt to get some kind of sex into 30s sf, it is of interest, if only as a historical curiosity. And anyway, it wasn't that bad. Still, what can you expect from someone who actually enjoyed the Hock series and some aspects of SPACE 1999? I'm obviously beyond hope!

...fine job you're doing with the new format VECTOR...particularly enjoyed the inner back cover by Zoe: can I meet the model?

GEORGE HAY: 38B, Compton Road, London N21

I'd like to comment on two reviews by Brian Stableford in the February VECTOR REVIEWS SUPPLEMENT, the first being that of THE EDWARD DE BONO SCIENCE FICTION COLLECTION, edited by myself. The second is that of Wells THE WORLD SET FREE. My interest in this latter is that it is one of four by Wells that I have got into paperback in the last year or two, wearing my hat as Chairman of the H. G. Wells Society. The two Sphere Books items had intros by myself, the two Corgi ones were supplied with ditto ditto, which somehow got lost in-house.

As to the de Bono collection, I would make two points. The first is that the stories were chosen by Dr. De Bono from a very large number of stories that I listed as "possibles" in terms of lateral thinking. Had the choice been entirely mine, I would have avoided all the tales already well-anthologised, except possibly "Noise Level", concentrating on such previously-unavailable ones as "The Test" and "The Matehnauts". In spite of all the barrel-scrapping, there still remain some excellent stories in the magazines which deserve wide reprinting, and I think an anthologist should do his best to secure these. As I said in my preface the work needed to trace and obtain some of the material we did carry was considerable, extending over years, in fact, to say nothing of the vicissitudes of selling the book to publishers in the first place. I would hate to have it thought that ~~it~~ it was "slung together". The second point relates to Brian's comment that the idea behind the book has not been "followed through". While this may well be true, I would point out that the follow-through in question has to be done by the reader, not the editor, nor the person writing the introduction! Proof of such follow-through would come with the use by the reader of the kind of lateral thought the stories advocate. In fact, how many readers have used, for example, the kind of approach advocated in "Noise Level"?

On THE WORLD SET FREE, I would disagree very much with most of Brian's strictures. There was a very strong autocratic element in Wells Utopian thinking, and it is not pleasing to see this exemplified in current socialist beliefs and political actions. However, my experience has been that many people - especially younger ones - have not the remotest idea of just where and how such beliefs originated, and I hope that the reading of this novel may spark some connection in their minds. It is, as Brian points out, a period piece, but it is a period piece that deserves to be read, as is, I may add, the Sphere edition of MEN LIKE GODS, another Utopian story which offers remarkable insights, not just into Wells' views, but into post World War One European politics and social thinking. After all, if we're ~~xxx~~ into alternative worlds, ought we not to consider all the alternatives - not just the ones that came out last week?

COLIN BATEMAN: 3 Ballymacormick Ave, Bangor, Co. Down

About my letter in the last VECTOR (79) - I keep my views that most people already know what they want; I wasn't trying to say that there is no need of reviews, but that

they do not have to be so long. The name, author, plot and a few comments on a book are all that are generally needed, unless the reviewer believes a book is something special.

((What you are talking about, Colin, is reports, not reviews. In order to criticise a work in any depth, a reviewer needs to take some time and some space; and the function of VECTOR in the area of reviews is to go into depth. - Ed))

I'm not over the moon about VECTOR; I think probably because I just read books for enjoyment, and not for hidden meanings, as many of your reviewers seem to do. MATRIX is for readers and VECTOR for thinkers - but don't take that too literally, please!

PHIL STEPHENSEN-PAYNE: Lindon, 1 Lewell Avenue, Old Marston, Oxford OX3 0RL

...VECTOR 80 - again a very impressive start, with a really beautiful front cover. It's a pity Dave Higgins and Carol Gregory can't/won't keep us supplied with more of their art.

...Dave's article was most enjoyable, but I fear I cannot really throw in my comments on its accuracy, completeness or relevancy, as rock music was a field I stopped following some years back through lack of cash, and so most of it was outside my interest/experience. Still, there seem to be a large number of rock/sf fans so no doubt you'll be hearing from them. It certainly was an impressive piece to read.

The Mike Coney piece I enjoyed and commented on in KIPPLE, but presumably most people will not have read it, so reprinting is fine.

