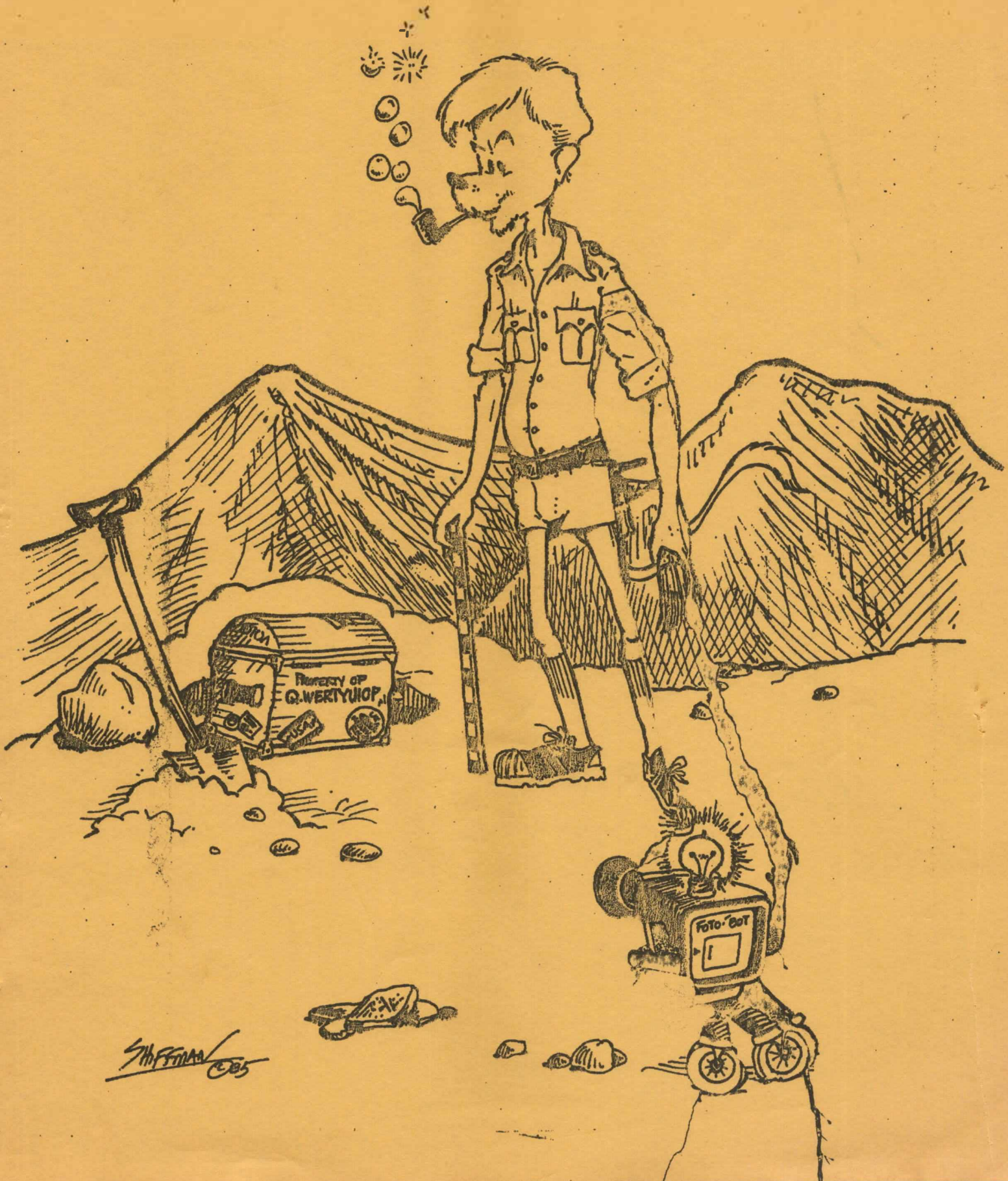
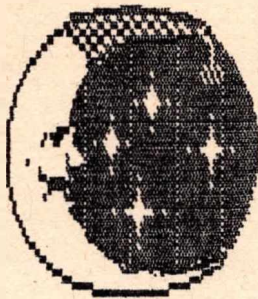


WHISTLESTAR 4



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO





ut of the blue of the western sky comes Sky King -- or maybe the lost rangers of Arnor tramping through the kitchen, seeking the remnant of their once mighty tribe of cowboys.

Who has not sat clustered into themself amidst the Barrington Bayley paperbacks watching the crew cut avant-garde skip from Laurie Anderson to Bono Hewson; without feeling a pang of wistful longing for who knows what? Ought one feel guilty for passing over the straggle-haired descendents of Neil Young for the sake of new puzzles and mysteries? Neil campaigned for Reagan in '84.

"Why," as one local underground editor said recently, "do we chew on cold pizza, hunting for a photo somebody kicked under a chair three hours ago? Why do we stare at computer screens, actually pleased with ourselves over a typeface being Italic?"

Perhaps someone on the mailing list can provide some answers.

Let there be no further delay in distributing what is now the annish -- by -- default of this irregular fanzine (which should see at least one more issue before Summer).

c o n t e n t s

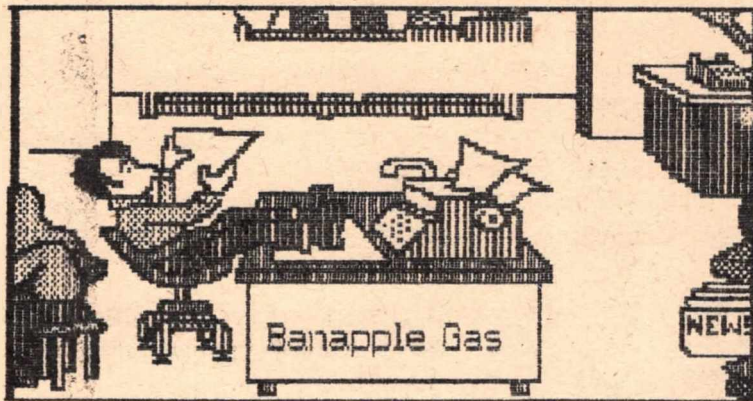
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ART CREDITS

Stu Shiffman	Cover, 22
Jerry Ferraz	11
Jay Kinney	20 (MacPaint)
Ray Nelson	25
Brad Foster	27
Tara!	Bacover

For C. M. Kornbluth fans, pages 2,3,4,7,8,9,12,15,24,30,32 contain clipart from various computer sources, transmuted by the editor.

 WHISTLESTAR #4, from Lenny Bailes of 504 Bartlett Street, San Francisco, CA 94110, is available for letter of comment, trade, or because you have a trace of the Moon and Stars on your forehead which won't wash off in the shower. Are we desk-top publishing yet?



Well, it's Friday night and my editor (of the computer mag *Microtimes*) has just told me it's okay to take another three weeks for my writeup of GEM Desktop Publisher, the computer software largely responsible for the cosmetic appearance of this *Whistlestar*. I discover, suddenly that I'm free! Free of the procrastinator's cloud of guilt which blocks the stars when the Sun goes down; free to drink fruit blend tea and write sllly poetry. I could even watch television.

"CBS' new series "Beauty and the Beast" is an urban nightmare/fantasy in which victimized, paranoid New Yorkers are saved from a crime-infested society by the intervention of mysterious, all-knowing beings."

--SF Examiner, 10/2/87

High above the great metropolis, a slight figure snuffles and walks to his refrigerator. As he clicks open the door, suddenly voices seem to echo out of a heating vent.

"Tom, don't do it! You've had your last quick - frozen meat - pie if you want to live! And for God's sake take some vitamins if you want your cold to go away and close that window." The hooded vegetarian disappears into an airduct and makes his way back down to the catacombs to ponder when the his column will be delivered. Life in Gotham City goes on.

"The New York City of these shows is so exaggeratedly threatening and sadistic, it's as if it were hallucinated by some Hayseed after reading the New York Daily News."

Oh. It's been a long time between issues, and I'm sorry. All along, while I've been learning how to play with the 40 year old's version of Lionel trains, I've had good intentions. When I bought my computer, I thought having a word processor might even encourage me to write science fiction. I became a computer journalist so I could cadge free page - makeup software to do the fanzine. Then when I discovered I didn't like the way a stencil looked on a dot - matrix printer I spent a couple of months learning about quadruple dot - density and font designing. Jay Kinney drew me a cartoon on the Macintosh, and after awhile I learned how to transfer it over to my IBM PCjr. Most recently, I decided I didn't want to mix stencil cement and E - Stenciling with the computer

generated stuff, so I've been learning how to scan into the Mac, and send the stuff back to the IBM where I can work on it. I'm reading computer magazines the way I used to absorb Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, retreating to a place where the ego suffers very few disappointments and can get lost in the intricacy of rules and structure. I apologize to Dan Steffan, who submitted his fanzine reviews in good faith back there in 1986. I think they're still worth printing. I think I'm going to combine stream of consciousness faan-fiction with computer journalism, at least until I have to or want to pay attention to the greater reality which usually doesn't pay much attention to me. Be watching for "Neuron Mincer."

My rant on *Brazil* is the other piece in here which may be getting kind of moldy. It's like the 20-page exegesis of the Death of Rock and Roll I started writing in 1978, revised dutifully once a year and finally abandoned around 1983 when I decided I was better at being a schoolteacher than a guitar player.

I hope, actually, that I've taken a leave of absence from, rather than abandoned, the guitar. The deepest feelings of fulfillment of purpose I ever experience are still focused around music, and I'm trying not to be a bad sport about the fact that few people my age make any I want to listen to, anymore.

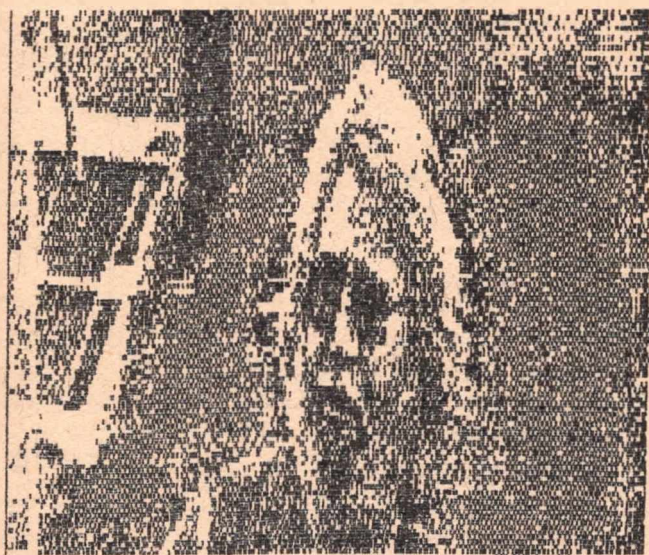
WORLD'S FINEST KARMICS:

They're selling postcards of the hankering.
They're painting the pastepots brown.
The boogie - parlor's filled with mailers,
Virginia Kirkus is in town.
And in comes Roneo, he's cloning,
"You look gone to me, I bereave."
I think you're in the song race, my friend,
I think I'm going to sneeze.
And the only king that's left
after the ambiances go - -
Is Bossa Nova, who's just being pumiced
for stubbling Pestillation's Toe.

