

Spring 1956

Issue #13

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BIRDSHITE is published by the Society for the Preservation of Robert Bloch, edited by Vernon L. McCain, distributed through FAPA and with no particular regularity and certainly no promptness to waiting listers. Stencils by McCain. Mimeography by Ted White.

Levity is the sole of wit.

Fairly frequently I receive queries about things that have appeared in BIRDSHITE, wanting to know who is responsible. Therefore, a statement of policy which I've never gotten around to making before. The editor takes all credit for the vast bulk of material in the magazine and also, I'm afraid, he must take all blame. It has always been my policy to identify the source on anything non-original which I may use. Last issue represented a slight deviation in that the cover, a Dennis Norton drawing which Terry Carr sent to me on stencil arrived after the rest of the magazine was completed so only the initials DM in the corner indicated source. The only material which is regularly used from any other source is the Bill Morse column. A couple of years ago Jack Speer was remonstrating as to the pointlessness of identifying a quote as coming from Thomas Jefferson, but since even well-known quotes are occasionally misattributed to some fan who merely happened to use them around another fan who was unfamiliar with them, I think such attribution is proper. This policy applies to everything in the magazine, including interlineations (though I disclaim responsibility for unconscious plagiarisms.) Where the interlineation is not original, its creator will be credited, when his name is known. Where I have no idea of the source but it is not original I put anon. at the end of the line and where I only have a general notion that source will also be indicated, as below.

Behind every silver lining there's a cloud.

radio

### Chant of the Faithful

Leader: You can tell your tales of the gods of the East....

Quite potent, all mighty, and such;

You can make the roof ring as you chant and you sing

Of the gods of the Belgians and Dutch,

~~But~~ from North or from South, from the East or the West

The multitudes all must applaud.

For right down to a man they realize and estan

That Bloch is the only true Ghod.

Chorus: YEA, BLOCH IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD.

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Leader: Oh, I've heard in Bombay, when a rajah's at play  
And the elephants take a siesta,  
Flies and gnats you will find, near a bovine behind,  
Taking part in an insect's fiesta,  
But though Hindus may fast, so the flies can repast,  
We Westerners know it's a fraud.  
All the fans, you will find, are of only one mind,  
For Bloch is the only true Ghod.  
Chorus: YEA, BLOCH IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD.

Leader: And the Bhuddists, they say, through the dark and the day  
Find their bellies a sight that will sure please.  
No mere navel, I fear, will replace divine bheer,  
(Unless it be Gypsy Rose Lee's).  
For liquor and ladies lead only to hades  
In the dogmas you meet while abroad  
For it's true, and let's face it, they cannot replace it  
For Bloch is the only true Ghod.  
Chorus: YEA, BLOCH IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD.

Leader: And Mohammed's descendants now crave independence,  
Want to wage holy war against Israel.  
While they may not produce more than one broken truce  
Still they'll manage to spread all their mis'ry well.  
But we simply ignore (since it is such a bore),  
It will vanish as wholly as vaude.  
For theirs naught in creation like the grand revelation  
That Bloch is the only true Ghod.  
Chorus: YEA, BLOCH IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD.

Leader: Then there is Billy Sunday, and some say that one day  
He'll Christianize all of the Earth.  
But the path I foresee would more probably be  
To collapse in hysterical mirth.  
The revivalist tent may (to those with the bent)  
Produce rapture (with only a prod)  
But we find it more pleasant to get on with the present  
While Bloch is the only true Ghod.  
Chorus: YEA, BLOCH IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD.

Leader: You may be oh so sure that the French keep l'amor,  
While Chinese are nuts about dragons,  
Germans cling to a monical, and sabres conical,  
While Swedes drink only from flagons.  
Japanese like to fly kites, the Spanish have bullfights,  
The British retain "Joan the Mad".  
But we lack superstition, divine intuition  
Tells us Bloch is the only true Ghod.  
Chorus: YEA, BLOCH IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD.

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Who steals my purse steals cash.....  
But not much.  
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1929 WAS A LONG TIME AGO

BIRDSMITH--Sufficient interest was aroused by the interlineations  
that at least two fans wrote their guesses to me direct, so per-



haps I should reveal the answer, rather than just letting it dangle in mid-air, as I'd rather intended. One of the guesses (Boyd Raeburn's) was correct; all the titles are by Alec Wilder. And in case anyone was suspicious, no hoax is involved. Everyone of these is a bona fide musical composition; I have all of them in my record library. None have lyrics, though.....they aren't that type of music. (Afraid I can't tell you what type music it is....Wilder defies classification.) It would be interesting to try to figure just what sort of lyrics would go with a title like "Jack, This is My Husband" though.

FANHISTORY #1--Although I live in Wenatchee, I seldom read the local paper. Instead I read the SEATTLE TIMES. This is partly because I like their comics, and partly because I like their columnists, but chiefly because my favorite paper, the PORTLAND OREGONIAN, is not available here. I normally don't read their Letters to the Editor section, but once in a while when I have a few minutes of my lunch hour to kill before returning to work I skim through them. A few weeks ago I read a brief little letter at the end of the column and thought, "That sounds exactly like Speer" but even so was a trifle surprised when I reached the signature and found the name John B. Speer. Just goes to show that you never know where you are going to stumble over fans. Incidentally, I wonder just what fan tried proselytizing the erudite music reviewer, Rob Darrell? A few years ago, when he was handling DOWN BEAT's classical section (he's now on the HIGH FIDELITY staff) he made some reference to musical 'fen' and then added in a footnote that this was the plural of fan as coined by science-fiction devotees. The very same issue of DOWN BEAT, in a column of trivia, had a note about some Ray Bradbury eccentricity....that he refused to have a telephone in his home, I believe. Just how Bradbury was connected with things musical I never did figure out... Evidently a number of the more modern jazzmen read stf, however. One group recorded an instrumental titled "Slan" a few months back. And about the same time another group produced one titled "Martians Go Home". One reviewer who obviously is not up on things stfnal nominated this for cleverest title of the year. I wonder if Fredric Brown reads DOWN BEAT and METRONOME? I would read METRONOME, if I were he. George Simon devoted a whole editorial to praising him, once, in 1951. However, he was discussing Brown's detective stories, not his stf.///Personally, I'm still waiting for some jazz group to record "Skiddin' With My Shiver Kid" ...and send an autographed copy to E.F.Russell.

FANTASY ALISTEUR--I'd like to protest the method of computing points in this poll. This system is advanced as being desirable because it gives decided margins. But who decided that decided margins were desirable? And if it's margins you want you'd have gotten even better ones by allotting 100 points to each first place vote, 2 points to each second place vote, and 1 for each third wouldn't you? There is no foolproof method of reflecting the voters exact intentions but certainly arbitrarily throwing a lot of extra points to a first-place winner doesn't do it. For instance, I have voted HORIZONS into first place every year prior to this one. For the first time, I reluctantly dropped it to second and put GRUE into first. This doesn't mean I think less of HORIZONS than I did before, but only that for the first time there was a magazine present which was ever so slightly superior to it. An accurate mathematical indicator of my sentiments would probably give GRUE 5 points and HORIZONS 4.9. But, according

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to the interpretation given it here I like GRUE  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times as well as I do HORIZONS. Of course, there's no practical way to go in for fine shadings but I think the fairest way around is to assign an arbitrary number of categories in each group (five would probably be most practical) and then give 1 to the fifth-ranker, 5 to the top-scorer, and the logical amount for each in between. Even this tends to pyramid probably more than the voters really intended. There may be several brilliant front-runners who are much more highly thought of than the bulk of the mediocre ones behind but there is no convenient mathematical way to show this. Instead, a Warner (who probably just squeezes home ahead of a Grennell or Boggs with most voters) gets so many first-place votes that even with this method of counting he appears to be anyplace from 50% to 150% better liked than the second-place contender.