Andrew Tidmarsh's letter raises many points that I feel I should reply to at great length, though I have not the time here and now (how common an excuse that must be!). Perhaps I'll write a second letter ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ just on this one. Briefly, though - certainly it is very easy for us within the context of fandom to lose sight of the limited nature of most sf. We come across a book like DHALGREN (which I enjoyed) and feel immediately impressed because this is such a "new" venture, an "innovative" style - while in mainstream terms it is really quite old. Silverberg gets a reputation for sex-scenes that are trivial compared to some novels around. Unfortunately, too many fans just do not see outside sf, and so our objective standards become subjective substitutes, and we praise and magnify the crud.

I think his "two" styles of writing are a little restrictive. I would say there was a style of "copying the approach in general use" and one of "generating a new style following other (mainstream) leaders". Both, however, have their values. Neither tradition nor innovation is good per se. As for Malzberg, any "brief" comments I make would certainly be "negative and dismissive" so I'll pass for now.

Laser Books lie to their readers no more than any established set of beliefs. Elwood is a Christian - some of the standards he applied through Laser are Christian in origin. You can (easily) disagree with them but you

cannot just say they're "wrong" because you disagree.

I am impressed by Colin Bateman's persistence. I thought half the point of having NEXUS separate was so that those who didn't want to read it needn't. Certainly I didn't expect PP to be read by any save those interested in the idea. Yet Colin has faithfully waded through it all, thus ensuring his discontent.

Okay - so you want criticism on a knock-for-knock basis? Can we call it quits now that ~~you've~~ you've dismissed PP reviews as I did VECTOR ones a while back? I'm not too worried by what term you call the pieces in PP - I think review is more accurate than report because they do, in general, comment on the success/quality/value of the book as well as describing them, but they are what they are and names are irrelevant. However, suggesting that they are written "on a mere skimming... or publicity hand-out" is merely insulting mud-slinging. If you really think that, I would, seriously, be interested in knowing which books you reckon it true of, for obviously my/our style slipped there. Every book reviewed is read thoroughly and carefully, often more than once - there's no point in reviewing it else.

On a thing Colin, and others, seem to have forgotten/not noticed is that PP is my zine and not the BSFA's. The BSFA funds no part of it as I, and you know, pay for materials from Keith and postage from the BSFA. The reason it goes out with the BSFA is partly a gesture on my behalf and partly because it only costs a little more to do so than to send it to the people I would otherwise send it to.

((Let's not forget all those nice paperback publishers who send you the books free, thus relieving you of the tedious necessity of emptying your pockets to buy the books which, presumably, you want to read. - Ed))

Tony Richards has written to me since his letter to VECTOR, so I'll reply to him direct in more length on the points he raises. Briefly, though, I didn't "improve" the reviews because you were in a hurry for them and "improvement" - in the sense I meant - would have required rewrites, for which I had no time.

Yes, I do seem to be outnumbered vis-a-vis Judy Watson's art. Ah well, I bow to the majority (while reserving the right to a sneaking feeling that the people who might have agreed are those who don't write locs to VECTOR - come on you lazy bunch, get out your typewriters!)

((Come on, Phil - you're surely not trying to pull that old "Silent Majority is on my side" one are you? I could equally well argue that the Silent Majority do like Judy Watson's art. And I'd have more cause to do so because the best way that you can tell if the readers like VECTOR is whether they bother to renew their subs - and they are doing so at a higher rate than ever before in the BSFA's history. - Ed))

As for my calling some of the artwork "crap", I confess that the comment was a little overemphatic. Compared with some kindergarten scribbblings I've seen they were really quite accomplished. XXXXX

((Hoho. Great joke, Phil. Very droll. Just keep out of the way of Judy's hit-girl, that's all I can say. - Ed))

Still, I think that we will just have to differ on the question of art, as long as the front cover stays of such a high quality - that's the important thing.

((Actually, it may even improve - I'm working on Judy to draw me a front cover....-Ed))

Whatever happened to John Clute. I found his Shaw review a positive "drone", and even the second review I found a trifle unsatisfying. Don't say the trusty reliables are beginning to falter. Mark Adlard seems capable of very good things in reviewing, my only complaint with his two being that the first was a little overlong for its content. Otherwise good. Chris Evans still has far too much of a tendency to ramble off into personal irrelevancies (like a brief expose of his expectations of sf). If he'd rewritten the AMAZING SF he might have got a reasonable review and a good article, rather than an overlaboured review. ((Actually, Phil, he did rewrite it. - Ed)) Chris Morgan's pieces varied wildly in quality as usual. The Tiptree was good, the Tucker fair and the CONTINUUM rather unconvincing (he seemed to like the books while saying they were terrible). Lastly Dave's EVIL EARTHS and Brian Giffin's two all suffered, I felt, from going on far too long about books that were not of sufficient value to warrant it. (Oops, just remembered the other two from Brian hidden later, which suffer from the same fault, though the Timlett was an improvement).