Well, hey now - - this summer I got to see
everybody's two favorite superheroes, Bob Dylan
and the Grateful Dead, in one adventure, together!

I think I would concede that their San Francisco show this summer was a very well-done magic trick. What went down was an artfully constructed illusion. This illusion took lots of work and a certain amount of inspiration. For three hours I felt like I was at a rock concert in the '60s seeing Bob Dylan play *Like A Rolling Stone*, *Memphis Blues Again*, etc. with tight high energy back-ups (I disregarded the "Don't Tell Your Banker about Home Equity Mortgage Rates" and Coca-Cola billboards). Soon, poof - - it's over and we're out in the parking lot.

I can't help but wonder about how the Pranksters of 1966 would have responded to being up there with the Grateful Dead trivia questions on the Oakland Coliseum scoreboard. "Halloo, halloow, saay, how was your stayy in San Josaaaay?" Nope, how many strings did Phil Lesh's bass have in the



WHISTLESTAR

year 1976 -- that's where it was at.

I liked this particular Dead Show more than any I've seen in five years for a few things. Mostly, I liked the look of sentience and quiet attention on Jerry's face; it made me feel that there was some sort of plan going on here besides doing the gig to pay the bills.

If the plan was only "We like Dylan -- he's a good guy -- thaw him out"; and not "Let's all levitate to other planets and change this one asd soon as we get back", it was still love (of a less expansive kind).

I still get a natural buzz whenever the Fillmore West movie sneaks into my sight and I get a flash of Jerry Garcia tuning up his pedal steel with the New Riders of The Purple Sage. Seeing him in 1987 behind the pedal steel guitar again reminded me of the laughing Acid - Superman, tossing off eight hour sets with the Rowan Brothers, New Riders and Grateful Dead all in succession.

Jerry's pedal licks sounded pretty pure to me. All of the strange synaptic responses of the '70s were bypassed, the dissipation of the Acid spirit into "let's indulge ourselves for the dancing girls". I could see the Sufi wizard in the poncho, the one with Graham Nash on "Teach Your Children".

The Dead are at their best the first two or three times they do any song, because the sense of wonder is still there. The song is still a here and now event, rather than a twisty set of runs and inversions, changes on something which is emotionally stale. So what happens to everybody the next day?

To me that's the most important part of the trip. Do the ones who are captured by the still lingering magic just replay the experience again and again, or is the essence of the spiritual and philosophical rebellion of rock n' roll somehow communicated into daily life?

Despite my disenchantment with the GD for surviving by pitching themselves largely to a mushy showbiz anima, I feel they need to be thanked for occasionally allowing an environment where long winded crabs like myself can unwind, and remember the vision of the kindly miracle worker within -- maybe even the great *Mr. Fantasy* crab from Minnesota.

To Whom It May Concern

Master games-smith Chris Crawford, best known for his Macintosh-based Balance of Power, has come out strong again with his interesting and unusual game called *Trust and Betrayal: The Legacy of Psiboot*. The action takes place on Kira, moon of the planet Lamina, home to the seven competitive species. Among them are: the first person player Vetvel the Jomkar who looks like a gerbil, Skordokott, a carnivorous penguin; Garbore, kind of an aardvark, and Kendra -- who looks unaccountably like a horse.

The Kiran colony is an artificial society [zoo?] of 250 beings who can communicate vocally only through interpreters and mentally through eeyal (an icon-based artificial personality language set. As Vetvel, you compete in mental combat for a turn at being The Shepherd, who governs Kira. To get there, the game takes you through a "typical" day, where you hang out and visit the other characters. Through the day you negotiate with the other beings to determine how much Tanaga (fear), Katsin (trust), or Shial (love) the others may have -- qualities of power that are the hard currency for attack and defense in the nightly telepathic contest. At dusk the screen goes to black and the power icons undergo animation backed by sound effects as they energize. Either you or your opponent emerges as The Shepherd.

-- excerpted from *Computer Currents*, 12/15/87

TILL THE MORNING COMES: "This is the age of pinnacles and blunders --
this is a long -- distant scrawl ...

"I haven't lost your fanzine," Terry Carr would say, "I know exactly where it is."

In the days of the middle '70s I wandered around San Francisco in a half-trance, my little ID-pak leaving my body at night to encounter strange shapes which whispered of ancient space-arcs and Dr. Dolittle's Moon Moth. When I surfaced at Baltimore in 1984, I wandered around the science fiction convention looking at all the unknown faces and wondering why I had come back to stare at strange people having even stranger conversations. I passed a famous lank, goateed shape coming out of an elevator and was too shy to speak. Terry reached out and touched me on the shoulder. "You're real," he said.

The way we bitch about a dying Constellation ...

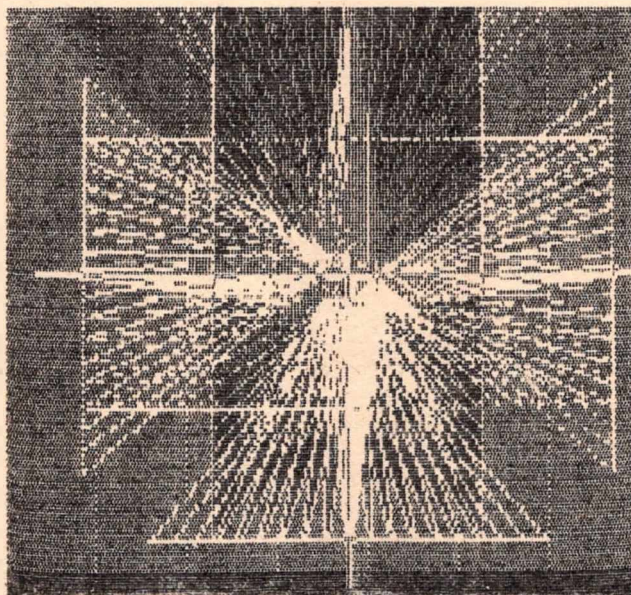
"I have very little urge to be involved in fandom these days," was an opinion stated by Dan Steffan from between twin beds where Ted White, Taral, Linda Bushyager, rich brown and Steve Stiles had come together at DisClave for the usual charades. "I work out my creative urges in other ways," Dan said.

When the worm-kings of Aldebaran whispered to me in dreams that my rice-paper sketches would never hang in the Galactic Museum, I was not disheartened. I remembered that we had elected an Ambassador to the Stars in the secret space of our dreams by mutual consensus. I was far out, but I knew that We Lived on Levels, and there was a tall tree-creature out there who would never steal anybody's sun.

And I remember what he wanted to tell me -- Sunshine Daydream -- I shall dance.

-- thoughts from Lenny Balles

in memory of a friend

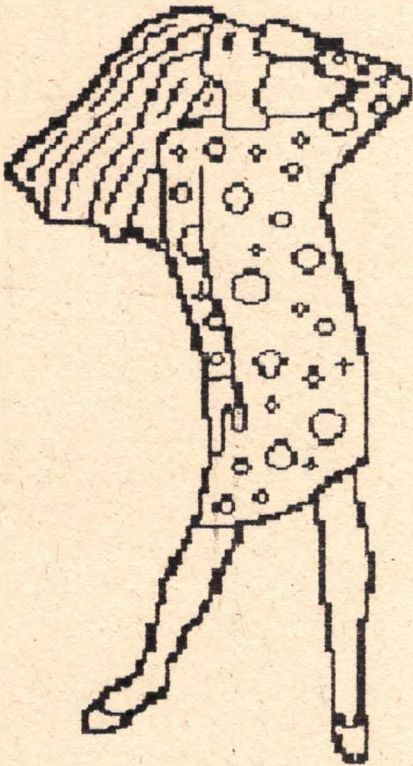


RABBIT RUN

by Jeanne Bowman

I have this thing about Road Kill, (like Sharee, I guess). The other night a hare suicided on my car. I retrieved the body & brought it home. Jaime had to hold it (in a paper bag) in his lap for the journey home. I was completely disconcerted. So I gutted it in the kitchen sink in a very scientific fashion. "Ah yes, here are the kidneys Yes, this is its liver is it a boy or a girl, hmmm, let's go back from the kidneys & down those tubes there... aah, female!"

Jaime's friend walked out of the kitchen & retched twice. "Oh, Jeanne, it's so gross," he moaned. His stomach recovered as the biology lesson continued & he got into it as we removed the organs & fed them to the cats. The impact had burst the critter's heart & liver, to say nothing of its shattered teeth. I couldn't leave it lay, I like to eat rabbit, but wouldn't go out of my way to buy it. I spoke of my desire to eat it & not waste good food, since I had, however inadvertantly, killed the beast and the children gradually came to an understanding of this. It was tough, tho, they have pet bunnies at Grandmother's house. So there I am, late at night,

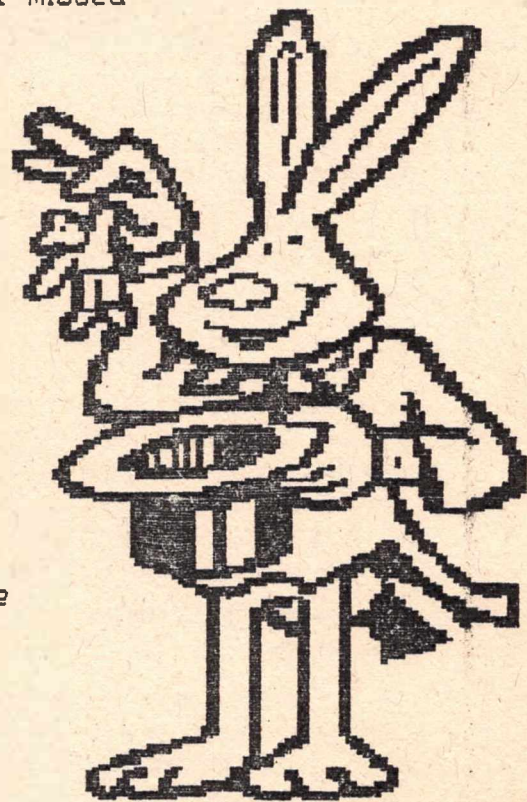


elbow deep in blood & gore with three overtired young'uns moving from total revulsion to detached interest to high excitement. The fur was delight once the blood was washed off. We stretched it out & set it in the woodstove oven to slow dry. I put the meat in a marinade & the boys to bed. I couldn't get to sleep. I cleaned up the kitchen, even. My body was so tense, My God, I keep thinking, it's so dam- easy to die. As I lay, the textures & smells of separating internal parts kept returning. I'd breathe & consider the randomness of the universe & realize that my body & soul, despite my intellect, were reacting to looking into the insides of this critter and how little difference there is between it and the insides of Jaime that I nursed together into his return to wholeness. My ability to be detached only lasted as long as the task of cleaning was on. Once I did manage to sleep after a gut-wrenching litany in my head of Yes, Jaime's alive, the rabbit's dead, it's okay. I had nightmares, awoke in tears again & realized we'd have a solstice feast.

I remained rather emotionally stunned that day, and stewed up the beast the next. It was good, altho a tad heavy on the vinegar in the sauce.

