

AMBLE 2

24th OMPA MAILING

Perpetrated by ARCHIE MERCER of 434/4 Newark Road, North Hykeham, Lincoln, England. (E&OE) Emanating from within the Caravan in the Shadow of the Malleable Ironworks. A MERCATORIAL PUBLICATION

THE SHAMBLES

being a review of the
23rd OMPA Mailing



OFF TRAILS v6:3 (Ron Bennett doing the honours) The cover is probably a Good Idea, and gives the whole just that little bit extra that it could probably do without. I mean it looks good, but it's strictly anti-functional (which is even worse than simply non-functional) - (a) because you now have to look inside for stuff you've come to expect outside, and (b) because now it doesn't even LOOK like OFF TRAILS.

As to the Proposal re the Presidency and TAFF, I have voted against this. This is mainly because I happen to be in favour of the idea (bear with me a sec) - but NOT in favour of having it declared official.

That is, I recognise the custom that has grown up of associating the OMPA Presidency and TAFF winners as a valid folk-custom of the Association and am in favour of a sort of common-law status for the system. But I'm dead against it being formalised. If I'd had my wits about me at the time I might have circulated another protest, but I was asleep. Come to that it's still not too late to circulate - but I'm STILL asleep. However, if it should perchance be voted official, you can rest assured that I'll be on the lookout for opportunities of non-constructive sabotage (unless of course I'm STILL asleep).

FABULOUS
FRED

SPIZZERINCTUM 3 (Ray Schaffer) "Significance" depicts a way of life that is not without its attractions - but I fail to dig the significance of the title. "Labyrinth" however fails to follow through.

A L'ABANDON 6 (Jim Caughran) Mainly fabulous west-coast-ish chatter, the high spot probably being the "Sam Hall" interlineation.

AMBLE 1 (me) This I'm afraid was rather more of a mess than it was supposed to be. For one thing, I somehow contrived to overrun the bottom of P.5 and didn't notice until the stencil was on the works machine and P.6 had already been run off. Hence the stray

sheet of foolscap in the middle and the fabulous blank double-page spread. Then when it came to the front page, the damn things stuck to the stencil and had to be pulled off by hand. So the girl hand-cranked with an open drum and I peeled off each copy as it came round. We'd got up a fairish speed by the end of the run. Main trouble was that there was too much show-through on P.2 as a result.

anIMu, curiae (George N. Raybin) Your dictum about "hating instead of being civilised and merely disliking" should be taken up as a warcry or something (if you see what I mean) by all fandom. Not to mention everybody else.

A pre-supplement is a supplement that appears before the item to which it bears a nominal supplementary relationship. I don't recall ever having used the term "post-advanced sheet" if only that it doesn't seem to convey a sausage. Anyway, I like Raybinzines.

ATOZ (Arthur Thomson) And, I suppose it could be said, about time too. Except for the strictly home-grown artwork in this, ATOZ compares interestingly with the previously-reviewed item, even to choice of subject for the bacover. The "Illo idea" is a good idea - and a good illo to start it rolling. Have to see if I can think up any possible subjects. As for your comment on POOKA, I'll just mention that Don Ford was presumably talking about the American Red Cross which may or may not bear some resemblance to our own native product, I wouldn't know.

CYRILLE 1 (Bill Evans) Another part of the scenery moves into the foreground. And now we've seen what you can be like in person, Bill, as distinct from Remembering Things Past, I can only express the heartfelt wish that you STAY here in the foreground.

I have "The Girl with the Swansdown Seat" as it happens, the "Lair" will presumably get there eventually when it's finished the fiction dept. I found it fascinating. The author, Cyril Pearl, is I understand an Australian. Though I don't see what that should prove, if anything.

ERG 4 (Terry Jeeves) ATOZ at least would comply with your suggested requirement for OMPazines on your bacover. Come to think of it, I'd sooner see that particular suggestion passed into law than the current one about OMPA Presidents and TAFF winners. FAR sooner. If somebody would propose it in all seriousness, I'd LOVE to vote for it!

EYE TRACKS 1 (George Locke) Fascinating (that word seems to be rivalling "fabulous" in my vocabulary) and meaty zine. The cover looks sort of Don-Allenish, though I regret that I'm still unable to puzzle out any meaning behind it. The idea of making (part of) a letter into an article is, of course, a valid part of the Editorial discretion. The far-fetched instance postulated on the bacover is of course ridiculous, but that doesn't invalidate the principle. Trouble is, the proper exercise of editorial discretion requires a discreet editor.

FANZINE INDEX 5 (Bob Pavlat) A monumental undertaking, which deserves to be more appreciated than it'll probably be. Even if its main use is only to "copyright" titles against future use by the ignorant. (Now somebody wants to bring it right up to date of course. And save me a copy).