FIENDETIA--The line is "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dogs." or were you accurately quoting a misquotation by Calkins? Incidentally I wonder how the word backs got tacked onto the end of the sentence, as quoted by you. I've seen the same thing fairly frequently in the past, but it seems pointless. It is redundant and wholly unnecessary from the alphabetical standpoint, also. And it's not part of the original sentence.///What gave you the idea that my habit of discussing things and people in general terms without identifying the subject by name was subconsciously motivated? I do it deliberately, for much the same reason that Warner related, a few years ago, that he found it impractical to discuss Communism or McCarthyism with the average person. Most people (even highly intelligent ones) are quite emotional. They hang tags and labels on things and people and once the label is on it is very difficult to make them take it off again. If you try to convince them something is other than they believe their minds snap shut almost instantly and it takes practically shock tactics (like gold-plated proof that one of their pet notions is completely wrong....and that's difficult to come by) to pry it open, again. Similarly if you are trying to make a general point and use a specific individual of thing to make your point, you never know what pet prejudice you may be treading on in that person's mental attitude toward your example. Usually they will insist on twisting the conversation away from the point and argue about some unimportant aspect of the thing you were using only to illustrate a more important point. It's irritating and furthermore you don't make much progress. Therefore I years ago acquired the habit of speaking in general terms whenever possible. Sometimes I was recounting details I wouldn't want made public in relation to an individual. But, usually, I was merely trying to keep my protagonist (or otherwise) away from side issues and with his mind on the point I was trying to make. For instance, you might differ with me on Zhukov's popularity or the path he would take if he acquired power. Few people have the control necessary to bypass it, if they felt that way, and not insisting on arguing about it. But, as it happened, that was quite unimportant. I was merely using that as an example and the important question was whether, given a leader with the qualities I attributed to Zhukov, events would proceed as I predicted. So I did not mention Zhukov until my point until my point had been made. Also, using these tactics, it is sometimes possible that someone may fail to recognize who you are talking about and you can actually make them see your point and agree to something which they would never do were they aware of the subject. Having once accepted it, a re-evaluation is called for when they find



learn the identity and realize they possess two conflicting opinions. Usually it is the earlier opinion which retreats. It is one of the few effective ways I know of of using logic and reason to change a man's mind. He probably won't completely abandon his earlier notions but a start has been made.///Speer's statements in this mailing on your 'interpretation' of the constitution merely being quoting it in slightly different language reflects my own views and what I would have said if Speer hadn't. Inasmuch as Speer is supposed to be the chief author of FAPA's constitution I think it pretty well establishes that you did not do "exactly what the authors of the constitution would have wanted (you) to do".

GERMINE--There have been quite a few comments in the last year about a 'Carr-McCain feud'. It's true that I've disagreed with Gertrude with fair frequency and at considerable length for the past five years. But I don't think I've done so as consistently or violently (and probably not as frequently) as quite a few others. I considered the term a joke at first and then was slightly irritated when one or two FAPAs appeared to be taking it in earnest. But I didn't take it particularly seriously until after the last mailing when I received a letter from Gertrude, herself, indicating that she also was coming to accept that such a state existed. So I think a public statement is called for. As far as I'm concerned, no such 'feud' exists. I disagree with her on a fantastic number of subjects; I disapprove of some of her actions, a few of her personality traits, and occasionally even the way she thinks. But I have considerable respect for other facets of her personality and approve highly of her outspokenness in the areas in which we agree. I always enjoy reading GERMINE and would be saddened to have her drop from FAPA (just as I felt about the loss of Laney, of whom I also disapproved in many respects, and with whom I just about as frequently disagreed). I've disagreed with her, with considerable heat, in print frequently before this and undoubtedly I shall continue to do so. I think her views on many subjects veer dangerously close to the fringe of totalitarian methods but I certainly would not want to interfere with her continuing to express them. Or, to paraphrase Voltaire (or somebody) "I may disagree wholly with what she says, but I shall defend to the death my right to continue disagreeing with her at the top of my voice."

HORIZONS--The 'frank' method seems to me merely an unhypocritical method of handling a practice which can't be prevented. The constitution states only that the magazine should be 'substantially the work of the member'. This phrase is not further defined. It's left up to the member to do so. Certainly if the member cuts all the stencils and runs off the magazine it is 'substantially' his work, even if he didn't write the material. Do you object to the fact that most of GRUE is not by Grennell and much of it by non-members? And if none of it is by the member how are you going to tell whether or not he cut the stencils? Or is it all right for me to staple Bill Morse's "Letter from London" in with BIRDSMITH as a column, but dreadfully immoral if I stapled it separately and included it as a separate magazine named "Letter from London". It is as big as many FAPazines. What if Morse should start cutting his own stencils. You surely wouldn't object if I still stapled them in with BIRDSMITH, would you? Well, why would it be any worse if this same material were circulated by me independently in FAPA? Even if it were stapled by Morse. I don't run off my own stencils at, all, any more, you know. And supposing you do ban 'franked' material. All that is necessary is for the member and his cohort to put on the masthead that it is published and edited by the member. How would you

counter that? It's not at all unusual for FAPA to have sub rosa members. Lee Jacobs appears to becoming one, right now. And Bill Morse is already one. He receives my entire mailing when I complete reviewing it, and he contributes regularly to FAPA an amount of material way above the activity requirements. No one is being deprived of anything thereby. All that happens is that FAPA has acquired an additional voice, one that (judging from comments received to date) meets with 100% approval. Morse does not have to wait for several years to become acquainted with FAPA or FAPA with him. It makes for a bigger BIRDSMITH and thus a slightly bigger FAPA mailing but since large magazines are almost universally applauded surely no one is complaining about that! If so, FAPA's most popular magazine, GRUE, is going to have to shed half a dozen contributors. I see nothing wrong with the franking process, unless it is abused by distributing material of little or no interest, like the oil company comics. And I'm in favor of relying merely on publicly expressed disapproval to keep those in check. I think it will work. That was the only serious abuse since I've been in FAPA. A few years ago I offered to help make Wrai Ballard an unofficial member. I was sending him my mailings then and I offered to circulate his magazines in FAPA with a front-sheet stapled onto it with two stencils by me in which I listed the two of us as 'co-editors' though it would have been his magazine. About the same time I set out to see if I couldn't do, by myself, what others had done with help.....that is, shoehorn myself into an APA without sitting out the waiting list and without officially being a member. I did it too; of course, I had help...from Ballard, but he didn't know till it was all over what my intentions were. In that case, again, we saw too it that the SAPS treasury, the waiting-listers, and the other members were none of them to suffer through our actions. Both Ed Cox and Peter Graham misunderstood some of our actions and objected. I explained more fully and think I satisfied Cox but I got a letter from Graham full of very fuzzy reasoning in which he tried to claim there was something morally wrong in even looking for loopholes in the SAPS rules in order to accomplish something its founders hadn't intended, despite the fact that he enjoyed an unofficial membership in FAPA, through Terry Carr's help, long before he became an actual member. It is ironic that this is the same Graham who, having violated the spirit of the FAPA constitution and even its over-generous technicalities, is now trying to hold on to a fraudulent FAPA membership by getting his cronies to sign a petition to waive his requirements for last year, despite the fact of the long waiting list. At this writing I don't know if he was successful or not but I think all signers of that petition should be censured. With the waiting list its present size I don't think I'd sign such a petition even for Boggs, although at least Boggs contributions to FAPA have been such as to warrant it. But the catch is that it would never be necessary in Boggs' case, since Boggs is a conscientious individual and has already considered resigning because of his recent decrease in interest. But certainly nothing in Graham's history merits extending this sort of leniency, certainly not now of all times. I have nothing personal against Graham but neither do I have anything I can think of particularly in his favor. His fannish and FAFish careers have both been undistinguished (his one claim to fame we will tactfully forget). He has consistently exhibited a lackadaisical attitude which led to trying to get egoboo without doing the necessary work to reap it which others perform. There is nothing particularly wrong with any of this except that such an individual certainly does not merit the extension of special favors, especially when our waiting list is badly overcrowded.