We were driving down the road the next day & a high class looking stupid dog raced in front of the car. I missed it, but only just & as I accelerated again & cursed the animal & its owners Jaime asked me what would I do if I hit the dog. I automatically replied I'd go back & stop & see what sort of shape it was in & try to find its owners and was going on like that when I realized what he really wanted to know was would I take it home to eat it if it was dead. I said er um, probably not. That's fairly heavily solidly proscribed in our culture, but what the hell, I didn't know, what did he think; would we eat it?? We weren't sure. The possibility definitely exists -- I loved the rush of defiant cannibalism that coursed kundalini-like up my spine at an anti-intellectual atavistic desire to say, eat yours, death, you dead dog, I have you now.... it was a physical rush of pure antisocial punk 80's consciousness.

Even in my simple life metaphysics are not boring.



I HELPED PATRICK MCGOOHAN



ESCAPE!



a review of *Brazil* by Lenny Bailes

A handsome boy with a silver crescent in his ear will smile as he dances in back of his serving counter. He flashes his eyes at the various customers who prance up to him and order breakfast.

On his day off this young man will see the movie *BRAZIL*, and it will cause him to smile. His thoughts still float in the rarified liquid world where art and music equal emotion.

"One sees western capitalism can be so boring and disgusting. One grits one's teeth at Andy Warhol collages and oohs at angular surreal distortion shots. But one congratulates ones' self as well for being above and free of the funny exaggerated situations one sees."

My young friend will smile softly on the following day should any customers come in for coffee wearing slouch brimmed hats, lugging metal attache cases.

Well, I laughed, too... at the magneto telephones and bicycle mirror computers from *The Gernsbach Continuum*. Then as I recognized the top security Bank of America money vaults tap dance by on the screen I felt my first flash of chagrin. After the next shot of briefcase toting automatons talking to each other through tin cans, I found myself dropping out of the laugh-track in the theatre. Terry Gilliam's burlesques stopped looking so cute to me as I recalled how uncomfortable a real data processing center in the financial district feels when you work in it as a clerk-typist. From chocolate production quotas to *The Happy Carrot* Health Food Store, from soma to *Sirens of Titan* the artists who grapple with dystopian futures have been united in presenting a challenge to their audiences. Do you want what you see here to come true?

BRAZIL is a subtle two-edged vehicle. It presents our science-fictional nightmares as really cute or silly.

For the brief time left to us while people still read and write without automatic self-correcting computer software, it may be that the power of a work of art is dependent upon internal consistency, not on the most ostentatious situational mind-fuck you can put over on an audience. Of course, in the

post-literate society to come this may no longer be true. MTV bands and junk food manufactrers are steadily at work on the foundations of consciousness. The world may eventually be made 100% safe for real estate speculators, who currently stand to lose a little from art as a vehicle for raising middle-class sensitivity to abuse.

For the longtime science fiction fan or film buff *BRAZIL* has a sort of familiar feel. Boy in autocratic future nightmare meets girl. Girl leads boy to secret enclave of revolutionaries. Boy would rather work for IBM till they confiscate his Mastercharge.

The cartoons sketched in *BRAZIL* are some of the cleverest brought to film in the 17 years since *THE PRISONER* was shown. Fans of Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, and Japanese Animation - monsters will find salient camera ideas proliferated and developed with a vengeance. But the technology of this pseudofuture is deliberately ridiculous, as are the compromises which the characters in the movie make for it. 90 percent of the viewers in the house will go along with this. The bad guys of 1984 are identified, but the bizarre state in which they flourish will not frighten the viewer. There will be symbols that a courageous, independent teenager can recognize. The outraged female truckdriver who braves the paperwork of City Hall to rescue a man falsely kidnapped by secret police looks a little like the woman they see in the coffeehouse (who wears the same color salvation army jacket and supports a political theatre cooperative by night).

But the writers of *BRAZIL* were only fooling. The revolutionary really wants to try on wigs and the hero's mother's dresses. It's only the word processor from Martin Scorsese's *AFTER HOURS* chasing a punk lady in Soho, not Winston Smith, after all sacrificing his lover to be eaten by rats. Not really a devourer of corpses feeding on the blood of Latin American peasants ((Which we in San Francisco have all been trained to recognize from our attendance at many Friends of Nicaragua poetry benefits)).

What we get after the Jello - Bones capitalist cannibalism sequence is Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Don Quixote -- an amazing sword fight against a fully armored Portuguese audioanimatronic robot. Watch him clank while George Lucas turns green and goes back to Young Johnny Tremaine for yet another patriotic adventure flick.

Guess whose face is really hidden beneath the tough looking mask of Darth Vader, here, as Don Q topples him? The face behind the Portuguese warrior's helmet is none other than the protagonist's! -- young Luke McGoohan Skytripper himself. Luke meets The Great Gildersleeve (currently working as John Galt's plumber) and that's the revolution.

Is this caricature too obscure? It may be, for a young would-be actor in toreador pants who's deciding whether or not he should buy a double-breasted overcoat.

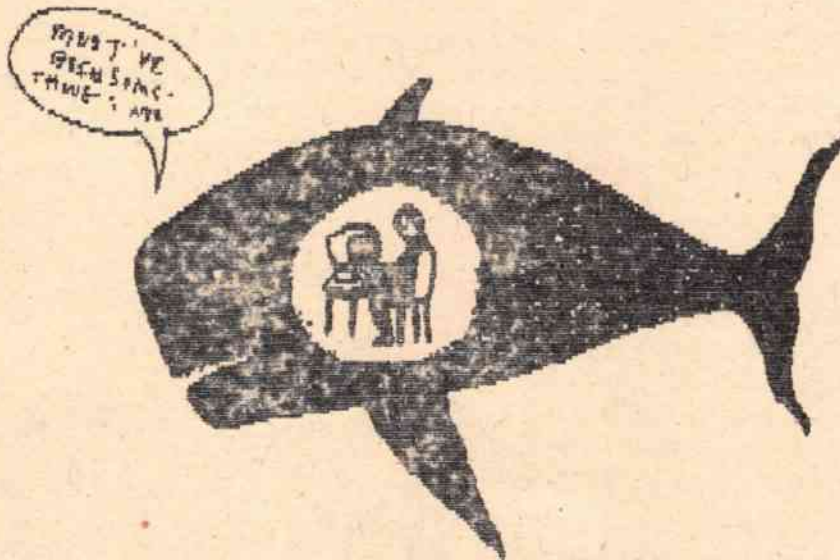
The protagonist of *BRAZIL* is really David Bowie; whose heroic chin and hatbrim are silhouetted against a hodge-podge of blurred, but detectibly revolting geometry. The protagonist of *BRAZIL* is also a schmoo, silhouetted R. Crumb style in some amazingly photographed light and



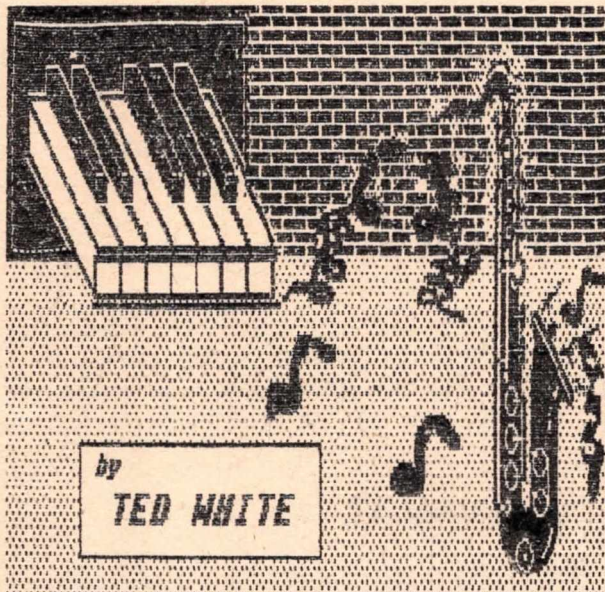
shadow. The camera exposes him as he attempts to bluff his way through to the top level of Metropolis for purely selfish purposes. But mostly, the protagonist is an adolescent protected from inconsistency by David Byrne's amazing fat white suit as he dreams the dreams of Brewster McClood.

What I feel from *BRAZIL* is an artist's successful imprisonment of the soul. The nightmare of consumptive overindulgence is quaint. The bureaucratic autocracy is a paper-mache boutique. The rear-view mirror computers are not as frightening as a trip to a real San Francisco employment agency. The oppressive machinery of money never actually intrudes in the fantasy to make the viewer uncomfortable. While my young friend in the Cafe might giggle, I find myself concerned with the logic of plumbing, the principles of In and de-duction, which appear to be the central conscious theme of *BRAZIL*. I fear the movie is actually a subtle two-edged Gibsonian product. Sure, we're left with the image of what a mess, and the heroic daydreams only come true in the hero's own mind. But the second message is that after we've made some faces at everything, we've had our catharsis and we might as well go back to work. No heroes busting out of The Village, no real alternative but adolescent daydreams.

Who profits from convincing clever teenagers that alienation is a useless joke?



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Letter #15, 18 October 1986:

One of the best things about living in New York City in 1979 and 1980, while I was editing Heavy Metal, was the music.

I'd hired Lou Stathis as HM's rock ("rok") columnist, and together--and occasionally with Dan Steffan, when he started working in the art department--we'd hit the various night-spots in the city. New York is unique in my experience for the fact that even on weekday nights the music in most of the rockclubs started around midnight and lasted until four or five in the morning. I don't know when this tradition was established--in the fifties and sixties when I was hitting the jazz clubs the sets started much earlier, and ended no more than an hour or two after midnight--since I was absent from the scene for nearly twenty years, but even with a 11:00 AM arrival time at my office, I often ran very short on sleep.

My favorite club was Hurrah, located a few blocks away from Lincoln Center, on the Upper West Side. You climbed a ratty stair up several dingy flights and suddenly found yourself in a vast room with mirrored walls, a large bar, a lounge with carpeted seats, a big dance floor, and a small bandstand flanked by TV monitors. It was here that I saw for the first time most of the premier British New Wave bands like *XTC*, *Orchestral Maneuvers in the Dark*, and *Ultravox* right after Midge Ure joined, as well as lesser, but quirky, bands like the *Slits*. It was here that my mind was blown by *Kid Creole and the Coconuts*, and here that I saw *Suicide* and Lydia Lunch and James Chance (*White & the Blacks*). And here that I saw, met, and became friends with Nash the Slash, the one-man band whom I wrote up myself in HM. I spent New Year's Eve at Hurrah with Nash, several of the *Talking Heads*, and Walt O'Brien (Now with IMPortant Records).

The person who made my frequent forays to Hurrah possible was the club's booking agent, Ruth Polsky. Not only did she book in so many of the bands that I wanted to see (making frequent trips overseas to catch new bands before they were even heard of here), she was always willing to put me on the guest list whenever I called--often only the afternoon before. I'm sure my HM connection was a major factor, but once she knew me--and especially after my write-up of Nash appeared--our relationship became more personal and friendly. I liked her taste in music, and I liked her.

I lost track of her when I left HM and NYC in August, 1980. Hurrah, I heard, closed in 1981. Ruth's name appeared from time to time in the rock press as a booking agent for other clubs.

But I was totally unprepared for her obituary which appeared in the October 23rd issue of *Hollings Stone*, which I snagged from the rolling library cart here yesterday afternoon. She was "run down by a taxi while she was standing outside the Limelight, a desanctified church turned nightclub in Manhattan," on September 7th. She was 32.