The film reviews were much better. Andrew's was slightly overdone in places on KING KONG and needed a little polishing on FORBIDDEN PLANET, but otherwise all three were of a very high standard. I hope they keep it up.

As one who objected to your old lead-ins, Chris, I must say they were preferable to your new style. Complaint and counter-insult do not add much of value to VECTOR. I think Messrs. Clute, Watson and Panshin are probably right in saying that VECTOR is good without need for an editorial, but if so it will certainly lack "editorial presence". Anyway, that's your decision and so I'll leave it to you to decide.

In all, a slightly disappointing issue. Better than 78 and some previous, but a slight drop since 79. My own feelings for a better issue would be to have Dave's piece slightly shorter, the reviews column with the same books but less space, a slightly longer interview (say 3 sides) and a short article by some well-known character (but not more Brian Stableford, please). But that's a personal opinion as much as the actual layout is yours, not an absolute judgment on what was wrong with VECTOR.

2nd letter, 19/3/77 - on VECTOR REVIEWS SUPPLEMENT 1

...I enjoyed it very much. The change of typefaces and split of one review was a little annoying (especially when it said "cont on p 6" and really meant 7) and the reproduction in places was bit rough. ((Yeah, sorry about that folks - you weren't

the only one to comment, Phil - I'm afraid the lovely Colette and I didn't integrate too well on that issue: she did the micro-edited pages, I did the rest; and I got a few things wrong in there. Better reproduction on N2 & 3, I hope. - Ed))

Despite that, a good idea well executed.

As for the reviews, Brian Stableford, as usual, is very patchy. His review of the Norton was abysmal, because it made no attempt to say anything about the book, except to give his own opinion. The review of SKYFALL was better, though not particularly good, and his review of SCIENCE FICTION DISCOVERIES was very good. Here he managed, unlike the other two, to give both an idea of the contents of the book and an evaluation of it. His review of WHO'S WHO... was also quite good, ~~throughxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ up to the end of the first column, at which the review came to a natural grammatical break. The continuation jarred, and was not really necessary. His review of the EDWARD DE BONO was also quite good, though a little weak at the end. With TETRASOMY TWO he again sinks in quality to a rather glib, and rather meaningless piece, from which I could not glean any information about the book, let alone evidence to back up his assertion that Rossiter is worth watching. THE WORDS SET FREE review again suffers from artistic drift as he introduces the, basically irrelevant, piece about Giffith but was otherwise OK. The Leinster one was quite readable, despite the digressions at the end. In all, some good, some bad. By his prolificity Brian is his own worst enemy as if the better reviews alone had been published he would have ranked as one of the best reviewers in the magazine. As it is, one remembers the bad stuff all too well.

A better reviewer is Brian Griffin. His review of THE EARLY LONG was very good, summarising neatly the good and bad points of the book as collection and the book as idea. Similarly he succeeded very well in coming to terms with, and evaluating, the eccentricities of MORWYN and WILL O THE WISP. Ironically, his poorest review is of the best-known book, THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, but even that is not bad, merely prosaic.

Chris Morgan is sadly somewhat below par. I found his review of the Pohl collections a little insubstantial, especially after the better Stableford review of one of them. He spends too long criticising DRAGONSONG for not being the third of the series - which it never pretends to be - rather than as the juvenile it is more clearly designed as. The NEW WRITINGS review is much better once it gets started, though I felt the Carnell/Bulmer discussion a little dated to be of interest. Fortunately Chris shows he still can write a good review with the Farmer one, which I enjoyed immensely and would have wished merely for a curtailment of the quotation which seemed somewhat irrelevant.

Of the other four reviews, James Corley's was fairly good, but unexceptional. Dave Wingrove's was basically enjoyable but, I felt, spent a little too long on the poor stories. Doug Barbour was quite interesting, though I wished he had ignored the first two books and said rather more about ORSINIAN TALES. Lastly Cy Chauvin's review was, I felt, basically sound but rather over-wordy for a book as old and well-known as EARTH ABIDES. Well, not quite finally - I thought the poem was very poor and would have been far better omitted.