To aggravate matters, Graham recently announced his intention of doing the absolute minimum necessary to maintain his membership....and for no better reason than that he'd acquired newer, more attractive interests. Certainly, at this point in FAPA's history such an individual hardly presents a picture of one entitled to any special consideration and I consider it impertinent for him to request it, and a sign of irresponsibility for FAPA members to abet him in this attempt. Notice that it is always the Graham's and Perdues who slide through on technicalities; never the really worthwhile members. (Incidentally, the latest EMBROIDERINGS arrived quite a bit later than 45 days after the arrival of my mailing, although there is no date on the postmark.) Possibly a few of Graham's closest friends like Carr and Rike couldn't avoid signing the petition but there is little excuse for the rest. Something is seriously wrong if a California FAPA can't be ejected no matter what his actions, simply because all the other California fans come to his rescue. It seems to me that this is a hole in FAPA's constitution which should be plugged. Under the present system there is nothing to prevent sixteen people from banding together to stay members without any activity whatsoever. Each quarter, as four are dropped for non-activity, the other twelve merely submit four petitions requesting activity requirements for these four be waived, and presto! they're back in good standing again. I think it should require at least a majority vote to waive any member's requirements.///I think you are oversimplifying the situation when you state that even extreme popularity wouldn't help a government leader who felt like uttering heresy. Remember, I postulated that the leader would have become supreme, the most important man in the government. It's an old stfnal cliché, this bit about the beloved leader who suddenly finds himself cut off from all contact with the people by his evil subordinates, but I doubt that it would work in real life. You speak of his uttering 'heresy'. But who is to determine what is heresy....especially in the Communist world where the line is constantly shifting....and how does it shift? To reflect the views of the men at the top in the Kremlin. No man would ever attain supreme power without a sizable basis of support within the government. Popularity with the people would be merely an extra bonus in such circumstances. Under such circumstances how would any rival or any group of rivals manage to muster the necessary power to cut him off from all public channels? And who would have sufficient authority to suppress a speech made by the most powerful man in the government? Suppose it were tried; it could not be kept secret from other members of the government and the leader's loyal supporters would instantly be plotting the downfall of the suppressors. And fooling the populace with the benevolent bulletins, as you visualize, would not work for long. There is always a minimum number of people in on such an operation. Some of them inevitably talk. And rumors start. In a police state rumors carry much more importance than in a democracy and they can carry plenty of weight here. With a genuinely popular leader it would take very little to arouse the populace to suspicion and a hysterical demand that the leader be produced in good health, to refute the rumors. And doubles never bear sufficient resemblance to a really well-known face to pass close scrutiny. Two or three times a year we see the rumors start when some Communist bigwig fails to appear in public for a while. And the Communists react; they are by no means immune to public opinion. Except in a case like Beria's the official is always put on view shortly after at some extremely public function. I'll admit that, while we don't know the true facts of Stalin's death, it appears that his end superficially matches the pattern you describe. He probably was murdered; and the people were fed soothing syrup about

his lingering illness. But it now begins to appear that Stalin had terrorized and alienated almost every other segment of government, thus weakening the base which supported him. It's interesting to recall that the head of Stalin's bodyguard was announced as having died five days before the supposed date of Stalin's death. And, further, despite the Stalin deification campaign, Stalin seems to have lacked genuine popularity with the Russian people. They accepted him as a demi-god and revered and respected him but do not seem to have adored or even particularly liked him. Notice that only in Stalin's home state was there any particular resentment of the campaign to tear him down./// Hollywood's difficulty in maintaining copies of films made in the early part of this century is due chiefly to the expense and trouble of transferring them to modern film stock, rather than any undue perishability of the present acetate material they use. I understand current stock should remain good for a minimum of 300 years. By that time something much more permanent should be available. Admittedly the material used fifty years ago was fragile and is already crumbling but the industry has come a long way since then.///The chief reason why the lie detector isn't used more commonly is probably because it is almost worthless for any purpose except frightening criminals. There are supposed to be only about three dozen men in the country capable of accurately interpreting a lie detector's results and I understand they frequently disagree with each other on their interpretations, plus which they admit (though quietly) that there are a number of ways of beating the machine. I think the courts are wise in refusing to advance the lie detector to any official status....though I think it is little short of criminal that such genuinely accurate scientific tests as the blood tests for paternity should be left up to the whims of a jury. I'm afraid none of us who recall that Charlie Chaplin was positively proven innocent in the Joan Berry case and still had to wind up supporting the child can spare much sympathy for Phyllis Economou's poor abused little "woman who always pays". I've read articles which indicate that this sort of thing is extremely common but, of course, few cases are as well publicized as Chaplin's and in many cases such positive proof of innocence is unavailable. Not that proof seems to make much difference to the average jury. They seem to say "He's a man, isn't he? Let him pay through the nose." And the more prosperous and respectable a man may be, the more vulnerable he is to this type of extortion, since the real father quite frequently is no longer around where hands can be laid on him and, in any case, quite frequently is neither financially nor socially the type of father our dewey young mother would choose to give her new child. Personally, I consider paternity suits the most unjustified legal racket since breach-of-promis suits were outlawed. If the girl was raped, she should have gone to the police at the time. And if she wasn't then she went into it knowing exactly what could result.

KEEP YOUR COTTON PICKIN HANDS OFF MY FANZINE--I think Lee deserves a salute for clearing up the business of the VAW fund. As all of us who were at all familiar with the fund have known for some time, Shelby has been done a very serious injustice in the frequent misattribution of credit here. Perhaps I should explain, to those who wondered why I (who have frequently expressed my admiration for most things Hoffmanish) failed to find a satisfactory candidate in the TAFF fund list in which her name was included. The chief reason was that Lee was being plugged as the person who almost single-handedly brought Willis over here in 1952. This not only was untrue but I felt that probably at



least two thirds of the votes she received would be for this reason. There was also the fact that Lee had been inactive as a fan for more than two years prior to her nomination and I feel that the nominations should be reserved for active fans. Since that time Lee has begun active once more and certainly no one could complain on that score now, but there was certainly no way of foreseeing that she would become active and I consider the nomination of inactive fans to be a bad practice, even if it did turn out all right in this case. But my primary objection is still in the way the fund is being run and I still shall continue to refuse to support it this year.///Just after typing the above the mail arrived, containing the latest A BAS and the news that Lee Hoffman is now Mrs Larry Shaw. Congratulations. Will you now go by the name of Shirley Shaw? Alliterative, anyway.

LE MOINDRE--I believe FANTASY is currently preparing a definitive series of Buddy Bolden LP's to be titled the "Buddy Bolden Story", including ten albums in all starting with "Buddy Bolden in New Orleans", "Buddy Bolden Meets the Prez", "Buddy Bolden Plays Pretty", "Buddy Bolden South of the Border", "Buddy Bolden With Strings", "Buddy Bolden Plays Cole Porter", and "Buddy Bolden with Lennie Tristano". Or if they aren't yet preparing them, I'm sure they will as soon as they think of it.

LARK--Reservation is, as everyone knows, an irreverent reservation, or a place where impious Indians live.

PHLOTS.M--I'm hurt that you should doubt the bona fides of our supplies. Just as "Bloch is the only true Ghod" so, also "Ghod is the only true Bloch." Please mail that \$50,000 check immediately. I need to pay my income tax.//Just Phyllosophising was a delight throughout, this time. I wish I were still editing a generalzine so I could ask you to do a column, for me.

POO--What ever gave you the idea I considered you unfit timber for F.F.A. On the contrary I consider you, Economou, and Raeburn to be by far the most worthwhile infusion of blood F.A.P. has had in some time...since Grennell, mebbe.

RAIBLING F.P.--Like you, I begin to feel uneasy when in the presence of more than two other people at a time. I think that perhaps it is because too many random factors are thrown into the equation with so many individuals. In the presence of one or two other individuals I can usually keep fairly good control of the situation and, if I wish, guide it into whatever channels I wish. But above that number it is no longer practical and there is no way of knowing what may result. Being a pawn of fate was never my idea of the way to spend the summer.

STEFANIT.SY--I endorse Grennell's words on grade-skipping 100%. I don't know what my life would have been like had I been allowed to proceed through grade and high school in the normal 12 years but it certainly would have been far different and I think I would have been much better off. There are many things I disapprove of in my parents methods of child-raising but none so much as in their encouragement of their children's grade-skipping (I'm one of seven children and each of us skipped one grade, and three of us skipped twice). Notice that it took me nine pages to get through the K's in my reviews, and finished the rest of the alphabet in one page? This last page was mostly cut 24 hours later than the others. My apologies to everyone whose mags come late in the alphabet, but I guess I just wasn't in the mood, today.

Bill Morse's LETTER FROM LONDON  
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In London today, there are roughly fifty theatres still retaining their original grandeur and still used for their original purpose of providing stage shows of varying interest and morals. As a general rule, you could say that (at any time) I have seen fifteen of the current offerings, which is not bad going for a man who spends long periods out of the city each year, and I remain a fairly constant theatre-goer because I like the additional air that a true stage givesy mostly due to the fact that the limitations of the stage as compared to the screen confine the imagination of the playwright, eliminating any tendency to highflown tediousnesses. Olivier can make a small stage extend to the ends of the earth, while some film actors of unhappy memory can make the Dynamic Frame seem like a much reduced and out of focus photo on the back page of the Daily Mirror.

At the time this is being typed, I could not recommend more than five of the plays running - that does not include musicals, which do not attract me overmuch - and the leading one is one which has been running since mid-1954. It may come as a surprise to you to learn that this is an American comedy, and a gentle comedy, at that: The Teahouse of the August Moon. I've seen it five times, twice with the girlfriend of the moment, once with relations who were visiting London and wanted to be given the treatment, and twice by myself just because I liked it. There is something so essentially likeable about it, and equally so essentially American that it exercises a fascination on me equalled so far only by Les Sylphides and Disney's Fantasia. That is a motley bunch, no doubt, and amateur psychiatrists will possibly be tempted to make deductions from it - I'll be interested to hear any that may be made.

The fact remains that Teahouse is playing to an enormous business, first to the regular theatregoers of London, then to the American servicemen and the seasonal visitors from Stateside, and then to the English provincials as they visit the capital. Not only that, but they are going again and again, in the same manner and for the same reasons as myself. It is an altogether delightful play in which some rather Pogo-like islanders most politely avoid being Civilised by the Forces of Democracy by continuing to be themselves and end by winning the occupiers over to their own way of life. The mere fact that in this case the occupiers are the US Army has little bearing on the matter, since the Armed Forces of almost any country behave in pretty much the same way, and it may even be that the play is enhanced by the fact that the nominal hero is a quite definitely recognisable model of the "nice quiet PLEASANT American boy" who spreads the gospel of the American way of life far more effectively than any number of Ambassadors.

I hope to see it at least once more before it comes off - and so far as I know that will not be in the immediate future.

What looks like being the film of the year is Olivier's version of Richard III. I've not seen it yet, but the reviews are with him to a man, which is the most encouraging sign; because the most carping of them can find no greater fault than the fact that Olivier has done some editing. When a critic has to descend to such a manoeuvre, then obviously he has no fault to find whatever, but is afraid of losing his carefully builtup reputation of The Poison Pen.



I recall, in 1945, how Olivier took the Old Vic Theatre Company on a tour of the Army areas in Europe. I was at Luneburg at the time he appeared in Hamburg, and we thought that it would not be too much waste of a Saturday afternoon to drive in the Humber up to see his version of Richard III on the condition that we would all walk out if it were not up to snuff. I had the impression, before the lights in the auditorium were dimmed, that a good 80% of the audience present were like us, soldiers with time to kill, bored to tears with life as an occupying force, and intent on getting our money's worth (the show was free, actually, but we had the paying audience attitude) or show our disapproval. We didn't have long to wait to learn that we were going to be entertained in a manner that most of us had never imagined in our wildest dreams; Olivier took us right away from Germany 1945, all the way back to England in the 1470s and 1480s. There we were, looking on spellbound at history - the mere fact that some of us doubted the validity of the theme was unimportant - and there we stayed until the end, because Olivier has the touch of the master, bringing each separate member of the audience into his personal confidence to the extent that he feels he stands right beside him, looks over his shoulder. And yet, at the same time, there is the impression that this is something more than the truth, this is a sorcerer conjuring up figures to go through actions which, though past and dead, still live on in time for those who have eyes to see.

After the final curtain fell, Olivier appeared alone on the stage, at the footlights. Within fifteen seconds the entire audience was standing, and we were yelling ourselves hoarse. We kept him there for a full ten minutes, all by himself, before the orchestra shut us up by playing the National Anthem. I think that is a record for any show I ever saw as a Serviceman.

I am now told that the film is on a level with the play, so quite obviously by the time you read this I shall have seen it at least once. You, I believe, will be seeing it on Television - how lucky can you get? I only hope, for your sakes, that the accents are not too bloody British for words (I find some of them a bit much, myself, at times) because the thing must beggar description by any man without a Roget's Thesaurus to hand, and mine is some 150 miles away.

One other film - "The Ladykillers" - Alec Guinness. Absolutely top form.

I seem to recall making some rather wild and sweeping predictions on the formation of Eden's Government. Most of them, I am delighted to see, hit the mark. Now that the reshuffle has occurred - and by no means before it was due, there are one or two things which deserve comment.

Butler, the Moneyman, is now in the position of Grey Eminence, the great co-ordinator. In his place we have Macmillan, the man who wanted to have his own Foreign Policy, and who left the Foreign Office unwillingly. I get the impression that his budgets will bear his own stamp, as did his diplomacy - forthright and slightly heavyhanded. To the Foreign Office goes Mr Selwyn Lloyd, whom you may have seen on TV at UN Headquarters, and he is a real soft-talking smoothie. I saw him once on a Press Conference over TV, in which he faced a really hard bunch of newsmen who flung some of the most weighted and barbed questions anyone ever had. His performance was a work of art, because he went through the motions of weighing up each question, considering an answer, then leaned forward urbanely and began:

"Well, you must remember that this needs to be put in its proper perspective before it can be viewed accurately".....going on to give a short and instructive comment on something entirely different. It was reasonably obvious that he had gone to the Conference with a list of subjects which he intended to cover, and reshaped each question so that he could answer it with a partyline dissertation. Not only that, none of us realised this until, as they faded it out, we sat back and asked each other just what we had learned. Answer: zero. From the expressions on the faces of the questioners, they were in a similar position, dazzled by the brilliance of this exhibition to such an extent that they were unable to realise that they had been completely foxed. As I said - a real soft-talking smoothie. Since he does not greatly admire the Communist line (his was the comment "dig that broken record") I have hoped that he might try some of this smoothness on the bunch in the Kremlin, for certainly it deserves far better use than pyrotechnics over television. Whatever the result, it will have been worth watching - I wish he could give me some lessons, for when I am out with the girlfriend.

On the other side of the House, Mr Attlee has been translated to the Lords, as Earl Attlee. That is typical enough of the man - no location for the title. A military Lord usually takes a location of his major victory, such as Montgomery of Alamein, Alexander of Tunis; political peers usually get there by devious means, and normally change their names altogether, so that no-one realises that Lord Chandos was originally the Oliver Lyttleton who went in for high-handed treatment of the Africans when he was Colonial Secretary ("I am delighted to be called insensitive"). There are one or two others whose names were changed to avoid an investigation, almost, and on whom I would prefer not to comment lest I get booked for libel. There was a most unfortunate Foreign Minister during the thirties, and some even more unfortunate Ambassadors, and none of them could be recognised from his title today. The rule is: if you don't remember the name, perhaps the face will, after all, be familiar. Earl Attlee is the exception, who has no need to be ashamed of his record as a Parliamentarian. He gave it as his view that his greatest achievement was the independence of India, and the greatest moment in his life the day in 1945 when he won his own election, and both of those are things for a man to be proud over. He goes to the Lords with the best wishes of us all, and there he will meet the Lord Chancellor, who was once Sir David Maxwell-Fyffe, the other of my "two honest men" in Commons.

In his place, we have Mr Hugh Gaitskell, so abhorred by Mr Aneurin Bevan. Mr Gaitskell is something of the same brand as his predecessor, in being from a class which does not usually produce Socialist MPs, and in the possession of an acid tongue when required. He is, however, not exactly like, only similar. Attlee was always an unassuming leader, where Gaitskell can be spectacular when the mood fits him. If You can imagine a middle class Socialist who, at the same time, hates all appearance of Communism, you have an idea of his angle; he is as sincere in his beliefs as any member of his party, perhaps more so than many, and practised what he preached when Chancellor of the Exchequer. His theme was austerity, and he lived it almost to the extent of the man whose steps he followed, Sir Stafford Cripps. He was the logical choice from all points of view, being eighteen years younger than the old favorite, Herbert Morrison, while none of the Socialist MPs had any hopes for Bevan really, given the straight choice and the final vote was Gaitskell 157, Bevan 70, Morrison 40. Verb.Sap.



Later that day, in an interview with BBC TV, Mr Gaitskell allowed as how he felt humble and sorta proud (honest!) before going on to pay a special tribute to Herbert Morrison and pointedly omitting to mention the massive and noisy Bevan. On the whole, considering the motley bunch they had to choose from, I do not see what else the Labour MPs could have done. How long he lasts, of course, depends on how strong a grip he can exert, and how much the old solidarity of the doctrinaire veterans will slip from support of Bevan, a support which is now based more on a combination of sentiment and pigheadedness than on any merit of the Welshman.

Sentiment plays too damn big a part in life these days; it seems to be an integral part of democracy, and if allowed to get too firm a hold on the populace could be used by the more clever politicians as the mechanism of mob rule. There is, after all, some considerable merit in the old ideas of duty, and we might do worse than bring those ideas back out again and dust them off ready for use as and when required. I look askance at the attitude which says "Oh, yes, I realize that thus and thus is the only proper way to behave, but it is so much nicer to do it this way instead." It usually boils down to doing what one wants to do and then blaming everyone else when this action rebounds and causes personal inconvenience far greater than would have occurred had the proper way been followed. Rather like a spoiled and selfish child, in fact, without the saving grace that the child knows no better.

That is why I was not too surprised at the fooferaw which roared up when our Princess Margaret decided that she would remain single a while longer. No happy ending a la soap opera, no wedding bells and candyfloss music a la Disney. When you get down to a careful and dispassionate consideration of what she might have done, it is fairly obvious that she acted perfectly in character and perfectly correctly; the mere fact that it was not a popular action does not make it the wrong decision, though that is a fairly common attitude. Look at it this way: the lady professes a devout belief in the teaching of her church, and the church teaches that divorce is to be avoided on the basis of its reference book, the Bible. If, then, the lady is considering the idea of marrying a divorced man, she must also consider that such an action will be totally in the opposite direction of her beliefs. Now, whether or no you believe in the Christian church, in this case the lady certainly does. If you have a way of life of your own which you have evolved from your own experiences and principles, then start to alter it and sidetrack as soon as it becomes the least inconvenient, then you do not really believe in that way of life but only prate about an ethic, which makes you a thumping big hypocrite.

So, professing a belief in the Christian faith, the Princess had to follow its principles or depart from it altogether. There were, of course, other possibilities. She could have spoken to the Queen, who is the titular head of the Anglican church, and the Queen could have made sufficient moves to have had the church law altered, and everyone would have been happy and everyone would bless the Archbishop of Canterbury, and beam at everyone else, thinking how marvellous love is, and how easily cupid can smooth the path of true love, and so on, ad lib, ad nauseam.

Within six weeks the first murmurs would begin. "Ah, of course, ~~SHE~~ could get the law altered. She's the Queen's sister. But when Gertie and me tried it, they turned us down like a short. 'Course, - me and Gertie ain't living together no more, but its all the same, ain't it? One law for them and another one for us." This I'll swear

to, knowing my fellow men. Not only that, but "me and Gertie" have not set foot in a church since they were ten, and if they had been accepted and married, they'd not have set foot in a church again.

Two things have come out of the whole squabble, and one of them is quite simple. The group Captain will never be able to call his soul his own for as long as he lives. Mothers with an eye for an eligible bachelor will list him as being the most desirable of them all for their daughters. If he does marry, there will be speculation as to the extent of his love for the Princess, and if he doesn't there will be speculations as to how he gets on without the comforts of home. If he gets promotion in the RAF there will be sly little hints that perhaps he was helped up by his highborn acquaintances, and if he doesn't it will be because of jealousy among the hierarchy of the Promotion Board.

The other is that the Press is easily as gutterish as I suggested some months ago. The Press Council, in its last report, expressed a pious surprise at the attitude of the general public to the Press as a whole; a purely hypocritical surprise, unless they are even more myopic than I thought. It should be fairly obvious to anyone with the eyes to see that the English newspapers are doing their best to improve circulation, and catering for the lowest intelligence, rather than for the average (though that is low enough, Lord knows) by the usual and full busted methods. Indeed, there has already been an implication the Group Captain Townsend is consoling himself with another lady of title on the Continent, based on the fact that he rides her horses at Steeplechases. If that were true, what a lovely life a professional jockey could lead if he confined his riding to stables owned and operated by females - always provided he could stand the company of the ladies, who appear offensively horsey in manner and (often) in feature.

For me, the British Press stinks. There are one or two exceptions, naturally, since there is no such thing as an inflexible rule in particular. But I avoid most of the outpourings of the yellowboys, and get my news from BBC, The Times, and Time magazine. For anything else, I must rely on reliable correspondents, and McCain gave me the impetus to set down my own views on the Princess and her romance by a casual-seeming statement to the effect that Americans expect an American style and standard of conduct from everyone else throughout the world.\*\* I think if we all behaved in exactly the same way under all eventualities, a hell of a lot of zest would disappear out of life. There would be no opportunity for saying "I wonder what the .....s will do about this? Will they blow their tops as they did last time, or take it in stride as they did the time before?" No-one is ever truly predictable, unless you could get his life history, minute by minute and engram by engram, feed the whole lot into an Eniac and postulate an occurrence. Even then there would be the idea of race-memory to take into consideration, before you could be sure of knowing what would be the reaction to the occurrence suggested.

I think it might be reasonable to consider the idea of race-memory as a possibility rather than as a writer's dream. The mere fact that most animals live by instinct of species while man has to learn by trial and error does not guarantee that he has no memories of behavior, and I have always felt that this is a more rational explanation of the experiences which, down the ages, have been the basis of many theories

\*\* In self-defense, let me point out that I was not endorsing the idea, merely citing a phenomenon, and have since pointed out to Morse that this is a trait common to almost every nationality. - v.l.m.



of re-incarnation. When you consider the number of impulses which are already in the child at birth, it is not too hard to assume that, somewhere in the back of all that mass of memory tissue, there should be a portion which is reserved for the memories of the predecessors. This is, presumably, what Hubbard was getting at with his later theories of Scientology, though he may have exaggerated a little in his estimates. Unfortunately for me (or perhaps not, according to taste) I never got near Dianetics, let alone the later work, which was priced 'way out of my reach when it first arrived in this country in US editions. I spent my time reading such erudite works as FOGO and MAD, whenever available, with occasional sidetracks into EEG (there are quite a few good books on the subject on both sides of the Atlantic capable of making the reader interested enough to miss a night's sleep) and even Stf from time to time. The trouble is that the Golden Years of Stf are coming fast to an end - there are those who feel they ended some time ago - and there is as yet nothing properly evolved from it sufficiently to fill the gap. I think that is why the anthologies sell so well each year, and I extend my love and affection to Judy Merrill and Groff Conklin and the others for the work they put into entertaining us, and giving me something else to do in addition to the Times crossword puzzle.

The arrival of commercial TV has made little difference to my way of viewing, first because we have no TV set in the home, and secondly because the average Sergeants' Mess has only a single-band set or very wisely remains without the additional antenna required for the extra band reception. On the whole, I've no great interest in extending my viewing beyond one or two of the more interesting panel games and the BBC's none-too-frequent orchestral concerts. From time to time the BBC has put on serials on Saturday nights, and they have managed to hold the suspense very well, including the two Stf stories of Professor Quatermass and his adventures. Otherwise there is only Sooty the Bear. Give the BBC their due, they even let down their hair so far as to acquire a BRE Dagmar for one of the shows, but this one had less acting talent and more astounding measurements. It may perhaps be a coincidence that her first name is the same as Marilyn Monroe's real name - Norma - though Marilyn can act, given the opportunity.

On the other hand, the BBC also produced another phenom., a little Irish girl with plaintive features, a plaintive little voice, and a repertoire of plaintive little songs, and she sells them by the million. Fifteen years ago we had Vera Lynn, who sang sad songs and looked/sincere as all get out; now we have Ruby Murray who sings sad songs and looks even more sincere. I suppose there is a moral there, somewhere but I'm not sure I approve of it. Both of them sing very nicely, hit all the right notes at the right times, and can carry a tune very well; Vera was sufficiently self-possessed to be able to star in a couple of personality films; Ruby looks so worried as she sings that I often wonder if she will finish her song before getting discouraged and giving it up. She looks just like the kid sister of the girl next door talking to her dolls, or perhaps to her even younger brother in his cot.

In contrast, we have a big buxom beaming lass called Alma Cogan, who puts life into every thing she records, and she records a lot. If you meet her casually in the street <sup>when</sup> she is not concentrating, she is by no means good looking - rather like a younger, fatter, darker Shirley booth - but when the music starts and she prances out on the stage, she positively radiates the sunshine of a sparkling personality, complete with dimples, twinkling eyes and flashing teeth. She is

usually described as the girl with the laugh in her voice - to me it sounds more like a gurgle of delight at everything that keeps the world going round.

Strangely enough, neither Ruby nor Alma have been noticed in the nightspots with or without escorts, except on a strictly business basis of appearance as an entertainer. Both of them live at home with Mom, which is the official custom these days, after all.

When Eartha Kitt appeared here for a brief visit the other week, I was trying my damndest to find an excuse to be in London. No use at all: I had to be content with seeing her appearance on ITV, which meant a special effort since the only person of my acquaintance who has a set capable of receiving it is not really in my regular circle. His wife, however, took pity on me and I basked in the cold light of the only woman who can make me enjoy icy shudders going up and down my spine. If all reports are true, she had herself quite a time, seeing all the usual sights and then getting out into the less popular areas as well. Not only that, she probably experienced the worst weather we have had for almost a year. What more could we do for anyone? I hope she comes back again soon. You never know.....we could arrange for her to watch cricket this summer, or she could come and look at my collection of fanzines.

Only a few weeks ago, I walked into the AnteRoom of this Mess and saw on the magazine table a heap of mags which turned out to be the best part of the FAPA mailing no. 72. Within 48 hours I had abstracted the whole damned lot and was delightedly reading them as an alternative to the compilation of my current monthly report of official activity for my Lords and Masters in Air Ministry. Much more fun and far more attractive reading, because the official report has to be in the type of language that those up there can understand, and their jargon is almost as esoteric as that of any teenage group. Can you imagine the type of mind which prefers the phrase "inadequate ascensional velocities" to "slow climbing speeds"? So help me, that is a true instance, and I copied down the full title of the handbook which contains it, complete with chapter and verse to prove that I was not kidding.

To date, a careful system of questioning has failed to identify the Samaritan who provided the Fapzines. ((Ed. note: Me...someone was opening Morse's mail.)) I know all the regular Stf readers and members of OF in this Mess, and none of them are in any other way actifen, so the thing remains a mystery. It is probably the same character who dropped a pile of back issues of Time on the same table some months before. I'd read them all, myself, so this time had no cause for larceny. I wonder if he will be dropping any baseball magazines next? I'm well up with POGO, now that we have full availability in the UK, so unless he can afford Esquire, I'll continue hoping he is a ballgame fan. There is always the possibility that he is the USAF Top-kick who is the darling of one of our female Sergeants here, I must admit, but I hardly feel that he is up to such highclass stuff as that. Any suggestions? I flatly refuse to believe in telekenesis yet, so don't try that one. Ah'm from Missouri.

In August of this year I terminate my RAF service of ten years, which followed close on six and a half in the Army. On the whole, though I did really enjoy most of it, I shall not be sorry to see it all over, more especially this last few years since my return from ... Canada. When I joined in 1946, I had been fired by the ideals of a Chief of Staff who was doing more than just utter platitudes about the kind of Air Force he wanted: he was getting it built. The trouble



is he retired in 1950. Since then the awful inertia of High Places has hung round our necks to such an extent that the whole thing has come to a grinding halt. I'm not happy under the circumstances, being eternally edgy unless I am actually progressing in some specific direction, preferably as the strawboss. Admittedly the time come when I tend to think wistfully of the little white cottage with roses round the door and the girl of my dreams inside waiting; the point is that I do not fancy the cottage if it is going to be a Service Married Quarter, since they are too impermanent to be a home as opposed to a house. I don't know yet where I'll be going when this year ends, nor what I'll be doing, who will be with me; all I know is that it should be interesting to find out what there is to offer in what remains of the British Empire, either in America (N or S), Africa, or Oceania. It also should be interested to find out how I'll cope with the raw and wicked life out in the great big wide world away from the comforting (?) arms of the Air Froce. I only hope (at the moment, anyhow) that it will be within the law. For a further instalment, see our next issue.

All right, so the Yanks lost the Series last year. Wait'll this year,

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I've got good news for you.

I'm not cross-eyed, today.  
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#### The Other Fandom

The above was, I believe, the title of the little piece by Walt Willis in a 1950 SLANT (#4?) which first indicated that gentleman's humorous genius to me. Prior to that I had considered Barbee the epitome in such things,

For those of you who missed, or don't recall, it it set out to prove that there was a vast hidden group of superfans (Willis called them tendrillless fans) who carried on a fandom completely hidden to us more mundane ones.

Since then there have been many references, usually in British fanzines, to (other' fandoms, of which perhaps the most popular has been streetcar token fandom. These are visualized as being made up of devoted followers, amateur publishers, completist collectors, historians, experts in fannish psychology and all the rest which we see in our own microcosmos.

Actually, I doubt if many fans have ever seriously considered that there might be other type fandoms devoted to other fields and functioning like stf fandom. Possibly because science fiction fandom has so little to do with science fiction. About the only close parallel lies in the Baker Street Irregulars, a small group of devoted admirers of Sherlock Holmes in New York City. This group is composed primarily of professionals of one type or another in the detective field and its activities are much more limited and its membership far more exclusive than in our fandom.

I suppose there probably never will be any other fandom which functions quite like ours; our fandom, actually, could more accurately be termed ayjay fandom than stfandom since most of its most worthwhile activities are centered around amateur publishing. Few other hobbies are apt to appeal to a large enough group of verbally oriented people for the phenomenon to be duplicated.

But in the past year, I've discovered a surprisingly similar version to the fandom we know, which has been operating for many years

and has a very firm foundation.

It is record collecting fandom. This should not be confused with jazz fandom. It is true that jazz interests dominate record collecting fandom but only to about the extent that an interest in science fiction is dominant in our fandom. There are many side branches and parallel tracks and many have completely abandoned the main one. Also 'jazz fandom' is something else entirely.....it could be said to include every jazz enthusiast,...or at least every extreme one. Most of these probably purchase records but they cannot be said to be record collectors in the pure sense since it is probably merely a sideline to their main interest. Take a typical example in our midst....Mr. Lee Jacobs, who has just about quit buying records because he'd rather spend the money attending live performances. Of course, geographic location has a good deal to do with the choice (a little more live jazz is performed in Los Angeles than in Wenatchee, Washington say) but beyond that there is a fascination to the collector in records for their own sake. Thus he is far more interested in digging up a rare scratchy old record made 25 years ago by some artist than in purchasing the same tune in a super-hi-fi performance recorded six months ago by the same artist on Lp, even though the new version may be a better performance and possibly cost less.

As most FAPAns already know, I have been collecting records for a good many years ago. I didn't pose for the portrait in the above paragraph. My interest is primarily in the music and I don't care what form it appears in so I cannot be said to be an extreme example. However I do qualify to the extent that I am a completist on most artists I collect, old rare records do have a fascination for me, and I will willingly take a sonically inferior performance if it is the best I can obtain. However, I never take 78's in preference to LP's of the same thing, nor do I prefer the original issue to a more recent 78 reissue in better condition.

I started my collection in my teens, buying pop records. This was in the exclusively 78 days. Gradually my taste veered toward jazz, the balance swinging toward the jazz side just about the time LP's first appeared. With LP's for the first time I found it practical to buy and listen to serious music so I came to buy it in about 1/4 ratio to jazz. However, serious music bears no importance in the rest of this history so we'll forget about it from here on out. I buy the classics only on new LP's.

In 1951 I switched entirely to LP. I retained 78's I was interested in in vague hope of eventually putting them on tape or replacing them with LP's (a very large percentage of the 78's I then owned have now been so replaced). For a while I flatly refused to purchase any 78's, for any reason, and only reluctantly would I buy 45's. Then in late 1952 two things occurred. EP's appeared, making 45's much more palatable and I was tempted sufficiently that I broke down and purchased a bunch of rare old Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday recordings on the Blue Ace bootleg label which issued only 78's. From that time, my doom was sealed.

I was on the road at the time and soon I was scurrying through the dustier stock in each record store in each town I worked at. I turned up some very interesting items and my 78's were increasing rapidly.... too rapidly considering the extra space they consumed and their fragility.

Then, as I mentioned in an earlier issue of BIRDSMITH a couple of years ago I was enticed into starting to purchase acetates from two firms who had vast supplies of musical performances never issued on



commercial records. These were taken from various sources....radio programs, film sound-tracks, concerts which happened to be recorded, transcriptions, V-discs.....in fact, I later learned that each could and would also supply me with acetate copies of almost any commercial record ever released on any label in any country, if I wished to name it. These copies were both more expensive and of inferior quality to the commercial recordings but where unavailable otherwise they sufficed.

Already I had become a far-gone collector. Then, just about a year ago I took the decisive step. There are three major jazz magazines. DOWN BEAT, the biggest and most prosperous, covers the whole jazz field. METRONOME specializes in the modern and experimental field. The third one, THE RECORD CHANGER, has always concentrated on traditional jazz. Now I've read both the first two with fair regularity for the past ten years and frequently had subscriptions to one or both. But only once had I ever seen a copy of the RECORD CHANGER. It was a slim, crude little magazine and looked completely uninteresting. At the time I was just edging into jazz and my interest and knowledge started with Stan Kenton and extended to Duke Ellington. A magazine which featured a picture of Art Hodes on the cover and which dealt with history and analysis of solos recorded by long-dead musicians on completely unavailable records did not appear of sufficient interest to warrant purchase. So I bypassed it. However, later as my interests expanded and I came to appreciate the earlier jazz and also find copies of earlier records more accessible it came to look more interesting, in retrospect. But the RECORD CHANGER is not available on newsstands. So I thought I'd subscribe. Especially as I knew that it had been giving much publicity to the bootleg companies which the other two magazines had self-righteously ignored. Having purchased many such records I felt the need of more information about what was available on them and the source of some unidentified items. But it is one of those things you constantly intend to do in 'a few months' and somehow never get around to. Then when you finally do you can't understand why you didn't do it long before.

I first decided to subscribe to THE RECORD CHANGER in the spring of 1952; I actually did so exactly three years later. The first issue I received was a revelation. I recalled the only previous issue I'd viewed as colorless and uninteresting. The experience I'd had in the meantime in fandom explained why. THE RECORD CHANGER, I discovered, was prepared in typewritten form and printed by the offset method. The articles interested me more than previously, although much the same as I recalled. In the front of the magazine were advertisements for various books available from the magazine's book department. Many of these were items I'd been vainly trying to get through normal channels. But what really fascinated me was the latter half of the magazine which was entirely taken up by an auction....in which the items were tightly spaced together in microscopic print....the same type size Larry Anderson used for a while in some of his magazines. There were a couple of pages devoted to 'classified advertising'....readers who had something to dispose of or wished to acquire something else. Five or six more pages were used by firms running their own auctions or sales. But most of the space was devoted to the RECORD CHANGER's private auction.....a total of over 3000 records they were offering for bid. I'd read of mail auctions at various times since becoming a jazz fan but had never before encountered one or knew where or how they were held. Many of the items were scarce things I'd never even seen, except listed

in discographies. I was intoxicated. I promptly entered my bid on thirty records, mostly Duke Ellington, having no idea whether I was overbidding or underbidding. I also bought a bunch of equally scarce items at quite reasonable prices from a firm which advertised, mysteriously, that all their records were new and unplayed. The solution turned out to be that they dealt almost exclusively in bootleg items, issued before the big record companies cracked down on that practice.

The surprising thing to me was that, although THE RECORD CHANGER, is strictly a jazz magazine, the auction was not confined to jazz records. Every type record imaginable was represented (although the classics were pretty sparsely represented....I suspect those are handled in auctions restricted to only that type). They ranged from Gene Austin to Carl Brisson to Richard Crooks to Jessica Dragonette to Seger Ellis to Phil Harris....well, you name it and it was there...almost. Jazz artists tended to have longer lists of records than others but this was by no means always true.

Where do the records come from? I still haven't figured out. In every town you will find one or more drug stores with stacks of old juke-box records for sale at low prices. Some of these are scarce items ten or fifteen years old. The natural conclusion would be that this is the source of these auctioned items. However, the juke box industry did not become really big-time before the late 30's. Perhaps 25% or more of these items pre-date that period. And I have purchased items on the BLACK SWAN label, a firm which ceased issuing records several years before the first jukebox was invented. There are other items which jukeboxes cannot account for. I won 28 of the 30 items I bid on in that first auction (my bids have become more moderate since) and included in the records I received was a test pressing by Japanese VICTOR of two Red Norvo-Stew Pletcher BLUEBIRD items from the mid-30's and an acetate of two live Duke Ellington performances (sourced unknown) which were on an acetate blank containing the title in Japanese characters.

THE RECORD CHANGER also carried occasional ads for 16" transcriptions. Not completely happy with the acetate copies of these I'd obtained I decided to equip to play 16" records, thus getting better copies and possibly also saving money since the prices on them seemed quite reasonable....lower in many cases than an LP containing the same amount of material. However, there was a problem. Many of the ones I wanted most badly were cut by the almost extinct vertical system and it is so rare that no radio technician I enquired from could give me any idea how I could equip to play them. BUT both DOWN BEAT and RECORD CHANGER had carried praise of and advertisements for a new small magazine specializing for record collectors, RECORD RESEARCH. An early issue had carried an article on the subject of equipping to play vertical records, so I subscribed asking for any early issues available.

RECORD CHANGER had impressed me as a rather elaborate and expensive type of fanzine. But when RECORD RESEARCH arrived there was no mistaking it. This was a fanzine, pure and simple. It was mimeographed, for one thing (I never did get the issue with the article I wanted, but contacted its author and got the info direct. He said they might reprint early issues from the stencils if there was sufficient demand but not the one I wanted because they had used the photo-offset process for that one, found it too expensive and reverted to mimeo. Sound familiar?). And while I doubt if RECORD CHANGER's contributors receive more than token payment, if that, there is no doubt that RECORD RESEARCH is completely a labor of love.



Like RECORD CHANGER it carries a large auction in the rear of each issue. But the articles are more personalized and it has a smaller more intimate feel. The writing is less introspective than in the average fanzine and sticks closer to the topic at hand, records. (Although RECORD RESEARCH carries a department devoted to piano rolls and also occasionally lists them as available in its auctions).

There are attempts to list every issue of small record companies, discographies of minor artists, histories of various facets of the record industry....the discussing of who took a solo on what record, or whether an item is from a different master....also arguments over the exact date of recordings. The first issue I obtained contained a long rambling dissertation by some artistsmanager of the past which goes into detail about his own importance, how he made a star of Fats Waller, got Jelly Roll Morton 'fired' from a certain record contract, etc. Throughout it he remains totally unaware of the effect he is creating on the reader. The similarity to certain of our more ego-maniacal fans who announce with great fanfare that they are editing some non-existent magazine or anthology, or giving intimate advice to some editor or author is unmistakable. I must confess it made me feel right at home.

It was on the rear cover that the full fannish flavor became most pronounced, however. One column was devoted to "Recommended by 'Record Research'". Eleven publications were listed. Several were discographies, but the rest were publications of the same sort as RECORD RESEARCH (just like in fandom, they indulge in free-cross-plubs and brief reviews. Listed were magazines like "Australian Jazz Quarterly", "International Discophile", "Matrix", and several others. Like in fandom each step you take leads to another one. I've already subscribed to "Discophile" (a British magazine) and "International Discophile" (which hails from California....RECORD RESEARCH is from the New York-New Jersey area) They are scattered more evenly over the world than are fandom fanzines. I believe I already have all the American ones. But there are several from England and both Australia and Italy are represented plus one or two whose identity is still in doubt.

The pattern of RECORD CHANGER and RECORD RESEARCH is repeated with variations for individual editorial policy in the others. All I've seen to date are offset or mimeod. Most, but not all, run auctions. They go in for discographies, frequently on artists of peripheral jazz interest who've been ignored by the strict jazz discographies or, sometimes, artists like Ruth Etting or Jimmie Rodgers of no jazz interest whatsoever.

They ayjay similarity is not confined to magazines. There are also books. Most, but not all, are discographies. These almost never gain support from professional publishers, but are usually subsidized by the compilers or friends. I recently obtained a small booklet (offset and neatly cardboard bound) called "The 'Wax Works' of Duke Ellington" compiled, edited, published and available only from Benny Aasland of Sweden. I later wrote him a letter asking for additional information and expressing appreciation of the book. He replied, a few weeks later, enthusiastically, saying he hadn't time then for a long detailed letter but would write as soon as he had. That was four months ago. Just like fandom.

In case some are wondering about why it takes me so long to answer letters recently and why I've become so inactive in almost every fannish activity, save FFR, it's because I am devoting more and more time (more than to sfandom, now) to My Second Fandom.

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Harness