Shit.

Letter #16 October 19:

Sometimes they let you sleep and sometimes they don't. For two nights now they haven't. The night before last the guard who routinely came into our cellblock to shine his flashlight into our eyes slammed the door loudly on his way out. "Hell," Jack said. "How's a man to sleep through that every fifteen minutes?"

Last night was worse. Minutes after the one guard conducted lock-in, another unlocked the cells from outside with the characteristic bang-bang-bang-bang! of gunshots (amplified within each cell by the confined concrete-walled space), did it again, and then came in and pulled open each door and shut it again, automatically relocking them. I was still awake, but Mike, Phil, and Jackson had been sleeping. I heard Mike's querulous "What's wrong with you, man?" from the next (D) cell. The next few passes through were relatively uneventful, but for the flashlight beam in my eyes. But somewhere around an hour before breakfast a flat-topped guard came through and unlocked each of our cell doors with a key, and then slammed it shut again. Why? Who knows? Maybe just simple sadism. Maybe boredom. Is it worth complaining about? Probably not.

Every time I get to thinking, "This isn't so bad. I can get along here," something mindless like this occurs. Simple bullying--reminders that this is supposed to be punishment, and loss of regular sleep is punishing in many ways--both subtle and overt.

Letter #16, 22 October 1986:

Today at "Forensics Class" Dan wasn't his usual talkative self. I asked him what was wrong.

"Oh, man, this place is really getting me down. It's really getting to me! I'm in a cellblock full of assholes with nothing to do all day but just sit there and try to ignore them. I ought to be getting out in a week or two, but there's this fucking investigator from Alexandria trying to pin a bad-check charge on me--even though I was in here when it's supposed to have happened--and I know he's gonna fuck up my release, the asshole!"

I've never seen him like this before. He's really depressed. I'd brought him a book he wanted to read--The Choirboys--and was looking forward to seeing him. "I don't like anybody in my cellblock," he said. "There's no respect, no friendship--just assholes wising off all the time."

"I think Classification is fucking up," Red Bob said. "We're getting all these Kids in A5. They yell all the time, and they watch fuckin' cartoons all day on the TV. Always

switching channels, always makin' noise. It's getting on my nerves." He's 42. "We've done written out three of them -- three at once, that's some kind of a record for us!"

Too bad we're full up," I told Dan. "Or I'd suggest you come down to A7. We got a friendly cellblock."

"I gotta do something, man," Dan said. "This place is doing bad things to my head."



BITS: If you're here without funds you get certain items from Commissary without paying for them. Phil gets a tube--very small--of toothpaste every week. "I don't use a tube every week," he told me. "I got three of them now. If you need toothpaste, I'll give you one.

I'd bought a small tube when I made my first Commissary order. It turned out to be Crest with fluoride, which satisfied me. I normally use a fluoride toothpaste. So when it ran out I asked Phil for a tube. But what he gave me was not Crest with fluoride, but Colgate without fluoride, and the tube was even smaller. Most odd was the sticker pasted on the box and on the (metal) tube: "MADE IN BRAZIL" it said. The writing on both box and tube was, naturally, bilingual--English and Portuguese. Why the jail giving away Brazilian-made toothpaste?

Immediately after I was sentenced, when a Deputy took me from the courtroom, he told me, "I've been in all the jails in Virginia and this is the best. You should be glad this is where you'll be doing your time." He also told me I'd be doing nine months of my one-year sentence. Both statements were false--and probably knowing lies. The Fairfax County Jail--excuse me; Adult Detention Center--is the worst in at least Northern Virginia. It is worse than the Alexandria City Jail, the Arlington County Jail, the Prince William County Jail, and the Leesburg City Jail, that I know of. I base this on the statements of those who have been to these other jails. In those jails one is not locked out of one's individual cell during the day, and the food is better. Jackson, for instance, was taken to Prince William Co. for a court appearance which required him to be housed in the jail there for two days, and told us what it was like: "They put me in a regular cell--not on the dayroom floor--and the food was a lot better. We got a full meal for lunch." Here one gets a sandwich and a bowl of soup, or just two sandwiches.

General opinion is that the guards are a lot more decent in those other jails, too. Here some treat you like a human being, but the majority like to pull petty-sadistic tricks, some of which I've described already. (The other day one looked in during the evening, making a routine head-count. I was in my cell, writing a letter. "Where's White?" I looked up and said "Yo!" and waved at him through the window of my cell door. He jerked the door open and said, in what I assume he thought was a joking voice, "Boy, don't you ever go up before a jury, 'cause you look guilty. Haw, haw, I never seen anybody look more guilty. Haw haw. You sure look guilty, awright. You better not let a jury get a look at you! Haw haw haw." Then he left. "What was that all about?" I asked the others in the dayroom. "He's just jerking your chain," Jack said.)

We talked about that in our Group, today. A new member of the group, the only black in it recently, said, "They racist here, man." He named names and examples--too many for me to recall them all--but one stuck with me. He'd filed a Request Form with a guard for the use of a free phone to call the hospital where his father was dying of cancer (such places don't accept collect calls), and had gotten no response. While he was in the company of the chief psychologist he asked her if she could help him. She called the guard over and asked him about it. The guard said no Request Form had been filed. Since the inmate knew he'd filed

one, he accused the guard of throwing it away. The psychologist wavered between believing him or the guard, and he suggested they look in the trashbasket. She agreed, over the guard's protest. The trash was searched, and "There it was, all wadded up, with chewing-tobacco stains all over it, man!" His point had been proved, but he never did get his call. He was told he could write a letter instead.

After several exchanges of correspondence with the circulation department, I'm finally receiving the Washington Post here. Today I received Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday's copies with my mail. (Apparently, they'll come one day late, through the mail, at a premium. Thank ghod I paid a year in advance last Spring, because my remaining six-plus weeks here may exhaust that subscription.) What a relief to have a real newspaper to read! I'll pass them on to the rest of the guys when I finish them, and then put them on the bench outside our door at cleanup, so others can enjoy them. I'm a news-junkie, and this really helps pass the time in here.

October 23:

Well, maybe. Today no Post came in the mail. If Wednesday's paper doesn't arrive in Tomorrow's mail (along with today's) I'll file a grievance form. It's more than pilferage--it's tampering with Federal mail. The vengeful in me would love to pin that on a guard here.

They have a new trick they've been pulling this week: delaying opening our cells for several hours.

Normally Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays are Shaving Days. On these days numbered razors are passed out, used, and returned. Each man who takes a razor has its number noted by his name. Normally the razors are passed out in late morning or early afternoon.

But this week they've been passed out after dinner. Normally, when a guard opens the cellblock door to remove the dinner trays and cups (using his foot or a pushbroom), he "pops the doors" of the cells immediately afterwards, and we're free to enter our cells. I look forward to

this. I like to lie down after dinner, to read, nap, or write letters (or Letters) at my tiny "desk," rather than on my lap.

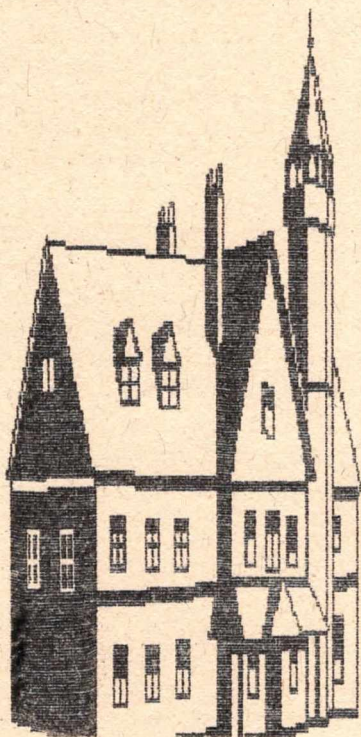
Tuesday dinner was very late--it didn't arrive until 6:00--an hour late, and seven hours after lunch. (It was fried chicken, so we forgave the wait. Fried--or barbequed--chicken is the best dinner one gets here, usually about once every two weeks or so.) After dinner, the guard, as he kicked our empty trays out into the hall, asked, "Anyone want to shave in here?"

The usual group did. (Mike and I ha beards, and Jack, half Cherokee, shaves only once a week.)

"I'll be back to pass out razors," the guard said, and disappeared--without opening our cells.

Half an hour later, he was back with the razors.

"How about unlocking the cells?" Bill brightly inquired.



The guard gave him a contemptuous look. "After you've shaved," he said, as though addressing someone who was mentally retarded.

Bill doesn't have a cell, but has complained that the steel mirror over the dayroom sink is hard to use, since the light over it is far too high. He looked in my cell one evening and noted that the light in my cell was much lower, just over the mirror, and made the mirror much more useful. Perhaps he'd thought to shave in one of our cells--I wouldn't have minded him using mine--or perhaps he was just being his usual helpful (sometimes too helpful self.

So everyone shaved--using already well-used disposable razors--and then we waited, and waited, and waited. Finally, the guard returned to collect them. "Can you open the cells now?" Bill asked him.

When I'm done collecting the razors," the guard replied. He finally returned to unlock the cells with a ratta-tatoo of extra bangs at 8:30. Normally they're unlocked around 5:30.

Last night dinner was late again, but without the excuse of passing out razors, our cells were unlocked at around 6:30.

Tonight--again--dinner was a half-hour late, and--again--they waited until after dinner to pass out razors.

"Those assholes," I grumbled.

"No sense letting it get to you, man," Mike said. "Don't matter none. They just playing with your head."

It was 7:00 before our cells were unlocked. I skimmed a Reader's Disgust (er *Digest*) while Mike played quick hands of solitaire, one after another. I notice once the cells were unlocked he disappeared into his.

% % % % % %

Have I mentioned that the only eating utensil we get with our food is a plastic spoon--which we are required to return with our trays? Most of the food we get is soft enough to be cut with a plastic spoon--even the cooked meat--which is just as well. I think a high percentage of the inmates are lacking a significant number of their teeth. (It was a bad joke when they gave Wayne Treon--still here as a Trusty -- apples each evening as part of his diet as a diabetic, after they pulled his last four teeth.)

% % % % % %

Well, this evening they finally figured out that they'd given Phil a sweater that didn't belong to him.

They'd brought it to him a day or two after I moved into A7, back in the middle of September. "What's this?" Phil asked.

"It's your sweater," the guard said. "Somebody sent it in to you."

"It ain't mine," Phil said. He looked at the collar. "Look," he said, "it says 'G.H.' on the collar. That's not me."

"Your name 'Funk'?" the guard asked.

"Yes, but..."

"It's yours," the guard said. He left.

Phil filled out a request form stating that it wasn't his and had been misdelivered to him. Another guard came in and looked at it. "I'm not 'G.H.'," Phil said. "Well, maybe 'G.H.' sent it to you," the guard said. "I don't know any 'G.H.'," Phil said. "Keep it," the guard said, and left.

It got cold in here. One day I asked Phil if I could wear it, since he refused to wear

it. He said sure. I wore it for most of a month.

A couple of months ago Michael Nally, during one of his weekly Saturday visits, asked if he could get me anything. "Yes," I said, "a set of thermal underwear." I'd noticed a lot of the guys--including Phil--wearing thermals to stay warm. Last week Michael brought me a set. "I brought two," he said, "but they'd only let me send one in to you." I suggested that he try the second set the following week.

