



-by Michael Glicksohn

"A-HA" said Richard Labonte with his usual perspicacity as I staggered into his office laden with luggage, "You're back from New York." Smiling evilly he reached for a large pile of fanzines, most published before Noah launched the Ark.

"Read these 25 zines and review them in the next two days," he said, fingering the engraved handle of his neuronc whip.

"Ah come on Richard," I moaned, "I haven't even found anywhere to stay yet, I gotta call some people, I gotta unpack, I gotta..."

"You'll review those fanzines, Glicksohn," came the slow, measured Edward G. Robinson response, "or you'll slipshett the next entire 18,000 sheets of the next H&M run, without a single bottle of beer!!"...and I'd read three zines before my suitcase hit the ground.

Now Richard is the Overt Master of Canadian Fandom so he gets all sorts of fanzines. He put out LOW-DOWN, he publishes a zine of his own, (yes, really. And if you enjoy this column, write to him and maybe he'll send you a copy.) and hes the Canadian version of Harry Warner, Jr. so faneds all over the country innundate him with their efforts. Thus the pile of material I've just been through ranges all the way from SUPER CRUDZINE #1 (though it's not called that by its ed.) to the latest issue of Hugo winning SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW; and I've

been asking myself just why is it that so many fanzines fall short of the mark? What distinguishes an SFR from a TAPEWORM 1, or raises a WARHOON so far above a VORPAL SWORD?

The answer to these questions lies in two major areas, with a third, more subtle region of influence which should be considered. The two areas in which a fanzine stands or falls are content and appearance; this I believe is indisputable. In addition, personality or tone of a zine can be the difference between a good (i.e. enjoyable) and a dull effort.

SFR is enjoyed by more fans than any other fanzine around (correction: SFR is enjoyed by more fans who vote for Hugos than any other fanzine around) and it's very easy to understand why. The reproduction is superb; clear, crisp mimeo, copious, excellent artwork from Gaughan, Kirk, Rotsler, etc. and an excellent sense of layout. This fanzine is a joy to read. And the contents include something for everyone. For example, in the latest issue: for the serious science fiction fan, an article on the Ace Science Fiction Specials by Terry Carr, one on the state of modern writers and writing by Charles Platt, and on the Second Foundation brohaha by Andrew Offut. For the sf reader: book reviews that are well informed and intelligent by nearly a dozen reviewers. For the fandom fan, the sf fan, the feud fan and just about anyone else who has a brain and can think, the lettercol is stimulating, rewarding, infuriating, disgusting and an absolute must. So Geis has taken a good variety of well written, pertinent material, decorated it splendidly and tied it all together through his own personality and the result is the best zine around even though I often disagree with Geis' biases and object to his habit of breaking into locs to give his own opinion. He scores A+ in all three areas of fanzine editing and could well win several more Hugos if he can maintain the standards he's set this last year.



So why is RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY always abridessmaid and never a bride? Take appearance: RQ is offset, half-size and generally suffers from a dearth of

anykind of artwork. Thus, to me at least, it's very difficult to read. (Vol. 4, No.1 is somewhat an exception art wise. There's an excellent Derek Carter and four beautiful Findlay's, but the rest of the issue has only sparse and generally poor illos.) But RQ does get Hugo nominations so it must be the contents that are responsible for the magazine's popularity. RQ's serious articles are generally far more scholarly and far more pendantic than those of SFR and they have a far more limited appael. An example is a thirteen page article on an obscure German writer of the nineteenth century. While such material may be of interst to the scholars in the field, the average fan couldn't give a damn and would find it dull and turgid. In addition, the letter-col is heavily oriented to politics, philosophy and non sf subjects and while often informative, is rarely entertaining. And I firmly believe that fans today demand that zines entertain as well as instruct, or inform, or exchange ideas.