In all, though, I enjoyed VRS and wish you luck with it. I would be interested to hear if/what any other members respond.

*****ENDLETTERS*****

MAGAZINE REVIEWS FROM MATRIX...

AN&LOG May 1975 - \$1.25

A Sternbach cover depicts a sail-powered craft orbiting Mars as a lead in to a piece on how and why we ought to go there; then come five shorts, one of which, "Vector Analysis", deals with a plague on a research satellite. It is set out in full-page width type rather than ANALOG's normal two column spread: could this be a market try-out for another "mutation"? Then you get "Law of the Instrument" about living space and a food-starved society; "The Demythologised Lycanthrope" deals with a genuine werewolf under lab conditions; "A Time to Live" on ftl travel and how you can shape your life anew. Best of the shorts is "Selling the Promised Land", a lovely little satire on how advertising can put across religion. For your money you also get Part II of the serial "After the Festival" (which I have yet to read, as I like all the parts first) and a page spread of an eight-line poem. Plus, of course, the usual fillers and letters. Nothing to build a fandom on, I'm afraid, so it's a good job Gernsback gave us that years ago.

--- Terry Jeeves

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE no. 2 - \$1 or 55p UK

Once again this issue sports Uncle Isaac on the cover .. a gimmick I can well do without. Once inside, and you have a contents list as long as the menu at a Grand Banquet - which renders down to some 12 stories and a slurry of fillers. Best out of the story bag is "The Steel Work", a whimsical little "Mickey Spillane" type robot. For the masochistic, there is another episode in the land of time stories when Gordon Dickson boils the trawler with his pet leopard from IASFM 1. The other tales are run-of-the-mill and how you like them depends on what your taste in sf happens to run to. Lovers of the unresolved middle-an-end will find the odd items to please them, but I fancy the magazine is still hunting for an identity .. give it time; it started well.

--- Terry Jeeves

ANALOG March 1977

Rather messy cover of a girl in a plastic bag exposing herself to a rusty space station ... to illustrate the Robinsons' tale, "Stardance", about a lady who dances in free fall, and thus "talks" to aliens...Yuk.

There is a cogent guest editorial kicking the slats out of modern educational do-gooders. Second novelette is James Bunn's "Child of the Sun" about a "sensitive" tracking down the kidnappers of a child destined to be great - it is a bit uncertain where it is going. Shorts include "A Rat of any Psize" concerning a psionic rat-trap if you're interested. "The Golden Years" shows how rotting society can be put right by the over-50s using a psionic machine - gee! "The Shape of Ploughshares" - mercifully short - is about how to beat a country by spending cash. Bova - how could you? "Three Coffins" is a rather morbid and sentimental piece wherein a woman space pilot finds a dead alien and hides the evidence rather than let such a noble body be exposed to lousy science. Last and utterly worst is one of those ghastly "Chap Fooley Rider" things in which the Chinese entrepreneur appears in "Children of Invention". Filling in the corners of the magazine is a very-pot-boiling bit of Bester. "Mastering the Art of Space Cooking" (fact article) is here, plus the usual, reviews by del Rey, and Brass Tacks. Sadly, not an inspired issue of the old magazine.

ANALOG April 1977

Cover shows a delta-shaped aircraft which will doubtless bug Concorde haters (Bova is one, the clot), plus an editorial on your duty to be politically active. A Freitas has the article spot with "The Legal Rights of Extra-Terrestrials" - a bit dull and dusty though bolstered by a couple of film shots. Novelette - "Man with a Past" - is a rather erratic item which starts with a racial "poor Puerto Rican" theme and switches to UFOs in mid-diatribes while outlining a take-over. "Lauralyn" asks if a computer can develop a personality - nice, but rather obscured by the man-woman relationship involved. "Letter RIP" is a lovely piece about what happens when to mail snoopers - brief but excellent. "A Rain of Pebbles" - the title allusion here escapes me - is about a code duello and alien diplomacy, and adds nothing new to the topic. Then we have the puerile "A Short History of World War LXVIII" - future wars will not be between men but between the robot machine champions fielded by the two parties in the dispute. A nice idea mishandled. Best item in the issue (after "Letter RIP") is del Rey's review column wherein he looks at two magazines, comparing UNEARTH and ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, to the detriment of the former. Nice going Lester.