About five hours after Michael's visit, a guard brought me the set of thermal underwear in a paper bag. I doffed the sweater and donned the thermal top. The next day I put the sweater (a sweat-shirt, really) through the "personal laundry." It's been in my clean laundry bag since then.

Tonight a guard came by and demanded the sweater. "It's not yours," he told Phil sternly.

"I told you that when you gave it to me," Phil retorted.

"Well, let's have it," the guard said. "Where is it?"

Phil looked at me. I nodded. "It's in 'C' cell," he said. It was after dinner, the razors hadn't come yet, and the cells were all locked.

The guard unlocked my cell, and watched while I went in and retrieved the sweater. "Close that door," he said as I came out with the sweater in my hand.

"Why?" I said. "It's after dinner."

"Close it," he said threateningly.

I closed it, and he left with the sweater.

"He's not the one who's responsible for unlocking the cells," Mike observed.

"I knew they'd figure it out eventually," Phil said. "There's two other Funk's upstairs in the B-cells. Gotta be one of theirs."

I was just as glad I'd had the use of it until I had thermals to wear

% % % % % %

At mail-call today a wimpy-looking guard (one of those regarded by the guys in here as a "Georgetown faggot" with his regulation Gay Moustache) called "White!"

I got up from the chair where I'd been sitting, reading. "Yessir," I said.

"You White?" he asked through the door.

"Yessir," I said. "I'm White."

"I can see you're white," he said, "but what's your name?"

"My name's White," I said.

He peered at me. "Okay," he said, and began opening my mail...

Letter #17, 27 October 1986:

It was about 10:30 this morning and I was playing Hearts, when a black deputy--a Sergeant--opened our cellblock door and called "White?"

I looked up. "Do I need my shoes?" I was wearing my "showers shoes" rubber-soled slippers--and they usually insist you wear shoes when you go to class, gym, or a visit.

"No, just put your shirt on," he said.

I slipped my blue short-sleeved shirt over my long-sleeved thermal undershirt, and followed the deputy out into the hall, wondering what this was going to be about. It was outside the routine, and that can make you nervous. (The last time something outside the routine happened to me, it was my transfer from A5 to A7. That was an improvement. What would this be?)

The deputy led me down the hall to a desk located opposite A- 10 in the hallway.

"Have a seat," he said, gesturing to a chair beside the desk, and sitting himself in the chair in front of the desk. He consulted a form. I could see the Virginia state seal at its top.

"You're going to receive your Mandatory Parole on December 4," he said.

"That's sooner than I expected," I said, feeling a rush of exhilaration. "Can you tell me when on the fourth I'll be released?"

"Five-thirty," he said.

One of our guys was released at midnight," I said. "That's why I wondered."

"If it's a weekend, they release you at midnight," he explained. "Weekdays, five-thirty in the morning." Then he proceeded to ask me questions and fill out the form. The questions were: "Do you have anyone to stay with, when you get out?", "At what address?", "What was your previous address?", "Do you have a job waiting for you?", and "What's your employer's address?"

He gave me a slip of paper with my state number (#149676) on it, "MPD 12/4/86," and the phone number of my parole board. "They'll tell you, when you're released, that you have three days to get in touch with your parole board," he said.

That was pretty much it. He wished me luck, and led me back to my cellblock, where I resumed the Hearts game (Mike won).

December 4th is a Thursday. I'll be out that morning! (I've heard they don't like to feed you the day they release you. That's fine with me.) Receiving definite news like this is great. As of now I have only slightly more than a month to go. (And this letter, at the rate they've been getting published, may well not reach most of you until after that date. I suspect I may not bother writing many--or any more...)

I called Michael Nally, who has my Honda, and he said it would be back in my driveway at the beginning of the week. And I called Matthew Moore, who has a key to my house, and he agreed to pick me up here on the 4th. "I've got the schedule for it," Matthew said, laughing. (He works nights for CSPAN, the cable broadcaster that covers Congress.) Then I called Dan Steffan, who said he hoped I didn't want to play Pinochle that night ("traditionally," Thursday nights were Pinochle nights at the Steffans'). "I haven't played any in here," I said wistfully.

This installment of Letters from Prison is the 6th set. Set 1 was published by Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden; set 2 by Victor Gonzalez; set 3 by Mark Kernes; Set 4 by Lucy Huntzinger and set 5 by Johnny Berry.

It was in an extremely "weak" moment that Lenny coerced me into writing this column. It was following the 1986 DisClave and Lenny and his brother had come for a brief visit and to go through a pile of fanzines I was trying to sell. The con had been mildly enjoyable and the fannish spirit was in the air, and before I knew what had happened I had agreed to produce something for the very next issue of the fine publication you are now holding.

I think it may have had something to do with hypnotism, but I can't be sure. I remember Lenny was telling me about what ol' Arnie Katz was like as a teenager -- it was chilling -- and the next thing I remember I was standing on my porch waving goodbye and saying something like, "August deadline? No problem."

The rest is hazy, but I do recall feeling quite refreshed for the remainder of the evening.

I tried my best to forget the commitment as soon as the Balles brothers had disappeared into the sunset, but I couldn't do it. It nagged at me like a housewife in a 1930s film comedy.

"Daniel, you lazy worm," said the little woman -- who looked suspiciously like Wallace Beery in a dress. "Have you written that column for that nice young man yet?"

"Not yet, my little fessure," I answer in my best W. C. Fields.

"You had better get to it, you simpering scumbucket," she bellowed. I tried to ignore her by hiding in the tool shed behind the house, but when I got hungry and tried to go back inside I found the door locked. Wifey stood on the other side of the door with her rolling pin in her fist, and a look on her face that reminded me of a small child with a large bowel problem.

"Well, my little continental drift," I said. "I guess I had better get to it. This is only a two reeler, after all."

* * * *

BSFAN 15, Summer 1986 *BSFAN* fifteen
is a fanzine
with a person -

ally problem. Not that it doesn't have any personality, but that it has too many, and none of them are the editor's.

Despite Elaine's name on the masthead of this fanzine, one can't help but think of it as being mostly the work of her husband, Steve Stiles. I know that Elaine will probably hate me forever for saying this, but she is invisible in this fanzine. Even though she has an editorial at the issue's start, the reader has a hard time deciphering her presence. The editorial's light weight subject doesn't help much, either.

I can understand if she has the inclination to defer to Steve about fannish matters -- after all, he does have about twenty years experience on her -- but doing so has prevented *BSFAN* from showing her mark, while Steve seems to be everywhere. He did the covers, seven pages of comics, some writing, six of the nine headings, and had a hand in recruiting the written and drawn contributions. If it weren't for the absence of Steve's editorial musings, it would be easy to assume it is his fanzine.

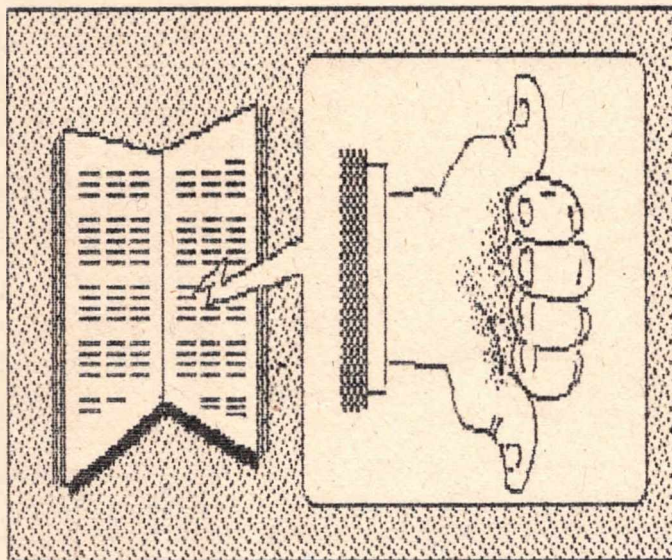
I know Elaine has a strong personality and well-reasoned opinions when it comes to social interaction, but on the printed page she is almost nonexistent. As a result of this, *BSFAN's* editorial

FOREST THROUGH THE TREES

personality is Steve's. His patented wackiness is all over the place. It's more than just his artwork, though, it's his unique and twisted worldview. It is over - whelming. Which might explain a lot about Elaine's invisibility.

I figure that living day in and day out with somebody as full of character and wit as Steve Stiles has got to be overwhelming. It could just be that having him "on tap" is too much of a good thing. Maybe she should do her next issue without husbandly assistance; just to give herself an opportunity to find her footing and her voice. Either that, or just make Steve officially her co-editor.

However, I don't think it is entirely Elaine's fault that she is editorially weak here. I've always felt that the lettercolumn is even more important than the editorial for presenting an editor's involvement and voice. *BSFAN 15* doesn't have a lettercol - - well, there's two postcards printed, but that doesn't really count - - and it is a real drawback. Perhaps if Elaine had managed a few pages of real letters she'd have come off much better. But like I said, it isn't really her fault.



© Eric, '87

It seems that the editor of *BSFAN 14*, a round Baltimoron named Rikk Jacobs - - shouldn't that be Jakkobs? - - "lost" the lettercol that Elaine had edited after her previous issue of *BSFAN* (#13) had been distributed. Then, much to the Stiles' chagrin, Rikk didn't bother to publish #14 at all. (As I write this, a month after the publication of #15, he still hasn't.) So when Elaine got the fanzine back again she didn't have diddly squat to work with. If she had I'm sure she would have fared better.

FANZINE COMMENTARY

BY

DAN STEFFAN

All of this leads to another thing that is wrong with *BSFAN*. It's a *gasp* clubzine. That explains the rotating editorship, and the "misplaced" lettercol. Clubs are always sticking their noses into places they don't belong. I, for one, wish they would just give Elaine and Steve the money and keep the fuck out of their way. The last thing a struggling

fanzine needs is a bunch of zip brains meddling into things that are beyond them - - especially when those zip brains are the financial wizards who put on the 1983 worldcon.

Petty power struggles and rampant incompetence have no business in a fanzine, they should stay behind the closed doors of sf clubs, where they belong.

However, having said that, I do want to make it clear that despite such handicaps, *BSFAN 15*'s

a pretty good fanzine. No, let me rephrase that: in light of such obstacles, *BSFAN* is an amazingly good fanzine.

As mentioned before, Steve Stiles is all over this issue. From his brilliant cover -- now this is what Cyberpunk comics would be like -- to his reprinted *STARDATE* comic strip soap opera, Steve has elevated *BSFAN* to heights that would be tough for any zine to best. It's nice to see somebody of his talent stay in touch with his humble fannish roots.

Towards this goal Steve has provided us with yet another chapter of his 1968 TAFF report. This time he graces us with what he claims is a transcript of his convention speech to his British hosts at Thirdmancon. In his introduction Steve claims to have lost his notes about the trip more than ten years ago, but I think that was hardly the only thing he lost (like his mind). This "speech" is one of the funniest things I've read in a fanzine in a long time. It is pure Stiles. Twisted, but pure. Maybe it wasn't a mistake having so much of Mister Stiles in *BSFAN* after all.