FANZINE REVIEW 1 (Bob Madle) Personally I'd sooner see OMPazine reviews in an OMPazine, but I'm not complaining, only grumbling.

GRIST v2:2 (Ellis Mills) It's all very well to talk about my numbering system mate - I don't pretend to dig your NAMING system at times.

HUNGRY two (Alan Rispin) I'm not quite sure if this is an OMPazine hankering vaguely after being a generalzine, or a rather personalised generalzine arrayed as an OMPazine. In the mean time, whether or not it's really quite either of the above, I like it. In particular, the production side is magnificent (well, that's a change from fabulous and fantastic), with beautifully-stencilled illoes and layout and all, but the contents are well worth reading while you're at it.

morph 23 (John Roles) My boss, the works accountant, is a Scot. Once for some reason we got into an argument about Scots/Scotch/Scottish in his office. We got into really deep water, and he appealed to a Scotch dictionary (published in Scotland I mean, possibly Chambers') he had on his shelf. That bore me out all the way - "Scotch" was perfectly in order where I'd used it.

Either I haven't been following very attentively, or your Rollings have now started to roll by flashback. Apart from which, the only trouble with this is that it's too damn small John.

OOLONG (Bob Pavlat) Oolongtated? Uhlan? Too long? Somebody ought to be able to produce a passable pun oolong one of those lines.

PIPRESS 1 (Bjo) This Mailing seems to be full of first issues, all of excellent fannish quality. This is no exception. If anybody didn't realise it before, Bjo has a fabulous/fascinating personality, and this zine bears solid testimony to this both in the text and in the artwork. In fact I'd like to hold PIPRESS 1 up to show just what a near-ideal apazine should be like.

A "pipress" could be a female piper by analogy with a muddress. But then a muddress is NOT a female murderer (which is a murderess) but something architectural that I vaguely associate with castles. So a pipress is probably something equally unexpected - and, I most sincerely hope, nothing so prosaic as a machine for pressing pips or pies or something.

POOKA 10/11 (Don Ford) Unfortunately your elite type doesn't seem to sit well with your method of repro, Don. Pity. The gramophone record listing beats me to the jump again - when I've dealt with my fiction and readable non-fiction (I mean

I have no intention of covering dictionaries etc) I have plans for moving the Lair on to the musical side of my collection. That won't be till a year or two though. I realise this listing was prepared for mundane reasons and only put into POOKA as an after-thought, it's a pity you didn't think of that at the time because you could have gone into much fuller detail. In some places you list interesting-looking artists without saying precisely what they're doing, at others you omnibus artists under such titles as "Harlem Jazz 1930", all of which has its frustrating side. I rather like a lot of your stuff by the look of it, anyway. And the family-album photo's a nice idea, too.

SAND IN THE BEER (Mr Richard H. Eney) This is the sort of thing that ALMOST makes "Pebbles in the Drink" sort of stuff worthwhile.

SCOTTISHE 20 (Ethel Lindsay) Among "Scot" 's attributes is the same thing that I remarked on back there under "HUNGRY" - the quality of being a sort of general-type apazine or apa-type generalzine. This is not altogether a Good Thing I tend to feel, but SCOTTISHE has been doing it successfully for so long that it's grown into a more or less inseparable part of it, and it remains among my favourites. And when the list of contributors contains names like Willis, any objection could hardly help but be over-ruled.

WALDO 2 (Eric Bentcliffe) Talking about "I Married a Prozine", there's a little Story attached. I sent the typed stencils off to Jim for heading and illoing, they duly came back, I marvelled at the superb artwork on the stencils and placed them back in sequence. Then I took them to work to be run off. One by one they went on the machine. Then the title-page for this particular article went on the drum in its turn. I scanned it - and oh horrors, the title read "I MARRIED A FANZINE". This I understand was originally my own fault for mis-instructing the artist, and most certainly for not proofreading the damn title before printing. Anyway, the stencil was whipped smartly off again, cleaned up and borne homeward for alteration. There was no time to return it to Jim, so I had to have a bash myself. And very luckily indeed, the result (though not perfect) was infinitely better than I deserved. I wonder how many noticed the alteration?

ZOUNDS! 1 (Bob Lichtman) Another fairly fabulous firstish. Yes Bob, but I used "Oh Didn't He Ramble" some years before John did. The first time I used it was in ARCHIVE 2, 2nd OMPA Mailing, Winter 1954, when I headed P.7: "This is a column entitled OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE in the hope that nobody else has ever entitled a column OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE". The following instalment, in ARCHIVE 3, bore the sub-heads "(title copyright by the Fun Era League)" and "(the column where Anything can happen, and occasionally does)". The next couple of instalments were without subheads, after which (in ARCHIVE 7) I settled for "the column in which Anything can happen, but seldom if ever does", or thereabouts.