--- Terry Jeeves

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE

--- Raj Rattan

So, here it is at last. The almighty hand of lucrative commercialism has finally caught up with the good doctor and grabbed him by the neck. Following the success of ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE and ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE I guess it was inevitable that sooner or

later science fiction would catch up.

I've read the occasional issue of the above-mentioned magazines and I have not been disappointed, so naturally when the publishers came out with this one my hopes were high. After all, science fiction and Isaac Asimov: it must surely be the combination to inspire and fire Mr. Fatigue's incredibly brain-fag quotient.

Something, which I feel is important, and is made clear in the editorial is the fact that the magazine is not actually edited by Asimov but by a gentleman by the name of George H. Scithers, as selected by Asimov.

Oh dear, methinks, this sounds like passing the buck, making excuses before the goods have even been assessed. I was almost disappointed.

I was under the impression that the magazine would be good, but I was totally wrong - it is excellent.

So what is it all about? Essentially it is a magazine for hard core science fiction, the type written by the Doc himself. However, in addition there are science fact articles related to the fictional aspects which have been examined in the genre over the years. They are linked to sf, which makes the magazine a discrete entity, without the randomness magazines have shown in the past (SFM, for example).

There is a section on book reviews, the reviews not being philosophical, in-depth studies, but more general assessments of their proposals and ideas. Also, there is a puzzle - slightly more sophisticated than those encountered on the reverse side of cornflake packets. It really is quite intriguing and will certainly make you think (it made me think anyway, and I still couldn't get it - a bit ego-deflating, because I can normally do the ones on the reverse side of the cornflake packets. Well, perhaps I'm just thick. That's right, keep nodding.)

For those of you familiar with the puzzles of Martin HOLLID in NEW SCIENTIST, this is similar.

Apart from a very short story from our very own beloved Arthus C. Clarke (less than 3,000 words) most of the stories are of modest length (of the same length as found in most anthologies) and of a very high standard. They all have, predictably, of course, a high "science content" which is not as outrageous and fantastic as is often the case in lesser stories. There is also, apparently, scope for the new writer: a lady by the name of Sally Sellers has her first sale in between these covers. It's true.

At what market is the magazine aimed? Well, without working out the mean Fogg Index of the fiction, I would say that it would satisfy most tastes. It will not, however, satisfy the followers of the New Wave (which is becoming pretty senile, now, anyway) because it does not go in for that style of writing. The magazine is

ideal reading for the devoted followers of the Old Wave. The fiction is well written, in a style that enables one to grasp the essence of the story without simultaneously trying to battle through a maze of allegorical references and whatnots. If you read them carefully enough, you will, of course, see messages staring you in the face, but whether these are intended to be the prime factors that ought to be observed is conjectural. These stories are entertaining and they will leave you with an in-built satisfaction at having read logical, coherent fiction.

Perhaps one might feel that since the magazine does have a distinct penchant for hard-core sf, it is liable to become a little tedious and hard to swallow at one go. This is not the case, however. I was surprised at the variety that is possible even within such limitations. But although there is a variety there is also a linking factor which gives the magazine a degree of order.

The editor is receiving numerous unsolicited manuscripts. His job is to opt for a selection which will be within the limitations provided by the editorial policy, but at the same time provide entertainment through variety. Contrary to the principles of thermodynamics, the editor has to inject a degree of order into what is a very random system. Forgive me, but he has to decrease the entropy of the system (in this case the magazine) by linking everything together. This will ultimately provide the combination which will provide entertainment within the limitations. But there has to be something which will suddenly destroy the orderliness, with the aim of providing total release from the limitations, and this release comes from the puzzle the reviews and the factual article. All in all, a very satisfactory arrangement which ensures reading pleasure rarely achieved from a magazine of this sort.

This ~~xxxx~~ first issue is very good indeed, but perhaps my judgment is biased by my predilection for this type of fiction. Provided that the editor continues to receive suitable material, which he no doubt will, and does not attempt to diversify the publication too much I am sure that it will be a success.

I thought the best story was titled "Goodbye, Robinson Crusoe". This was founded on a good idea and possessed a scientific bent fundamental enough for even the anti-science reviewers of "Read all about it". The story involved me with its implicit quality of approach. John Varley seems to possess this admirable quality of providing intrigue. He keeps the reader's attention by backing up his fiction with fact, which smooths the whole piece to a credible level.

With Isaac Asimov as editorial director, one would hardly expect anything different.

I also thought "Period of Totality" by Fred Saberhagen was very good. The science here leaned towards the world of astrophysics, in contrast to the biophysical emphasis of John Varley's story.

William John Watkins has also written a very thought provoking story with the title "Coming of Age in Henson's tube". This

provides a lively sensation which I can only describe as giving the reader the same exhilaration that a carbon dioxide bubble must receive when it hits the surface of a fizzy drink. Mind you, I had to read the story twice before the bubble burst.

I haven't given a synopsis of the stories simply because an attempt at this would not do the magazine justice. It's easy to say that a story is about this, but such descriptions often omit many factors which contribute to the entertainment value of the piece.

To say that the majority of the ~~xxxx~~ stories are of a hard-core variety with an inclination to provide an element of science in order to add plausibility to the plot is sufficient. All of you have read sf of this nature. Think of the good ones: it's hard to describe their appeal in most cases, as it is with these.

By reading the magazine, followers of hard-core, traditional sf will burst many bubbles.

There have been numerous occasions when I have debated the nature of sf with colleagues and friends who regard it as a second rate literature for second rate readers. Being scientists of one kind or another they are quick to point out the scientific faults which often appear in mediocre sf literature. But they also, on rare occasions, give rise to the better, science-oriented, stories. I asked one of them to read a couple of the stories with the words "This is sf, the way it should be". "Isn't that clever, and it all fits" he said enthusiastically. That says it all.

The Editor of NEXUS wishes to point out that opinions expressed in the above magazine reviews are not necessarily those of himself.

MISTAKES IN VECTOR 81:

V81 has just come back from the printers, and I've noticed a couple of errors. The illustration by Dave Griffiths on page 3 has not been credited - my error; and the full-page illustrations by Dave Griffiths and McLean Storey got reversed at the printers - the one on page 12 is the Storey one, the one on page 21 by Dave Griffiths. Apologies to Dave and Mac.

BSFA LIBRARY

In accordance with the instructions of the BSFA AGM at Easter 1977, books left over from reviewing in VECTOR are all being passed on to the BSFA Library at the SF Foundation at N. E. London Poly. The following books have so far been sent:

Hale: THE ENGLISH CORRIDOR by John Gilchrist; THE MANTS OF MYRMIDON by Eric Burgess/Arthur Friggens; METAMORPHOSIS by Robert Ray; THE LAUGHING TERRAN by Perry A. Chapdelaine; HARLOW'S DIMENSION by L. P. Reeves.

DeNoel: GALAXIES INTERIEURES edited by Maxim Jakubowski

Arrow: TECHNOS and VERUCHIA by E. C. Tubb

Panther: THE LEFT HAND OF THE ELECTRON by Isaac Asimov; STRANGLER'S MOON by E. E. Doc Smith & Steve Goldin

Corgi/Bantam: PSYCHO & FIREBUG by Robert Bloch; THE RIVALS OF DRACULA by Michel Parry; THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE by Shirley Jackson; REIGN OF TERROR I & II edited by Michel Parry; THE EVE OF MIDSUMMER by Jack D. Shackleton; THE STIGMATA OF DR CONSTANTINE by Tom DuJack; THE ARCHIVES OF HAVEN by Julian Jay Savarin; STAR MAIDENS by Eric Palce.

Wyndham: TRIBESEMEN OF GOR by John Norman; FIREFLASH 5 by Graham Masterton

Coronet: THE OVERMAN CULTURE, by A FAR SUNSET & PRISONER OF FIRE by Edmund Cooper; SWAMPWORLD WEST by Perry A. Chapdelaine; AGENT OF THE TERRAN EMPIRE by Paul Anderson; BORN WITH THE DEAD by Robert Silverberg; TODAY AND TOMORROW by Isaac Asimov

SPHERE: RINGWORLD & INCONSTANT MOON by Larry Niven; THE FOOD OF THE GODS by H. G. Wells; THE BEST OF JOHN W. CAMPBELL, THE FALL OF THE TOWERS by Samuel Delany; DEATH-WORLD I, II, & III BY HARRY HARRISON; THE BEST OF ISAAC ASIMOV 1939-1940 & 1954-1972; THE BEST OF JOHN WYNDHAM 1932-1949 & 1951-1960; HOW TO TEST AND DEVELOP YOUR ESP by Paul Hudson

Although the above are a very mixed bag, they are the first additions to the BSFA Library to be made for some time. A look at Malcolm Edwards' column in MAYA 12/13 will tell you what happened to the spare review books when he was VECTOR editor.

BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW (mostly for review in VECTOR 82)

THE DISINHERITING PARTY by John Clute (Allison & Busby)

Gollancz: THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST by Ursula Le Guin, DEUS IRAE by Dick and Zelazny

Hale: WOLFSHEAD by Andre Norton

Pan: STARBURST by Alfred Bester, THE SURVIVAL HANDBOOK by Michael Allaby

Sphere: THE BEST OF ROBERT HEINLEIN 1947-1959 & 1939-1942, STAR-BEGOTTEN by H. G. Wells, THE CROSS OF FRANKENSTEIN

by Robert J. Myers, THE COMETEERS by Jack Williamson;

Coronet: TOWARDS TOMORROW by Isaac Asimov, BLOODSTONE by Karl Edward Wagner

Wyndham: THE PURSUIT OF DESTINY by Muriel Bruce Hasbrouck, CONTINUUM 4 edited by Roger Elwood, SPACE 1999 - THE PSYCHOMORPH by Michael Butterworth (two copies!)

T-K GRAPHICS (via BRAN'S HEAD): THE MAGINATION by Anne Etkin; WATERSPOUT UP by Anne Etkin; THE REVISED HANNES BOK CHECKLIST by C. W. Brooks; PAGES FROM THE BOOK OF III - A PRYDAIN GLOSSARY by Douglas A. Rossman & Charles E. Rossman; VULCAN REFLECTIONS & MORE VULCAN REFLECTIONS;

If you would like to complete your set of copies of NEXUS/THE VECTOR REVIEWS SUPPLEMENT then you will want to know that there are still a very few copies of NEXUS 1 & 2 left at 30p each. These very issues, featuring work by Many Top Names, are bound to become Collectors' Items in the years to come which are in the future, as Dave Lewis might say when he waxes poetic. Hurry, hurry, hurry and buy one Now!

Knowing how Keith Freeman, worker of the Magic Duplicator, hates to see an empty space on a page, I struggle to think of something to fill the gap. No...it is no good. I can think of no more. A gap there will be. This will result in the loss of 1/4 of a page, which equals 1/8 of a sheet of paper, multiplied by 600 (the print run of NEXUS 3). Thus we have here a total loss of 75 whole sheets of A4 paper. A total value of about 16p. Will the BSFA finances stand this tremendous loss? Will the editor of NEXUS be cast out of the BSFA Committee for such a criminal waste of money/paper? Watch next issue of NEXUS/VRS for the horrid truth....

There, that's it. I'm not typing any more.

No, really I've had enough. I mean, I've now typed 18,000 words of NEXUS and 50,000 words of VECTOR 81, and I've had enough of typing. I'm going away now to play at Revise For My Economics exam.

Goodbye.



I'M PROSTITUTING MY TALENTS WRITING THIS NOVEL!



WHEN I FIRST STARTED WRITING, I PROMISED MYSELF I'D CREATE WORKS OF ART!



THEN I GOT MARRIED, HAD KIDS, BOUGHT A HOUSE...



IT BECAME NECESSARY TO INCREASE MY INCOME TO COVER MOUNTING COSTS!



SO I SACRIFICED MY ARTISTIC INTEGRITY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR MY LOVED ONES!



DAMN THEM ALL!



HALFLIFE

WORDS: CHRIS EVANS
PICTURES: JIM BARKER.

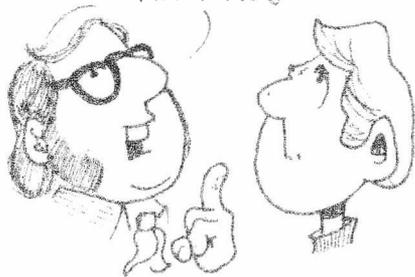
SF IS THE LITERATURE OF OUR TIME, THE DEFINITIVE METHOD FOR EXAMINING THE HUMAN CONDITION



SF IS A USEFUL POLITICAL TOOL, TOO! IN ITS CREATION OF FUTURE SOCIETIES IT GIVES US INSIGHT INTO OUR OWN TIME!



ITS ALSO THE ONLY SATISFACTORY MEDIUM FOR EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON MANKIND!



SF WRITERS BEAR AN AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THEIR READERS!



WHAT MADE YOU BECOME AN SF WRITER?



A WIFE, SIX KIDS AND A MORTGAGE!