The other contents of *BSFAN* struggles to meet Steve's standards, but generally do a good job of it. I found Ray Ridenour's "The Hawk and the Scalp" to be particularly interesting. Not only is it well written and charming, but it provided me with a punch line, of sorts, to a story that I've been trying to track down for years.

You see, in the mid 70s I was doing a fanzine that was changing my fanac from neoishly hollow to fannishly fulfilling. Along the way towards publishing better fanzines I asked a lot of folks to write for me, hoping to garner contributions from at least a couple of them. One of those I asked was Jay Haldeman, who I had met a couple of times at cons. After several requests Jay agreed to do something for me, and began telling me about a bar in Baltimore where he and other fans had more than one strange evening's distraction. He passed on a couple of teasing stories and promised to write it up Real Soon Now. Naturally, as these things often happen, Jay never got around to it and eventually the article became a kind of joke between us whenever we passed each other in one hotel corridor or another.

I know how things are sometimes, and I never held it against Jay, but I never stopped wondering what that article might have been like. As near as I can tell, Ray's article in *BSFAN* is probably a lot like the one that Jay would have written. It is full of strange anecdotes and gives the reader the feeling that this bar was one of those special places that quickly acquire a kind of mythology. This article offers a misty kind of nostalgia that makes me wish I'd been in Baltimore in those days to hang out with these guys and be a witness to the mad tribal tomfoolery that was par for the course at that aptly named Blarney Inn.

Charlie Ellis is another of Baltimore's slightly askew fans. I've sort of known him for years. But usually we just would nod at each other across a smoke filled room at various cons, but I have known for years that he is an amateur film maker. And, in fact, he is responsible for one of the funniest bits of film collage/splicing I've ever seen. He took the opening bit of a classic Three Stooges film and spliced it to one of history's most memorable pieces of candid film.

Imagine, if you can, a Stooges picture opening with the standard credits and then cutting to the boys in a small room where they are struggling with a rifle. Suddenly, while pointing it out the window, it goes off. When the Stooges look at the window what they see, and what we see, is the awesome Zabruder film of President Kennedy's head exploding and slumping forward. Back inside the room the Stooges react with shock, drop the gun, and rush from the room. The End.

The first time I saw it I nearly puked I laughed so hard.

In *BSFAN* Ellis writes an article about more film making that led to nationally released features and a lot of personal turmoil. This is an article that once again proves that even people you thought were your friends can stab you in the back when it comes to piles of money. It's an interesting look at how low budget schlock horror movies are made and forced on an unsuspecting public. You come

away from the article feeling that Charlie got shafted by his associates, but that he managed to have some fun despite it all. Good stuff.

Steve Brown contributes a couple of his astute and informed book reviews. It goes without saying that Steve's reviews could easily have appeared in *The Washington Post* -- where he has been a contributor before -- but the fact that they are in a fanzine makes them all the more outstanding. Surely it is painfully obvious when you read reviews like these that sf fandom has let critical writing go by the boards. Hell, even *SFR*, the longstanding home of reasonable criticism, can't boast of material as good as this. And with *SFR*'s demise just around the corner it will be almost impossible to find. It is great that such quality can be found in a fanzine like *BSFAN*. I only wish there was more of it.

The other contributions by Joe Mayhew, Lee Smoire, and Eve Whitley are more or less ordinary. They leave the impression that they were generated because of *BSFAN*'s club affiliations rather than a need or desire to say something. They aren't bad necessarily, but they just kind of sit there. If you take the time to read them you won't be insulted, but you won't come away enlightened either. But that's okay, this is only a fanzine after all, not the New Yorker.

The other contribution comes from a jerk named Dan Steffan. I'll refrain from commenting too much about it because I understand that the author is a large man with an enormous temper. So since I like my face I'll simply say that it is one of the finest bits of fluff ever to appear in the English language. Ahem.

Overall, *BSFAN 15* is a good genzine, and an excellent clubzine. So if you are one of those people who try to steer clear of any publication connected with more than five people I recommend you break your rule and give it a look. If you don't care about such things, but are only concerned with a good read, stick by your guns and give it a look. Either way, you won't be sorry.

And if you do like *BSFAN* please be sure to write them a letter of comment. This participation, more than anything else, will guarantee another issue and the end to the invisible editor. [BSFAN, from Elaine Stiles, 3003 Resin Ave., Baltimore, M.D., 21218]

SHORT STUFF *PULP* is the first issue of a new multi-editor fanzine from the U.K. Edited by a team of fannish heavyweights -- Pam Wells, Avedon Carol, Vinc Clarke and Rob Hansen -- it goes a long way towards plugging the void that has been growing in fanzine publishing in the past year. With this kind of an editorial staff you know that you are going to get good material even if they can't convince anybody else to contribute.

But that isn't a worry for them so far. This issue sports two meaty fanzine review pieces that make for very interesting reading. The first by Dave Hodson is a level-headed bit of analysis that made me want to know more about its author. His opinions are solid and he seems to understand what it takes to make good fanzines. I haven't heard of him before, so I feel pretty stupid finding these informed opinions coming at me out of the blue. But I think this says more about my gaffa than Dave's. If only I could be as succinct...



The second review article is written pseudonymously, and has caused quite a stir in Britfandom. "Damien Razorbill" decided to write this under the protection of a phoney name because he intended to slash his subjects -- like Simon Ounsley and D. West -- to the bone. I don't really approve of this, but then I wasn't asked my opinion, because I think it is more personal an attack than a fanzine criticism.

I mean, it's an old fannish tradition to write about one's life experiences in fanzines, so I don't think there are really any grounds to jump on Ounsley's windpipe because he chose to write about his recent illnesses. Simon is a quality writer and he made good reading out of a difficult subject. If Damien found it tedious I think it says more about him than Simon.

The same holds true for D. West. If he chose to include stuff about his crumbled marriage in his article that's fine with me. Again, he is a damn good writer, and I thought this material only added to his growing legend. (This West guy is so foul and disgusting that even his wife got rid of him.) But he also wrote about other stuff, too. Granted, it wasn't a piece on the level of quality with "Performance", but so what? How many times could George Gershwin write a "Rhapsody In Blue"? It is more important, in my opinion, to see any writing by D. West than to see nothing by him. For sure, it is better than seeing more writing like this from Damian Razorbill.

The issue includes an ATOM cover, reprints of a couple of Teresa Nielsen Hayden's postcards (which are denser than most fans' letters) and a new installment of Walt Willis' "The Prying Fan." This issue is edited by Pam, and her cohorts don't make appearances here, but presumably they'll pop up in the future -- at least in their own issues.

Check this fanzine out. It is small, but, as they say, size isn't everything. I agree. When it comes to fanzines and penises it is quality over quantity, always. Besides, *FLIP* won't ruin the sleek line of your trousers when you carry it in your pocket. [PULP/Vincent Clarke/16 Wendover Way/Welling Kent/DA16 2BN (the usual)]

* * * *

SF86 is a new issue of an old fanzine. So old that the last issue came out 34 years ago. Woo, now that's old. But it doesn't matter in this case as the editor is that groovy grandfather, Dick Lupoff.

In its last incarnation it was called *SF82*, and its appearance proves the old adage about death not releasing you. And it's a good thing. Dick writes this issue with all the wit and skill that he has brought to his fiction for years. This issue is full of imaginary conversations with Castro and Nixon and some very funny personal history.

Lupoff manages to tell us the background of *SF86* and other things thanks to his new computer/word processor. The issue was composed as a learning exercise to familiarize Dick with his new equipment, but you'd hardly know it. His engaging writing sucks you in and immediately makes you glad you're reading it.

To further use the new equipment Dick decided to make every issue of *SF86* an original printout, signed and authenticated by Lupoff at the end of each copy.

As an entertaining little frnz *SF86* is superb. I encourage you to request a copy from Dick and force him into publishing another issue before the year 2020 rolls around. I'm sure the last thing he expected was for some dumb asshole to review this fanzine and force him to publish again, but hell, we dumb assholes have to have a purpose in life, too, don't we?

Get a copy of this fanzine and watch a big time pro's skin crawl.

[SF86/Dick Lupoff/3208 Claremont Avenue/Berkeley, CA 94705 (editor's whim)]

= = dan steffen Sept. 1986

Well, when I saw Dan in May of this year and this fanzine was only six months overdue, I convinced him not to withdraw his column although it might seem dated. I mean, we've seen three issues of PULP, since then, (some of us four), I was still in a race with Elaine Stiles to beat the next issue of *ESFAN* to press up until last week, but now I've lost that, too. So perhaps in the ensuing breakup of the friendship between the Stiles' and Steffan which can no longer be avoided by my Gaffa, Dan will forget to be sore at me. With Dan's kind permission, I'm going to fight the timewarp a little by flipping through some of the other things which have kept the little nightlight glowing in the mailbox since then.

This is by no means a complete listing of all the fanzines, I've read, enjoyed and appleboxed in the last year and a half, but rather an attempt to reenter the matrix of Cipher - space and commend those who wrestled with the great void and won.

Lillian Edwards and Christina Lake published two issues of *THIS NEVER HAPPENS*, bringing us more of Simon Ounsley's cinematic slides, and some consciousness that irreverent, sexy, comic book fandom continues to defy intellectual pretentiousness and think its own thoughts.

Avedon Carol, Rob Hansen, Pam Wells & Vinc Clarke went on to nourish the spirit of tru-fandom with three more issues of *PULP*, taking up the slack of *IZZARD*, *EPSILON* & *NUTZ*, championing the cause of cogent, well-written fanwriting for its own sake, which Avedon & Rob also espoused in *CHUCH*.

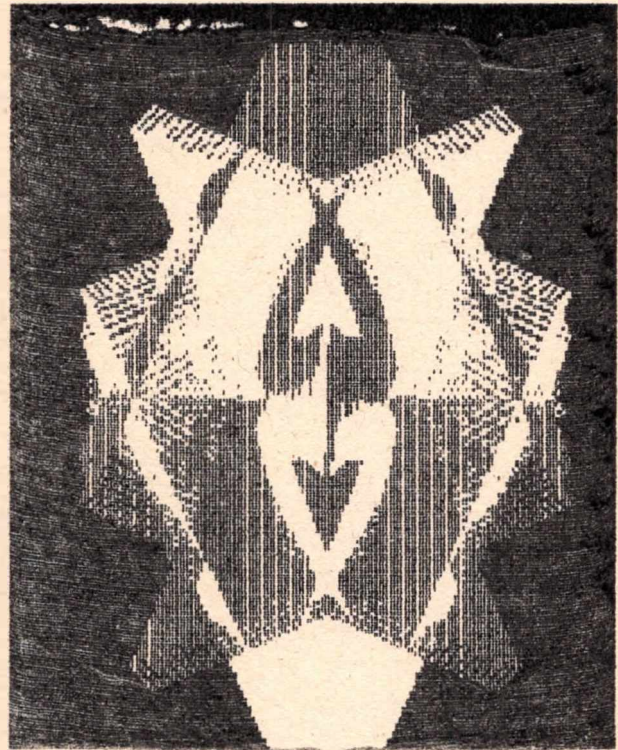
Dan Steffan, the Nielsen - Haydens, Stu Shiffman & company did their best to carry the American side with *SF-FIVE YEARLY*, now with more than 50% of its contributors originating in the U.K. Ted White kept alive the flavor of faaan fiction from his dungeon cell, the others gamely fighting Lee Hoffman's vision of a Fannish black hole.