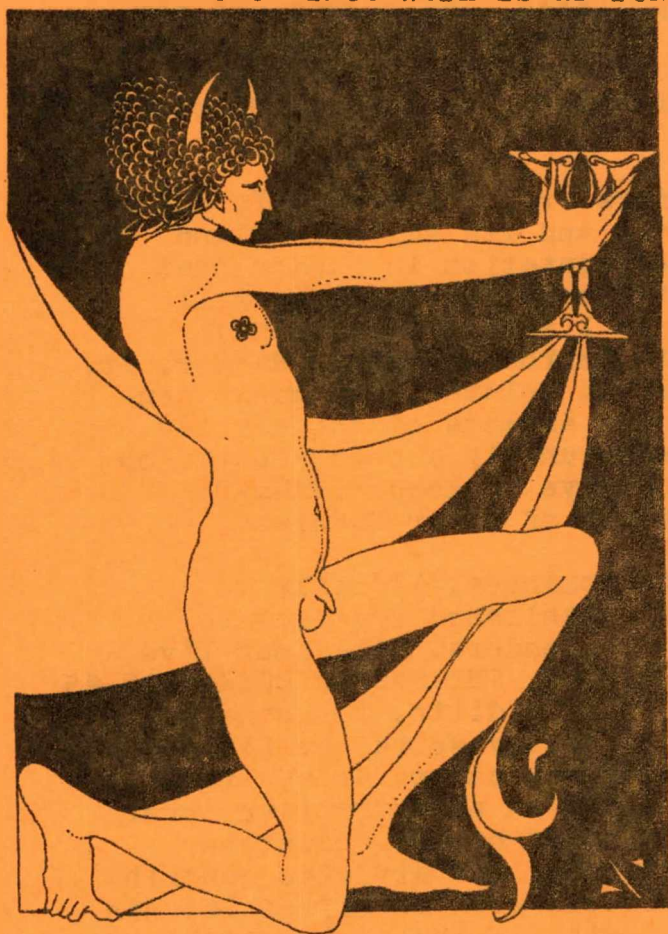


RQ is one zine that suffers from its tone. It has such a reputation for dullness and its editor, Leland Sapiro, enjoys such a unique reputation in fandom that many people are unaware of the many interesting, well written, and entertaining (yes I said entertaining) facets of this magazine. Jim Herron and Harry Warner, Jr. reglarly appear with fascinating columns, and guest contributors cover many intriguing aspects of the serious side of science fiction. Unfortunately a poor reputation and uninspired appearance contrive to keep RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY forever in the shadows of other fanzines.

Having looked at two Hugo nominees, I'd like to examine four reasonably well established fanzines to see why they aren't yet Hugo contenders. The four I've selected from my pile are: LOVE #9, THE PROPER BOSKONIAN #5 COSIGN #17, and QUARK #22 (LOVE is ditto, the others are mineo.) Now unless you're really weird the first thing you see in any fanzine is the cover, so any fan-ed worth his salt will strive for an as attractive cover as is possible within the limits of his reproductive system and budget. (And I suppose, his artistic contributions) PROPER BOSKONIAN succeeds with an offset Gaughan cover (really, Jack, Phoebe isn't all that inhospitable!) and LOVE has an offset melange by half a dozen people,

some of whom can draw, while others can't. The overall effect, though, is a positive one. QUARK isn't quite as effective. The Lovenstien illo, apparently electrostencilled, is certainly not one of his best, and the almost unnoticed typed name in the top left corner is a case of poor layout. COSIGN achieves much better results from an electrostencilled Ron Miller illo based on the Apollo shot; but none of the four is a total washout as far as cover is concerned.

On overall appearance COSIGN comes off best. The art is good, electrostencilled and fairly abundant, and the issue is nicely laid out, with only one or two facing pages of solid type. The mimeo work is sharp and clear. PROPER BOSKONIAN is only slightly less impressive, owing to the use of a variety of typewriters and hence conflicting type faces, and less good quality artwork. Their column headings are less professional than COSIGN's too, but the mimeo work is as readable. And they do separate



the letters in the lettercol more clearly than does COSIGN. On the other hand, LOVE is just poorly done. The art, with one exception is uniformly crude and downright bad. Ken Fletcher proves that ditto art can be good--and even if he hadn't, I've seen ditto work that would knock your eye out. In fact, one of the very few reproducing advantages of ditto in my book is the availability of colour for the art.) Editor Haskell has practically no sense of layout or style (red comments on bright orange paper? Come on now!) and even the quality of repro varies greatly from page to page. QUARK has the poorest quality mimeo and also suffers from considerable see-through on its white paper sections. Much of the art appears hand stencilled and there is just no comparison with electro-

stencilled material. The layout is inadequate but unimaginative (except for the lettercol where all the locs run into each other, a very elementary error in layout and one which is so very easily avoided.) In appearance then, COSIGN approaches the quality of SFR, the others falling varying distances behind it.

With regard to content, three of the four fanzines under consideration are not general interest zines. QUARK and LOVE are APA-zines and in addition QUARK is very nearly a rock music zine, while PROPER BOSKONIAN is still basically a club zine, even though one of interest to non-Boston area fans. COSIGN is a definite genzine. LOVE has the usual mailing comments usually found in APA-zines, plus a lengthy, rather personal editorial and a long "story" by Sandy Jordan that is neither well written, interesting nor true. The lettercol seems almost unedited but shouldn't be. I'm afraid all you need is definitely not LOVE.

QUARK bored me, quite honestly, but this is due to my own general disinterest in rock. From my reading, the material seems accurate and the opinions based on knowledge of the field. So, if this is your bag, you may enjoy it. Again, there are mailing comments that are fine if you belong to the APA, but are not of general interest. I enjoyed the letters but still felt that one of the most common faults of editors, young and old, is the failure to edit locs. (And I guess, columns like this.)

PROPER BOSKONIAN is a clubzine and has clubzine features. Articles by and about local fans, quizzes, descriptions of local fan doings, etc.; but since I know most of the people and since the writing is entertaining, I don't mind. The material is more varied than QUARK's or LOVE's including an intriguing,



if pseudointellectual look at intelligent life in the universe, another trivia quiz, a Miniconrep and an interestingly biased article about Latvian translations of American sf. The meatiest part of the mag is a thirteen page excerpt from "A Summer in the Life of Cory Seidman", being part (yes I said part) of Cory's BayCon report. Of interest only if you know the people involved; but I liked it. You could do worse than THE PROPER BOSKONIAN.

COSIGN has a good variety of content. A reprinted, and to my mind, substandard Tucker article, a long, well researched, extremely interesting, but sometimes biased look at Fandom as Institutionalized Escapeism by Joani Wood, a sporadic spoof by Jerry Kaufman and three more articles on 2001 and What's It All About? that concentrate largely on the Nietzschean interpretations of the film, but degenerate into name calling contests. The lettercol is tight, pertinent and informative, and if you've gathered I enjoyed the zine, you're absolutely right. It's still a step below SFR because of its slightly spotty consistency of content and the fact that fandom couldn't contain and probably doesn't need another lettercol like SFR's, but it's a damn good genzine and I recommend it highly.



(How much more will Labonte let me get away with?)

Here are the newer zines which might be the COSIGN's and TRUMPET's of tomorrow. CROSSROADS! #5, ICENI #6, AKOS #2 and ASMODEUS #3 (formerly MONSTROSITIES). ASS (he calls it that as well) has an electrostencilled REG cover. Sorry folks, but I don't dig REG--consider him an inferior craftsman and a bad artist, but that's just an opinion. The other three have offset covers; CROSSROADS! by Goldstone, simple but effective; ICENI by Delap, crude in places, but still a nice drawing; and AKOS by Judy Mitchell, which has some Beautiful half tones and is humourously executed to boot. Some of the new faneds must be wealthy or influential or both to produce such attractive zines.

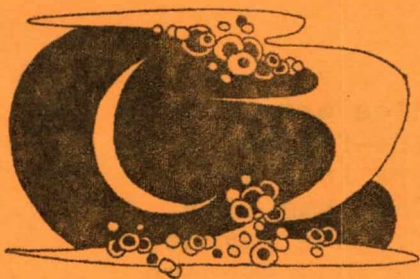
When we move to interiors, AKOS doesn't live up to its cover. A some-

what faded offset with dull layout and some nice art ruined by abismal repro (and don't you hate neo-faneds who use Selelectrics?). Judy Mitchell, however is someone to keep an eye on in fan art circles. ICENI has fair to average mimeo, but needs more art to improve the layout. Far too many pages of solid print. CROSSROADS! has average to good mimeo with electostenciled art by Rotsler (or so they claim but some of the cartoons look hand stenciled to me). There isn't much layout visable, just standard pages of printing. ASS on the other hand, has fairly good, if spotty, mimeo; but very good electro-stenciled art. Editor Smith should aim for line drawings as his machine obviously can't handle black areas. Properly repro'd, some of the art would be good, though Doug has a hang-up on nudes which doesn't add anything to his zine. In addition, he badly needs to understand the use of white space in a magazine, and the placing of articles and columns with reference to some overall pattern.

As far as content goes, CROSSROADS! is obviously out to become a Focal Point of Fandom with its series "We Love You-----" in which pros are disected monthly. This month Delany and Zelazny are castigated by "Jeff Scott" an admitted pseudnom used for objectivity in the readers. After setting up a pretty spurious definition of sf which includes the cliam that sf stories "take place neither yesterday nor today", Scott tries to prove that Delany and Zelazny are (a) not good sf writers, and (b) not good writers. This claim is based on a long, long discussion of the use of "which or thqt". The entire article strikes me as petulant and petty and the author (my personal guess is that it is Andrew Offut) spoils any points he might have made by his obvious desire to stir up a controversy. The rest of the issue is lettercol and editorial focusing on the drug scene in fandom. CROSSROADS! is striving too hard to be SFR; but if you're interested in these ideas and concerned about dope you might enjoy it even though the comments on grass are asinine.

AKOS is most definatly not controversial. Right now it's nbt much of anything, really. A Disclave report, two bad pieces of fiction,





and a thoroughly pretentious scientific article on interstellar travel in which the desire for scientific showing off almost obscures some interesting points. I found a few too many in-group references and the by-play between the eds palled after the first ten times; but if you like personalzines, maybe this is for you. The locs were good and I think AKOS will be a zine to recon with, but it will take a couple more issues for a definite less neo-ish image to appear.

ICENI is aiming for a genzine, but still has a long way to go before it'll be a challenge for a Hugo. Articles: on Fu-Manchu, not so good; costume shows, dull; reviews of fanzines, good; of books, not so good; because of being arty and strangely opinionated; of films by Delap which are beautiful to behold. And there's a lettercol, of course, but the whole thing lacks the depth required for a really good genzine. The material is too much on the surface with little penetration. Oh, it's interesting and considerably above mediocre, but it's hard to take ICENI seriously. Oh yes, almost half the issue is devoted to the first half of a STAR TREK screenplay which is no more puerile than most of the episodes we've seen.

And then there's ASMODEUS which manages to have all the faults a fanzine can have, but still promises well for its editor. I read most of ASS and decided that Doug Smith was probably 15. He was. It shows in his writing, his phrasing and his ideas. The zine is brash and arrogant and much of it turns me off. While Smith has all the faults of the young neo-fan, I can't help admiring any 15 year old who'd put out a 75 page zine! Most of the contributors are also new fans, so they probably don't realize that what they are writing is old hat, or that solutions have long been found to the problems they pose, or that



their ideas are not prpoerly thought out. If you like enthusiasm, ASS has it, but it's also pretty shallow and superficial in content and ideas. The reviews are plot summaries, and there's far too much useless adulation of Doc Savage (before you strike back, Doug, I've read and enjoyed over 30 Doc Savage novels), the article on w.itches had better be a put on, or it was written by a psychotic. There's something wrong with most of the other material too. But they're all faults that can be corrected by time, maturity and exposure to fandom, so good luck to you Doug Smith. After all, look what happened to Harlan Ellison.

The ten zines discussed here pretty well run the gamut of fanzine quality. Somewhere along the spectrum you'll find you're own level of appreciation, but you'll probably enjoy something from most of the other areas of fanzine publishing too. That's what fandom is all about folks.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #32, 52 pages, mineo, 50¢ each
Richard Geis, Box 3116, Santa Monica, Calif. 90403

RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY Vol 4, No1, 75 pgs, half size, offset,
60¢ each, 4/\$2
Leland Sapiro, Box 40, University Station, Regina, Sask.

COSIGN #17, 68 pages, mimeo, 35¢ or the usual
Bob Gaines, 336 Olentangy St., Columbus, ohio 43202

LOVE #9 37 pages, ditto, available for any response
Fred Haskell, 4370 Brookside Court, #206, Edina, Minn 55436

QUARK #22, 49 pages, mimeo, contributions
Besleigh & Chris Couch, Rte. 2, Bbx 889, Arnold, Mo 63010

THE PROPER BOSKONIAN #5, 48 pages, mimeo, 35¢ or 3/\$1
Richard Harter, c/o NESFA, Box G, MIT Branch PO,
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

CROSSROADS! #5, 39 pages, mimeo, 12/\$3 or the usual
Al Snider, Box 2319, Brown Station, Providence, RI 02912

ASMODEUS #3, 75 pagesm mimeo, 50¢ or the usual
Doug Smith, 302 Murray Lane, Richardson, Texas 75080

ICENI# 6, 56 pages mimeo, 40¢ or 3/\$1
Bob Roehm, 3166 Maple St, Jeffersonville, Ind. 47130

AKOS #2, 28 pages, offset, usual
Eli Cohen, no address given