After John had used it, he tumbled to my prior use of it ("Also," he told me, "it would be a good name for a dixie tune.") However, I was by now bogged down in the welter of cumulative pre-supplements to ARCHIVE 14 and it was dormant, so I was just preparing magnanimously to turn over all rights in the title to John when he forestalled me by calling his column something else. So I guess I'm still stuck with it, and if I ever get round to putting out a general issue again I'll doubtless carry on using it. Particularly as (in contradistinction to "ARCHIVE") I actually LIKE it.

BLUNT 15 (Sandy Sanderson) As a matter of fact, I was first put on to "Ariadne & the Bull" by a certain Joan Carr who reviewed the thing in NU FU some time back.

THE LESSER FLEA 14 (Joy Clarke) Personally I like the sound of "agger-pothery" with a sharp "th". Of course the whole subject's really rather ridiculous, because if one was to back-travel till one found one, go up to it and call it an agapothere using any conceivable pronunciation one liked, it still wouldn't have a clue what one was talking about.

No, I can't say I've ever noticed what you say about "News Chronicle" readers - possibly because one just NEVER meets one, at least not in the circles I move in. I used to know somebody else once who read it - this was in my London days. We used to sit next to each other at work. He read the sports pages and nothing else, I read most everything but. Actually, one copy of the paper would have done nicely between the two of us.

You re microelite (MARSOLO review) - as one who believes in actively DISCOURAGING microelite, I suggest that microelite in OMPA should be penalised by making it non-eligible as activity or a page of it only counting as half a "quota" page or something.

You re high heels (end of MORPH review) - displacing the muscles and thus altering the shape of the leg doesn't make said leg look more INTRINSICALLY attractive. Actually, nothing is really intrinsically attractive, it's mainly a matter of education and/or environment. I presume that women wore high heels (to give them added inches) before their ankles were liberated from long skirts. Thus the male (and female too) got used to the idea of a slim ankle which became a standard adjunct to accepted feminine beauty. Supposing it had suited women's books to emphasise their LACK of inches though, and long skirts had gone out to reveal low heels - then maybe a somewhat thicker ankle would have been generally acclaimed the ideal.

You re drugs (DUPE review) - one thing I'm still by no means clear on is the question of where precisely falls the boundary between a "vice" (which is legal, often officially encouraged in the interests of the revenue, and is generally considered to be comparatively harmless) and a "drug" (which is generally agreed to be illegal, immoral, and possibly slimming too). Tobacco and most alcoholic drinks fall within the "vice" category, the great mescaline argument seems to hinge mainly on which category it belongs to. But where IS the boundary?

ADDENDA (Joy Clarke) Commended as was APathy.

TRANS-ATLANTIC FRINGE FAN 2 (Rich Brown) You mean that this is a SECOND first issue like? Sort of reminiscent of PLOY, or possibly that Ray Nelson thing.

Rape as a National Sport - somebody ought to be able to make something of that theme methinks. Not me, I daren't.

MARSOLO 6 (Art Hayes) The Greek article tended to be interesting, though somewhat of a rambling nature. I rather like the way you suddenly drop what you're talking about and print some stray article like this without preamble or introduction or anything, straight out of the blue (and out of context withal) as it were. The article isn't always worth reading, but the way you flash it before our startled gaze is definitely recognisable by now as a personality-trait. So MARSOLO is definitely showing personality now. This is a Good Thing, and I'm sorry I couldn't see this in the earlier issues - it takes time to fix the pattern sort of.

That's it for this quarter. Unless of course some other OMPazine shows up tomorrow before I've got this page finished. I wouldn't know, but every time I look at a set of OMPA reviews that I've done I get the impression that they're not as readable as the last lot - which in turn were vastly inferior to the lot before that, and so on. This lot, therefore, is clearly my worst to date, only to be exceeded in its utter mediocrity by the reviews I'll be doing on THIS Mailing.

This doesn't mean I'm losing interest - in fact I'd say I got more enjoyment out of this particular Mailing than usual if anything.

Today is tomorrow, and no more OMPazines are yet to hand, so this closes the reviews for this issue. And, apart from the Lair opposite (I think that should more properly have been split either "opposite" or if I can spin out this line long enough to match, "opposite") it virtually closes the issue for this issue, too.

I suppose I ought to apologise, really, because it looks very much as if this'll be a standard specimen of my quarterly OMPA output for some time to come. Basically, just the mailing reviews, a two-page Lair, and just a mere modicum of this sort of thing. the whole running to either eight or ten pages (six if I can do it).

The reasons for this are assorted and sundry, but can mostly be summarised under the following heads: (a) more and more general fan-zines keep flooding in and I'm getting fannishly overworked, particularly since (b) I tend to be a slow reader, writer and thinker to start with, (c) I look like having to treasure the BSFA for another year (stop me if this turns out to be inaccurate after the AGM), and (d) I'd been rather overworking the works typists who run these things off for me recently and it's about time I go slow.

Incidentally, this talk of SAPS's 800-page mailings fills me with alarm. It Can't Happen Here - I hope. 800-page mailings are a complete Way of Life in themselves, methinks.

Right. Natter over. Now is the time for another instalment of

LAIR OF THE LEADEN-FOOTED FANCY

PART 4

DUNDY, ELAINE The Dud Avocado
 Somehow, without apparently being up to much, this left me with the wish to maybe read it again some time. So into the collection it goes. One thing I like about it, by the way, is the title - which sounds utterly euphonious if pronounced "The Dudda-vocka-doo".

FOSTER, RICHARD The Rest Must Die
 Run-of-the-bomb "Catastrophe" stuff, but I'm a sucker for the old Catastrophe.

McINTOSH, J.T. Worlds Apart (Born Leader)
 World Out of Mind
 The Rule of the Pagbeasts (The Fittest)
 One In Three Hundred (trilogy)
 The Esp Worlds
 The Big Hop
 The Million Cities
 200 Years to Christmas
 Novelettes

J.T. McIntosh is of course one of my standing favourites. Apart from the longer stories listed above (of which all but the first three are magazine extracts), I have some fourteen shorter novelettes. As far as individual stories go, the original "One In Three Hundred" novelette (which I've never dared re-read - I'm saving it for some Special Occasion) is one of the most memorable stories I've ever read anywhere. And "The Esp Worlds" (which reads to me like two-thirds of another trilogy, and requires a final episode to round it off properly) is still the best serial I've ever read in New Worlds.

MacVICAR, ANGUS The Singing Spider
 At one time, a number of his adventure-stories were available in paperback, and I read them with avidity. They'd disappeared into the limbo whence they'd come, however, by the time I started Collecting them. All except this one, which is by no means what I remember as his best.

MERWIN, SAM (Jr) The House of Many Worlds
 Three Faces of Time
 Knife in My Back
 The Creeping Shadow
 Centaurus
 The Dark Side of the Moon
 The Sane Men of Satan

This is another one I tend to go for. The first two titles are a "set" that you can hardly have missed hearing of, good solid sfic-adventure stuff. The third and fourth titles are detective stories - I don't go for detective stories as such, but Merwin manages to keep them going on the adventure and

general-interest level as well. "Knife in my Back" for instance (an L.O. Botomy title if ever there was one - there IS a knife-murder involved, but not for pete's sake of the narrator) is largely concerned with the paperweight-collecting fad and its ramifications. The last three titles are all magazine-extracts. I THINK I'm right in assigning "The Sane Men of Satan" to Merwin - it's actually bylined "Jacques Jean Ferrat".

MILLER, WALTER M. (Jr) Novelettes

Just a couple - "Dumb Waiter" and "Blood Bank" actually. Around that time, he went through a brief phase of adventure-novelettes that found favour in my eyes, before he went all literary on us.

MYERS, CHARLES F. The "Toffee" stories

I'm not entirely sure I'm a completist in this line, but I try to be. I have ten stories, seven from "Fantastic Adventures" and the last three from "Imagination". They're in the "Thorne Smith tradition", though all based on the same gimmick that is put through its paces under different conditions. The earlier stories in particular are screamingly funny in parts. One odd angle to the series is that the longest story, "The Shades of Toffee", is sort of in a different continuum to the others, because it totally ignores all that has gone before, and the protagonist discovers Toffee for the first time all over again. My own surmise is that after his success with Fantastic, Myers wrote out the novel-length effort with an eye on book-publication, which didn't pan out, so it went to Fantastic the same as its predecessors. And Hamling couldn't be bothered or something to insist on its being amended to take its proper place as a sequel before publishing.

NESBIT, E.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
The Would-be-Goods

A batch of Puffins of E. Nesbit's came out fairly recently, and I got them all. They comprised two sets. One set comprised three out-and-out fantasies (two of which I'd read before) which, although they had much to commend them, somehow failed to enthrall me as they doubtless should have done. The other set comprises the two above-listed stories. These I had not read before (although I seem to recollect having heard an episode from the first-mentioned on the wireless once), and turned out to be simply mundane-type children's stories. And they "got" me so much that I've hung on to them. It's something in the author's basic attitude that makes the difference - in the three fantasies she deals sympathetically with the children, but they somehow fail to come over. In these two books she writes AS one of the children, and takes one (me, anyway) right into their family circle. If only she could have done that for the fantasies as well, they would have surely been perfect of their kind.

Anyway, I'm now definitely more than half-way through the fiction listing. More next time.