Owen Whiteoak published several snappy, chatty personal fanzines, allowing the fannish group mind to travel to two British conventions, and follow the adventures of the missing (but not forgotten) Allyn Cadogan.

Closet sercons were adequately entertained by Pat Mueller's *TEXAS SI INQUIRY*, which has sometimes the liveliest lettercol in fandom and would be the best bet to capture the combined CORFLU audience together with those who pine for *RHETORICAL DEVICE* if it were published more frequently. I'm happy that rumors circulated in the Bay Area about this fanzine's demise have checked out false.

I've been saving up Barrington Bayley paperbacks to send to Dave Bridges, ever since the arrival of *SCATTERSHOT* and the other excellent fanzines from him and Linda Blanchard, this winter. I hope this will make up for not writing a letter of comment, and remind them that good karma may accumulate amongst those who dance in slower time.

And *IZZARD*, the meandering giant star at the core of the galaxy, wobbling out of



the black hole, bringing its million year old light -- ah, proving itself to be worth the wait between issues, and reminding us of the possibilities for a unique and transcendent literary experience contained in the fanzine medium.

... Much later (several months) another issue of *FUCK THE TORIES* wherein Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas continue to maintain a thin veneer of charm over righteous indignation at the general stupidity of the human condition, bearing the wistful news that Terry Hughes sinks deeper into the abyss of Mundane.

Following closely, an issue of *WING WINDOW* with no Terry Hughes LoC, but lots of interesting chatter for would-be Desk Top publishers from John Berry. Hope John won't be too appalled at the dot-matrix multifont layouts I've experimented with here. My instinct is to differ with his opinion that justified columns are to be avoided, but the GEM software has an automatic kerning mechanism which microjustifies between letters.

And still later we have a oneshot from Pam Wells and Jeanne Gomoll bringing friendly conversation and well-reasoned criticism. Jeanne is upset that fanzine fandom (at least as represented on panels at conventions) has forgotten the homey, philosophical dialogs and essays which were epitomized by Susan Woods' writing ((I wouldn't mind seeing Alexei Panshin return to this sort of thing, either.)).

Then *BOTTLED LIGHTNING* from Maureen Porter and *ABBATOIR #3* from Lucy Huntzinger and Bryan Barrett, and now it's Christmas day, and I'm going to make a last gasp effort to get this out by New Year's.

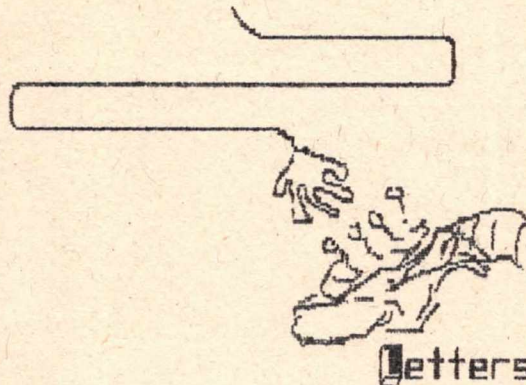
-- LB



Old fanzines are quite
nutritious if you
boil them and add
ENZYMES.



ASTRAL FINGERS



Letters

DARROLL PARDOE

11B Cote Lea Square, Southgate,
Runcorn Cheshire WA7 2SA, U.K.

Thank you for WHISTLESTAR - 3, which made a remarkably swift transition from you to me - four days only. At that speed it must have come airmail; what is puzzling me at the moment is that fanzines from America over the last month or two have all been arriving airmail, whatever variation of rates the senders paid on them. It's fine by me, of course, but rather a bizarre practice from the Post Office's point of view. What's the point in having differential surface and airmail rates if it all goes by air anyway? Odd. I like the idea of a car demolition party. The nearest I came to that myself was years ago when my brother had an old car (a Karmann Ghia I think it was) and decided to do some work on its gearbox. He had it all separated into places on the back lawn, tinkered with it then tried to put it together again. At this point he discovered that you need special tools to reassemble a gearbox, tools which he didn't have. So he gave up, and since it was an old car that was practically falling to bits anyway, he and I dismantled the rest of the car to match the

gearbox. The dismembered vehicle lay around in our cellar for years.

What I always really enjoyed was dismantling pianos and reed organs, a task which usually required a certain amount of axe-work. 25 years ago in our area the auction sales rooms were choc-a-bloc with the things (a state which pertains no longer, alas - a second hand reed organ will fetch a decent sum even in poor condition). So, despairing of unloading them the auctioneers had a habit of throwing one in with any miscellaneous lot of household articles they happened to be auctioning, and since my parents were inveterate attendees of auction sales we often ended up with a reed organ or two, or occasionally a piano, in the garage. I had one in the house to actually play on, but more than one we didn't need, so the supernumeraries went to the axe, and great fun it was.

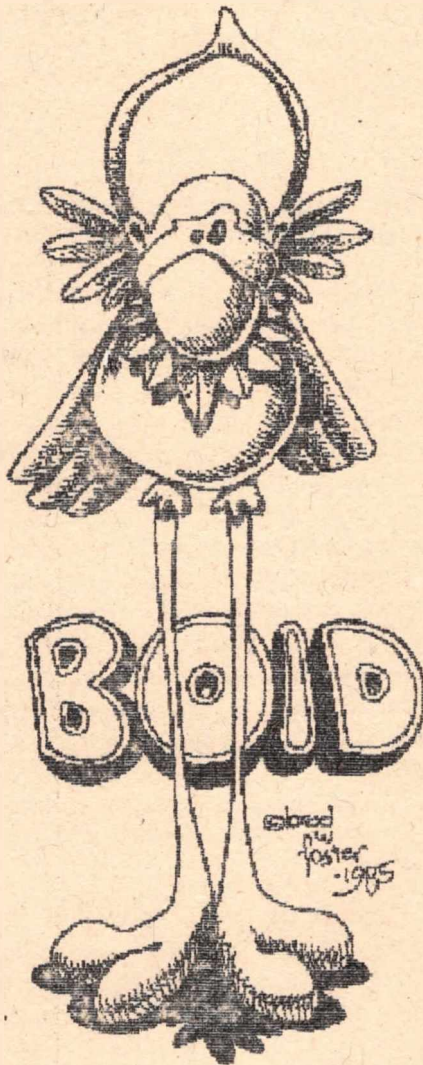
The sale items I liked best of all were the boxes of miscellaneous books that my parents sometimes came home with. In my formative years my reading was very wide and varied for that reason - you never knew what

would turn up in what was, presumably, the contents of some deceased person's bookshelves. For my sins, I read them all.

JEANNE BOWMAN

P.O. Box 982
Glen Ellen, CA 95442

It seems slightly ironic that I sit with this quiet space & time to write because the current set of wheels I use is in the shop having its 15,000 mile warranty adjustments made. It still bears the Lucee tags, and is growing a similar patina of hard use finger prints. I can't honestly say I'd forgotten the joys of my old VW, but it's been enough time that I



very much enjoyed the jolt of recognized time passage.

Sometimes I think of my life as being sort of boring, at least rather asocial, and I felt that sense of being away from it all in reading Banapple Gas. I mean, I've only once been to a North Beach cafe & then didn't strike up any incidental conversations. In my milieu the waiters abscond from the area should my conversation bore them or they will substitute for TALKING HEADS the rousing choruses of Disco Duck singing the Bunny Hop. No accounting for taste.

Robert's bit was interesting. Get him to do more, will you?

JERRY KAUFMAN

4326 Winslow Place N.,
Seattle WA 98103

I'm sometimes puzzled, but always pleased by your fanzines. So thanks for Whistlestar 3. You and all your writers seem to try to push language places where it's never been and almost refuses to go. This leads to the puzzlement and the pleasure.

BRIAN EARL BROWN

11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, MI

The Many - Collared Land: I've always felt disconnected from social trends - punk, rock, sex, drugs .. avoided them all, or got them wrong (mostly the latter). Well, maybe not completely, but if fans are foremost social misfits, then I graduated at the head of the class. Len Balles teaching geometry? The concept boggles the mind.

BRAD FOSTER

4109 Pleasant Run
Irving, TX 75038

Coffeehouses and strangers reading foreign poets and the angst of our present day and how kids these days listen to funny music? Hoo - boy, beam me up, Scotty!

HARRY WARNER

423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Two or three times a year, the law of statistics causes a voice on the radio to speak a place name or a person's name or some distinctive phrase at the very moment when I'm reading the same thing in a fanzine. This causes me to jump about two feet in an upward but slightly canted to the left direction. Then I look around wildly for the intruder in the house who is reading my fanzine aloud over my shoulder, and this reaction is followed by a sense of indignation that a mundane radio voice has broken into the magic circle of fandom. This time it was your passing reference on page four to Mary Lou Retton while the radio announcer was telling how she had been spotted at a West Virginia University basketball game and besieged by autograph seekers and even the referee went up into the stands to see her close up, only it wasn't Mary Lou at all but a young lady who looked like her. It's not too easy to redraw my mental image of you to make allowance for your new status as a high school geometry teacher. I'm not too clear in my mind about the California teachers' strike, but I hope it doesn't extend to your school district. I can't imagine how a teacher can keep kids interested in a geometry class in this day and age, but trying to catch them up after losing time to a strike would be even more awful to contemplate.

I hope some of your readers take to heart the moral implied in Robert Lichtman's article: stay off the interstates and enjoy the surroundings. I hate driving on interstates and never do it except when I need to reach certain destinations west of Hagerstown which are inaccessible from this city without a monstrous detour, except via Interstate 70. There just wasn't room for a dual highway through the narrowest part of Maryland west of here, with the Potomac River on one side and cliffs on the other, so old Route 40 was abducted and disguised as one of the two halves of the Interstate for quite a few miles. However, this abstention from interstates makes it increasingly hard to find things. People have fallen into the habit of giving

directions only in terms of interstates and exits and maps available to the public don't show each exit by number.

WALT WILLIS

32 Warren Road
Dunagadee, N. Ireland BT21 OPD

We were deeply impressed by Bob Lichtman's vivid account of his cross-country journey with the Lupoffs. Partly because it evoked such fond memories of Dick & Pat. We had, I suppose, subconsciously assumed them to have remained in suspended animation since we parted so regrettably in 1962: but suddenly here they are in 1970 travelling with another old friend along a route we know, and maybe not even thinking of us ... well, we feel sort of left out. Another form of nostalgia was more mine than Madeleine's, for the sort of 2-lane blacktop America I remember from the 1952 of small towns and curiosities, rather than exit signs. Like the Voice of America on radio, the turnpike/freeway system has hidden away the infinite variety of America.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico,
London SW1V 2ER, United Kingdom

Thanks for WHISTLESTAR 3 and INKGUN BLUES. And for WHISTLESTAR 2, to which I failed to respond (naughty me). For the same reasons, I suspect that I've put off responding to WHISTLESTAR 3 -- it was very pleasant, very enjoyable, a half-hour's fine reading, but I can't think of anything to say. Somehow, its contents avoided engaging my cognition centres, did not provoke thought along the same or similar lines to those followed by your contributors. ((Perhaps due to our policy of ideological surrealism -- LB)) Although I might disagree with Harry Warner's contention that someday "UK fanzines from the 1980s will be among the most-sought collector's items in the United States, because some of them circulate in such limited quantities or not at all over here". How does this differ from the circulation of the UK

fanzines of the 1970s? Such seminal and influential titles as Roy Kettle's TRUE RAT, John Brosnan's SCABBY TALES and Greg Pickersgill's STOP BREAKING DOWN had next to no non-UK distribution at all, and many of the other titles which had some overseas distribution -- such as Ian Maule's NABU, Dave Langford's TWLL-DDU, Peter Roberts' EGG and Paul Skelton's INFERNO/SMALL FRIENDLY DOG -- had only a very limited US circulation. A fanzine like Rob Jackson's MAYA, with its very large US circulation, was virtually unique in that regard. I further suspect, too, that the UK fanzines of the 1980s will turn out to be a lot less collectible than the UK fanzines of the 1970s, for a variety of reasons. For one thing, the environment in which they're produced is very different -- in the 1970's, the cross-referential nature of their contents and the fannish ethos shared by their editors and contributors resulted in the creation of a particular gestalt-like atmosphere; but nothing of this nature informs the fanzines of the 1980s. For another thing, the overall quality is much lower -- the best of the 1980s, such as Rob Hansen's EPSILON and Malcolm Edwards's late TAPPEN, are comparable to the best of the 1970s, but many of the rest (Dave Wood's XYSTER and Martin Tudor's EMPTIES spring readily to mind) are indifferent to mediocre. Thirdly, the infrequency of publication of ALL titles robs them of any editorial consistency; there is no sense, amongst both readers and contributors, that one is participating in any ongoing debate or discussion or even that there is any ongoing debate or discussion -- and this infrequency of publication inevitably reinforces both the lack of any recognisable gestalt and the lack of any universally accepted standards. It's possible, of course, that much of the above is a lot less objective than it seems; that it depends rather more on the fact that I'm not as involved with the fandom of the 1980s as I was in the fandom of the 1970s. It's certainly true that I'm not as active now as I was then -- getting older, getting tired, losing one's enthusiasm, etc. etc. etc. -- and I'm prepared to concede that this will colour my outlook to

some extent; but I think there are a great many more factors at work than just that. Which factors? Well, here I have to say that I'm intermittently engaged on an article dealing with just this subject for a future issue of FUCK THE TORIES, so don't want to rehearse in condensed form here the arguments that will eventually be dealt with at more expansive length elsewhere. This may be tough on any letter column discussions that may flow from the above observations, but...

MIKE GLICKSOHN

308 Windermere Ave., Toronto,
Ontario, M6S 3 CANADA

Well, thanks, I've always wondered what a Len Bailes fanzine would be like. My curiosity was especially piqued when Steve Higgins, in the editorial of STOMACH PUMP 10, asked me "would you really take two WALLBANGERS in exchange for one WHISTLESTAR?" Well, I may never know the answer to that question, but I have to admit I'd probably take even one WALLBANGER in exchange for WHISTLESTAR 3. Sorry about that, but I was underwhelmed. Avedon puts her finger on part of it when she refers to a previous issue as appearing to be in code. Obviously we just don't speak the same language a lot of the time but I find it hard to believe that you actually speak the way you write so I'm left with an image of a group of intelligent people looking backwards, wondering where Ginsberg has gone and bemoaning the absence of the EAST VILLAGE OTHER. I know that's unfair, but it's the impression the fanzine gave me.

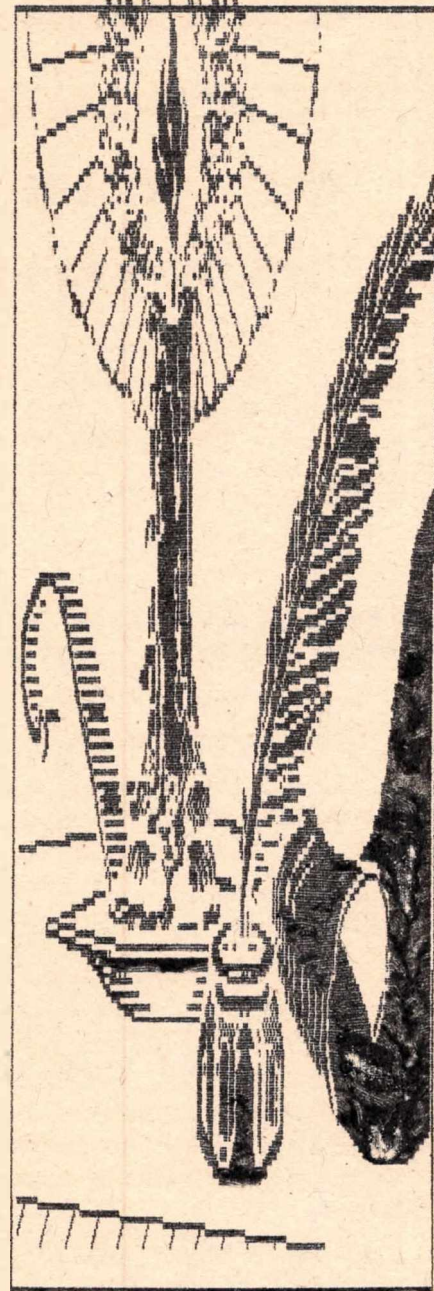
((Well, I attended a screening of the uncut RENALDO and CLARA in 1983, and in answer to one of the questions you raise here, Ginsberg was asleep in the seat next to me for most of the four hours, regaining consciousness only to watch the 10 minutes of the film where he teaches Roger McGuinn how to chant "OM" -- LB))

I also got the impression that this issue was written and produced by people who were too stoned to know what they were doing. The usually rollable Robert Lichtman

sprinkles his meandering prose with non-sentences, half-sentences and grammatical goofs and nobody edits them out. In fact, a few lines get printed twice as though the typist were suddenly struck by their specialcosmic significance. This is marvelous stuff? Nah, this is mediocre stuff. And then you slip in that beautiful piece on the '85 Disclave and drop a reference to Don Marquis and I wonder if maybe that's what all the hoopla is about. Maybe I got you on a bad day. Maybe you got me on a bad day. Maybe we'll see.

((I appreciate your sincerity, and apologize in the event my sloppy editing last December spoiled your chance to appreciate the intrinsic beauty of "1958", or whatever else I or a contributor was convolutedly creating impressions of. I don't talk about it a lot, but like a true Philip K. Dick protagonist, I have occasional bouts of disorientation from time to time which can cause inattention to cognitive details. This occurs without the grace of artificial substances, from which I have refrained for almost 10 years now. It gets hard to cut stencils with Hispanic Eldila looking over one's shoulder, demanding poetic justice for their own cellular histories of The Creation. Sufficient rest and vitamins often effect a return to a modality more commensurate with corporeal middle-class iconoclasm. But I do probably talk a lot like I write, yes. Perhaps I should don an electronic helmet programmed with PC-STYLE or RIGHTWRITER to cure my synapses of their syntactical expansiveness.))

WAHF: Harry Andrusak, Arthur Thomson, Nan Rapp, Robb Gregg, Michael Ashley, Loren MacGregor, Gary Mattingly.



**THE RADIO-FREE
TRANSMIGRATION
OF ARCHER-VALIS'
DIVINITY**

(or FISH SWIM)

I don't think they'll shoot you, Phil. They'll want you alive to write crappy books for them full of government propaganda. -- PKD in *Radio Free Albemuth*

Momentary bursts of whimsy I remember:

I remember the talking taxi; flapple flapple over the skyline of New York on the way to your psychiatrist's office; actually, maybe not in New York at all, but really on another planet, conveying you to the slime - blobs of Titan.

A terrible pot sings softly to itself in a small voice. We know it is terrible, but the pot is hoping to be reconsecrated. This was previously known only to Chinese grocery men.

I remember when you lost your title - deed to the City of Berkeley again in an all night Monopoly game. "Oh no, where can you crash now?" Will your Footmen carry you home before your coach becomes a radioactive pumpkin? It's exciting. Your suitcase and the doorknob will settle it by flipping that two-headed nickel you gave them. "Ike and Mike, they look alike."

Awake? Asleep? Awake? Time travelling Jonathan Winters collector hurry if you want to rescue your buddy from that orbiting pleasure satellite. Our nymphet proprietress is almost ready to show the steel claw concealed beneath her glove -- in a fashion show dreamed up by All We Mafsmen.

But Manfred, dear Manfred, please check this out; this is important: That fleabag hotel where Rosicrucians read Michael Kurland spy - novels is not run by Soviet braineaters. I don't think there really are any Russians in the wallpaper electronically badgering Bobby Fischer and Neal Cassady to drive each other crazy.

Listen, Manfred and Mr. Arctor:

GABA GABA hoo -- GABA GABA hey!

Plant aphids vanish when You take your vitamins

-- One a day.

Mr. Arctor, Mr. Fat, I know we want to get down to central questions of existence, here: Did David Bowie secretly betray Christ behind the Rock of Eternity? Yes or no?

But, Mr. Fat, Mr. Arctor; if I had a wish, being it was maybe the last time, I'd wish you had stumbled into Honest Abe's Spinet Shop that day when your Ceph'scope flipped out. I'd wish old Abe had calmed you down a little bit and persuaded Glimmung to flush all the Substance - D down a 4 - dimensional toilet. If Abe or Lord Running Clam had been around, I'll bet they could have chased the Russlans away, so that you could come up from Fullerton more often.

You and Abe and Bishop Pike might have met April Archer for Chinese dinner; maybe gone to see one more Lamplighters show. You could have discussed some C. S. Lewis novels together on the way back down South and hit a few Mythopoeic Society picnics at Glen Goodknight's.

I'm sure the three (or four) of you could have handled it, then, when David Bowie's space people came to call. Arctor, you could have played your double - agent game to good advantage. I can see you all raising money to melt the moons of Jupiter for water; and even if David funk'd it up somehow; the Bleekmen would never thirst.

"One does not carry a harmless shoe ad to the
bathroom and set fire to it in the bathtub."

--- PKD, *Radio Free Albemuth*

So what does one do, anyway? Seth Morley knew. The Walker could be reached through the power of amplified prayer. Saving the life of a cat was real.

What's real about the last four novels of Philip K. Dick?

1. Orange County may be hazardous to your health.
2. There's a Starman waiting in the sky.
3. The umpire never stranded.
4. The Brain Police are inside of your head. ((Obey posted signs, and watch for passing ceramics vendors))

--- Lenny B.

Caffeine's Slave

by Kathleen Wood

Another cup of coffee, Joe...
I really need the speed.
No matter this is my eighth cup
Or that I'm wired indeed.
I don't care if I wreck my nerves.
I just want to get wired.
Who cares if my heart's going nuts?
It sure beats feeling tired.
I sit with friends in "cool" cafes.
My friends drink coffee, too.
We spout rhetoric 'till closing time.
That's all we ever do.
I don't mind that I've got no job
For cheap speed's all I dig.
I'd probably shoot straight caffeine
But I ain't got a rig.
I wonder why I can't give up
This beverage that I crave.
I guess I'll have to face the truth
That I am caffeine's slave.



Whistlestar



WHISTLESTAR
Lenny Bailes
504 Bartlett Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

return requested

TO: