

# BLANK

[illegible]

BLATANT #9 is published by Avedon Carol in spite of the economic crisis (mine, not Ronald Raygun's) at 4409 Woodfield Road, Kensington, Maryland, 20795 USA. This is the Summer of '81 issue (I think I can remember what year it is now, Mom) and brings us to Silver Dagger Publication #94. Copyright (c) 1981 by Avedon Carol. All rights revert to the contributors. Available for the usual or \$1.50 US.

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HOW NOT TO BECOME AN ENGINEER I wonder whatever happened to those television sets. They sat around the basement for a few years and then disappeared. I guess the Parents must have gathered up the various tubes and wires and whatever and given them to the AmVets or some other charity which collects useless objects.

My brother had taken them apart. I knew this because when I came home from boarding school my mother announced that my brother had demonstrated his interests and abilities as a budding scientific genius and electronics engineer by dismantling several television sets which were now strewn around the laundry room downstairs. "Did he put them back together?" I asked, hoping that this meant (1) that we now owned several usable TVs and (2) that my brother was now available to repair things that broke. No, he had not put them back together, and he never did, but this didn't discourage my parents from believing in my brother's innate genius for such things.

Personally, I was unimpressed. I took things apart all the time, and no one carried on about what a genius I was. Of course, I generally restricted most of my scientific studies to my own belongings, having been instructed at an early age and with great emphasis that I must not touch, let alone disassemble, those things which did not belong to me. People were not prone to giving me TV sets, working or otherwise. People gave me mostly dolls and stuffed animals and clothing, as a matter of fact. Sometimes they gave me jewelry boxes (with and without music boxes and turning ballerinas) and junk jewelry. It seems that of all this treasure, the only thing I could take apart without giving my parents apoplexy was the occasional string of pop-beads that some generous individual bestowed on me.

Nevertheless, I did try to investigate some of these materials. Plastic furniture and other permanently-sealed objects fascinated me, and I would take them apart just to find out what was inside. It didn't take me long to discover that there never was anything inside them and that once broken open they did not close back up again. Stuffed animals were a little better, since they did contain stuffing, but they were also difficult to reassemble, and I had to listen to a lot of yelling about all of the sawdust or whatever it was that spilled all over everything.

What I mostly heard about was how destructive I was. "You're so *destructive*," my mother would say, as if she was speaking to Hitler. "Why must you destroy all the nice things we give you?" It

was even worse when it came to dolls. Dolls could be easily taken apart and put back together—you could pop their heads and arms and legs off and then pop them right back on, good as new. But to my mother this was apparently more like an act of murder—I don't think she'd tumbled to the fact that I knew dolls weren't people (I often wondered whether she'd tumbled to the fact that dolls *were*n't people, for that matter). I was being destructive again and had no respect for the hard hours they slaved saving up money so they could buy me these lovely things, only to have me mutilate them beyond recognition. If I could not refrain from ruining things, I was told, they would simply not give me any more things to ruin.

To make a long story short, I stopped taking things apart and learned to be terrified of anything with moving parts. My brother, on the other hand, can build or fix nearly everything, and frequently does. What really tears me up, tho, is that my brother went and demolished all those TV sets, and you can't watch old movies on a Barbie Doll, no matter how well it's been taken care of.

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THE MATTER AT HAND Is this fanzine, of course, and, apparently, whether or not I actually do have a mission. Kate Schaefer doesn't think I do, although she has no complaints about *Blatant*. Ted White Himself, on the other hand, as you must know, not only believes I have a mission, but informs me that, "*Blatant* #8 fulfills your mission admirably. Good stuff, and one of the best fmz I've gotten lately." And then there is Patrick Nielson Hayden, who said, "You have a mission. Believe me." But he seems to feel that this mission includes making *Blatant* monthly or bimonthly, a thought that fills me with loathing and horror. The mailing costs of the last issue still have me boggled as I sit here putting off mailing out the last of them, and I truly detest the chore of stapling, addressing, and stamping the bloody things. And now I find that I can no longer produce them for free, and will actually have to dish out money just to create them, never mind mailing costs. Me, an impoverished, arthritic, overaged college student. Me. Urk. Pleasant dreams, Patrick, old chum.

Getting away from that subject, we have also a letter from Larry Carmody who likes Ralph Bakshi and *American Pop* but agrees that Bob Segar's music was the wrong choice for the end of the film; a letter from Pascal Thomas discussing the state of Reagan's health, the obesity of American fans (he wonders whether feminists have conspired to censor this subject), and asking if I've lost any weight (no); and, for some reason, a DNP loc on *Boonfark* #4. These in addition, of course, to a letter from Harry Warner Jr., who says "I enjoyed this issue of *Blatant* despite the fact that it contains a serious mistake. Everyone hasn't read *The Diary of Anne Frank* and everyone hasn't seen the movie. I know, because I haven't engaged in either of those activities. ((*mea culpa, mea culpa...*)) Admittedly, I'm a special case. Sometimes I think I ought to get a list together of all the things I haven't done, and ask the people at the Guinness Book of World Records if it qualifies me for inclusion. I've never seen *Star Wars*, I've never learned how to write in Tolkien's runes, and I've never cursed Richard M. Nixon. ((Wow. I'm *still* cursing Nixon)).

"On the matter of a woman's first period, though, did it ever occur to you that this is one theme which has never been featured on television during these years since the networks have been bragging about their increased liberalism and relaxation of old taboos? If men really do consider menstruation as a mightier phenomenon than women do, as you suspect, such a theme would seem like a natural in the television industry where men predominate in so many positions of authority. As far as I know, the only time the first period has come close to forming the subject of a television show was years ago on

*The Waltons* when Mary Ellen was still very young. A script based on this theme was prepared and rejected by the network. ((It wouldn't surprise me, Harry, to know that the network decided that such a script might be interesting only to women, and not to "people." I can actually think of some interesting ideas for a TV show which might spend an hour on the subject of menstruation, but merely *getting* one's first period is simply not worth an hour of programming. Nothing really happens. I mean, you wonder if the blood can be washed out of your underwear, mostly, and try to figure out whether you're ready to try tampons, and if so, how to put them in comfortably. Unless you have Carrie's mother, that ain't much of a story.))"

And one from Lee Hoffman, who wanted to know how old Joe Mancini was (he was 33 at the time—the same general age group with most of the men I knew growing up. I was younger than most of the people I knew, in those days, so as far as I'm concerned Joe was in the group I generally think of as "my generation" when I'm not being super-literal). She says, "I agree with you that it seems remarkable for even a member of an earlier generation to think females over 17, living in the world, would really identify with a 13 year old in a very tight closed environment. But sometimes the academic life seems to become a rather closed environment, too. Then, again, I know a lot of people living out there in the world who amaze me with how little they are aware of anything beyond their limited circles. Like, what do they read and watch on TV and listen to on the radio? How can they have missed becoming aware of at least a few things? ((Precisely))"

"Anyway, even if Joe has a wife and daughters ((he doesn't, but he fools around with his students)), he probably knows very little about menstruation other than what he's read in books by men who know very little about it and think of it in social/anthropological terms as a Rite of Passage. He prolly equates it with the traditional First Shave of the male aspiring to manhood, or something like that. ((Yes, that's exactly why the whole business has me in stitches.))"

"Alexis Gilliland's statement on the state of the state is neat. Very well put. An elaboration of you can't win, you can't break even, and you can't get out of the game..."

Also heard from Terry Carr, and that's about it, but then, I haven't finished mailing it out yet, as I sit here typing along. Any minute now I'm going to the post office to buy some stamps...or so I tell myself...

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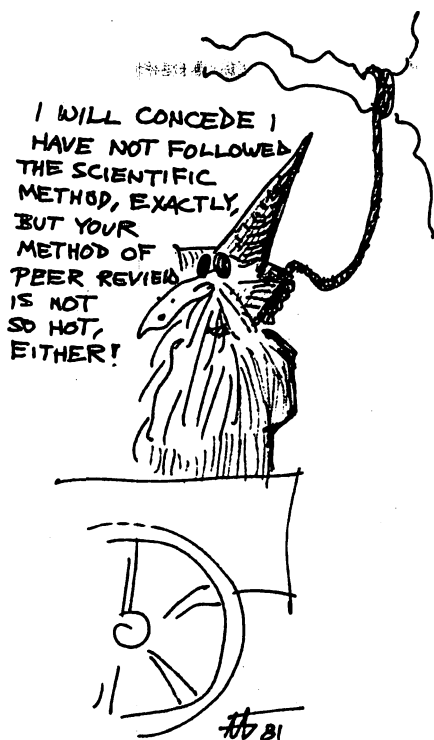
*And now, a fanzine review column by the one and only Ted White Himself.*

#### FANZINES ON WRY

I first started reviewing fanzines about twenty-five years ago, when hardly a day passed that I didn't get at least one fanzine of varying quality, and literally scores of others, some tattered little personalzines and some fat and ambitious genzines. Maybe there are still every bit as many fanzines being published, but they've stopped arriving in *my* mail. This column, therefore, is designed to see if I can increase the number of arrivals, and if not perhaps to discover why not.

That is my motive for writing this column. My purpose is two-fold: to reward those whose fanzines I enjoy with egoboo; and to entertain the rest of you with the occasional brilliant insight for which I am justly famed.

There are not a lot of fanzines here for review. *Telos* has been out too long for a review of it to be timely. *Boonfark* is the work of a close friend and occasional collaborator and obviously the high praise I would heap



upon it would be suspect. *Pong* is in part mein own. At the moment, while we wait with growing impatience for *Warhoon* 29, *Telos*, *Boonfark*, and *Pong* are the best we have. Oh well. Onward.

*Xenolith* 17 (Bill Bowers, 2468 Harrison Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45211; 75¢, "available by Editorial Whim")

I have been fascinated for years by Bill Bower's fanzine-editing career. In part I identify with Bill. Neither of us initially showed much talent for it, and each of us scored our first successes as co-editors (*Double Bill*, in Bill's case), after which we each became known for our attention to format, layout and overall fanzine design. Then we both grew tired of putting out ambitious genzines and settled for less formal personalzines.

That said, I must also admit that it has also bothered me at times that Bill seemed to live his life (or more of it than I was comfortable with) through his editorials. At one point he all but told us that he'd placed his fanzine ahead of his wife, to the detriment of his marriage. He seemed to me both sad and proud. And although he produced some highly-crafted fanzines in terms of their design, I never felt that Bill understood what he was really doing (and, for that reason, he seemed to write incessantly about what he was doing with his fanzines' designs), nor that he understood the real function of an editor (which is to create and maintain a level of quality coherent to an entire issue). Which is to say that I thought too many of his experiments were failures, and his published material uneven.

But Bill has hung in there for a long time, now: a multitude of fannish generations. At some point in the 70's he experienced a "greening" and began letting his hair grow and wearing caftans to cons. And these days an issue of *Xenolith* is as not to consist mostly of the carefully crafted script for a convention speech, which seems a bit convoluted and rambling in print but delivers well when spoken, and whose concerns are usually the life and times of Bill Bowers, who has transformed himself into the object of cult-worship among the younger fans of the midwest but still seems to suffer an endless succession of mundane problems relating to car, job, a place to stay, etc.

Be that as it may, *Xenolith* 17 is devoted instead to the script for a would-be video-tape play called "Faans" by Larry Tucker & Randy Bathurst. Tucker takes credit for the "ideas." There aren't many of those. The basic "idea" is to do a fannish *Jaws*. This has possibilities, but most of them aren't explored. Instead what we're given is a "mundane" s-eye view of a convention, in which the play's resolution is the anti-climactic explanation for all the strange things which seemed to have occurred.

As fans, of course, we are never less than one jump ahead of the hotel detective, "Mundane," by name. We knew from the moment the maid discovered the "body" in the green-slime-filled bathtub what was going on: the continued exploitation of a very tired joke which has been previously cashed in on by everyone up to and including that paragon of lively wit, Jerry Pournelle.

I had hoped for a modicum of cleverness—in either the execution of the plot or the dialog in which it is told—but Tucker fails to supply any. Ploddingly pedestrian, obvious



in all its allusions, chauvenistically midwestern, "Faans" is a waste of Bowers' time and our time.

Bowers contributes less than a page of himself, and more than half of that is taken up with a listing of the first one hundred cons he has attended cons he has attended, starting with the 1962 Chicon III and concluding with the 1981 Rubicon. Terry Carr used to publish an index to "Fanzines Published by Me" every year or so, just to make sure he had a permanent (more or less) record. I think I'd give his index a slight edge over Bowers' list in potential interest to other parties.

*Not Mellow* 4 (Chris Estey, 600 S. Kent St., G#45, Kennewick, WA 99336; 75¢)

Estey makes a point of stating, "This is not a magazine, it is not a 'fanzine'. It is a personal letter to those who like to think; no—to those who have to/MUST THINK." The temptation is to point out that those who like to think usually employ better grammar and punctuation and a less hysterical mode of typing than UNDERLINED CAPS, but Estey ("S.T."?) undercuts that objection by adding, "And, like my personal letters, it can be confusing and not at all mannered. So, just think of it as a long, detailed, and sloppy letter to you. Okay? Just remember that."

One could hardly forget it. *Not Mellow* has an amphetimine intensity to its visual design, which owes more to the fanzines put out by punk-rockers in the last few years than to sf fanzines. Every one of its ten xeroxed pages except the cover is crammed with typing and scribbles. Estey shrinks the text of his pages to create wide margins and then types sideways in those margins. Fortunately, the pages come unstapled; otherwise the marginalia might be unreadable.

Much of the content is excerpts from letters, the authors ranging from Jay Kinney to Bill-Dale Marcinko, and reviews of records and books intermixed. However, the meat of the issue is an interview with Richard Geis in which Geis talks candidly about his premature birth (which the doctor bungled, giving him spine damage which has scarred much of his life) and his life and times as "recluse who needs people." For lagnaippe there's a Robert Bloch interview which suffers from tired and true questions, although Bloch for the most part gives straight answers despite his obvious fatigue with them.

*Not Mellow* is typical of the modern-era fanzine. Estey knows little about the traditions and history of fandom; he is using fandom as a vehicle for communication. Communication of what? Mostly eagerly-voiced opinions on sexual roles (Estey is gay) and contemporary culture, of which sf/fsy is a part, but no greater a part than rock music. Few of Estey's opinions are startling, nor are most very interesting, but they do communicate enthusiasm, a youthful excitement with life.

Why do I get the feeling that once again I am watching someone reinvent the wheel?

*SF Commentary* 59, 60/61 (Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia; \$1.50; US/Canadian agent: Hank Luttrell, 2501 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53703)

Australia used to have a pretty poor reputation for fanzines, but all that changed in the mid-sixties with Bangsund's *Australian SF Review*, and the development of a critical stable in Australia's fandom. ASFR has slipped away, but SFC supplies continuity. Here one can *still* find Franz Rottensteiner snarling at everyone except Stanislaw Lem, whose ass he kisses as obsequiously as ever; and Lem himself, confessing that Franz is his "literary agent"; while Brian Aldiss alternately scathes Delany and sympathizes with him; and everyone else speaks softly but with scholarly authority so convincing, even in arguments, as to

persuade one that this indeed is one of the cloistered halls of academia.

Priest's article on why he dropped out of the SFWA, which was also published in Geis' SFR, headlines #59. Chris makes perfect sense, but has been ignored by all but those who already agreed with him. His key statement, for me, was this: "This attitude sees fandom as existing only to feed the egos of authors, and is thus essentially contemptuous of it." But of course Rottensteiner, in his letter commenting on Priest's article in #60/61, continues to beat the same dead drum: "Without their worshipful audiences, without their fans, sf writers would still be nothing, and what he laments are not excesses and exceptions, but the logical outgrowth of a largely uncritical fandom. The SFWA is only a symptom; to blame is the fandom from which it has sprung."

The fandom in which I grew up did not worship its pros (known more or less affectionately as "dirty pros"), but shared with them a common love for sf itself. And our love for sf was not uncritical: we recognized the truth in Sturgeon's Law and our love was as much for the potential we recognized in sf as it was for the actual specimens we read incessantly. But I think that's changed, or is in the process of changing. At one time fandom was made up of people who were themselves for the most part creatively active in one way or another. Now, if a random survey of the typical large-convention audience gives an indication, many people who call themselves "fans" are worshipful and adoring of sf authors, abasing themselves before their idols as worthless, non-creative, passive consumers.

Priest, commenting on the attitude that fandom exists solely to feed the egos of authors, says that, "As I am a writer with fannish roots, and am still to a degree active in fandom, I cannot help but find this attitude repellent."

But modern-day "sci-fi" fans are creatures of the media; they think first of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* and their notions of what constitutes sf were probably formed from reading Marvel comics. It's hardly surprising that one of "thier" authors, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, would demand that a worldcon give her a room in which to meet her adoring fans, and Rottensteiner offers a glimpse of the truth when he states, If an sf author wants the use of a room to have intercourse with her groupies, that is all right, for, contrary to what Christopher Priest believes, 'sf writers' are not so much serious writers but pop stars, and should be treated as such." Thus contempt is mingled with envy...

SFC is now typeset (on an IBM Composer) and offset, with sixteen pages of three-column type per issue (thirty-two pages in the "double issue," #60/61), into which Bruce packs a good deal. The editing is at once tight and semi-informal, the letters often forming an unwitting dialogue. SFC is never less than literate and sometimes approaches liveliness, especially when correspondents like Rottensteiner, Lem and Aldiss get bitchy. (But that's an old formula and one I think Geis worked for about as much as it was worth, more than ten years ago. Now it's a bit like watching Gore Vidal have another go at Norman Mailer on a late-night talk show: a bit stylized and ritualistic.) SFC has a maturity and a respect for continuity that gives it the air of permanence. I mean, after all, sixty-one issues at an average rate of two to four a year...how many fannish generations have come and gone while Bruce published steadily on? One can only applaud an institution like SFC and trust it to continue.

—TW

[Send fmz for review to Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046]

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And with that, it looks like I'll actually be able to start Helen Berrotini's article at the top of the page...!

## PRAISING THE LORD, PASSING THE AMMUNITION

A Movie Review by Helen Berrotini

*Heron Libertine's return is slouching toward an overwhelming question rather than Bethlehem. Warning folks about themselves has always been futile but never was it more lucrative than with people in the now. Why do handguns always succeed in killing Lenmons (rather than Ray-guns, that is)?*

5-K 1020: Origins of Early Cinematic Cliches: The Americans.

This course is a continuation of the series on common movie (2D) themes. Explores the transitional period from mass audience to proto-diffuse. Emphasis on the "America" movies: American Graffiti, Americanization of Emily, American Pop, and especially America: The Movie by Reagan et. al. Interconnectedness and competition among the flat media; colonization/canalization of aural (cantistic) tradition; exploration of the *flateur* theory of movie; commutativity among the Americans. There will be two holo- and two flat-films as group projects. Coordinated by Ms. Berrotini with a little help from her friends. Auditors on 10-D; participants on 3-A and \*237. 3 credits.

Seriously.

The country is crying out for straight answers. Slowly, painfully, with growing hope and glowing triumph and then sudden, crashing, betrayed dismay, we accumulate the set. The Moral Majority insists it is Burt Reynolds; Alex Haig plunks for Malacca (but oh! how brilliant he is, even if he can't spell; it is our loss that common sense has never been a major part of the curriculum); and David Stockman insists on  $x = 3y - 1$ . Straight responses, perhaps; hardly answers.

This is depressing enough to make me want to throw away my crutches and return to science fiction.

Seriously, we said.

A basic quality of fantastic art, be it literature, film or whatever, has long been recognized as suspension of disbelief. The artist/creator leads us slowly, craftedly, craftily past the reality censors of millions of years of survival evolution into a vision of new connections and meanings. We are confronted with an illuminating illusion grafted onto the cultural prejudices which define our sanity, our belief in first the structuredness of the universe and then the nature of that structure. This is the basic distinction of art from illustration, of literature from mere writing. Appreciating good artifice is easily more difficult than graduate courses in theory. (Yes, you are encouraged to think about that sentence....) It is what de-



lights and satisfies us; it is why so much SF and almost all SF movies are awful.

Seriously: Why the Reagan movie is bad art.

To see light at the end of the tunnel is often, as at Frankenstein's Castle, merely the result of illusory assumptions we make about illumination, its sources and meaning and consequences. The great nervous system of our body politic, the mass communication network, has been seized in a frenzy of misinformation and malinterpretation about and of current politics.

Hypothetical transcript of *Mace the Nation*:

Q: What is the difference between the Moral Majority and past right-wing religious nut groups?

A: MM has television, PR savvy, & (consequently) a lot of money.

Q: What do polls show about people's attitudes toward abortion and gun control?

A: They approve of these more than in the past.

Q: How much greater a proportion of the voting-age population voted for Ronald Reagan in 1980 than Barry Goldwater in 1964?

A: None. Many more people refused to vote. That's called a "landslide."

Q: Who defined "supply-side" theory's combination of a tax-cut with \$100 billion defense budget increases as voodoo economics?

A: Vice-President George Bush, while opposing Reagan for the Republican presidential nomination.

Q: How have government social programs been proven to be failures?

A: By helping poor people. The proportionate number of people in poverty in the US has fallen by half in less than 20 years. CETA has been proven to aid the chronically unemployed to get and keep productive jobs. Headstart has been proven cost-effective in improving children's learning. Emission controls have been proven useful in controlling smog. Many of the more successful programs were actually invented by the Republicans.

Q: How far below the trend of the average real dollar level of the last 30 years was the 1980 defense budget?

A: Not at all.

Q: What group do current tax laws most benefit with government largesse?

A: The middle class, overwhelmingly. After all, they are the ones who vote; it makes sense.

Q: What group does the new administration wish increasingly to benefit with its proposed changes?

A: The upper-middle class and the extremely wealthy. They are unfortunately being squeezed by inflation.

Q: Did your tv set tell you any of these facts last week?

A: \_\_\_\_\_

Q: Why not?

A: I wish I knew.



Alas, to live in usurious times may be the greatest curse. The ideologues who have through the (ignorant?) connivance of the press and the Democrats grabbed control of the American government are intent on creating a great work of illusion, not to contrast (artistically) with their assumptions about life, but to make the outside world conform to those assumptions. The (failed) artist in spite of himself, Reagan is intent on reformulating us and our world to match his court jesters' conceptions. Wishing to have a nice day will make it happen. Would that we could hesitate a moment, and think for ourselves. (Re)Read *The Futurological Congress*. *The Sheep Look Up*. Go see *Nashville*. Remember *The Lathe of Heaven*. Ponder a moment, if you will, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

For that is why this administration must fail: the illusion cannot indefinitely keep the outside objective world from poking its tendrils of gripping reality under the circus tent. The crowd determines soon enough that the canvas is afire. An electric storm will short your television...burning cities soon send their acrid smoke out the great highways to the suburbs...ground-zero bursts disrupt efforts to protect the truly needy.

This is not a sermon. It is an outline, a thought experiment where you, the *subject*, must fill in the detail.

Personally, I'm afraid. Seriously.

...the falcon eludes the falconer.

\* \* \* \* \*

DISCLAVE In spite of everything, I have survived Disclave. I hope I have sufficiently apologized to the Mauls, Stu, Moshe et al for my outrageous display Saturday night while proving that you don't have to drink beer to make a spectacle of yourself. I'm told that there was talk of nominating my performance for a Hugo in the Dramatic Presentation category, but I'm afraid I can't remember what I did very well so couldn't repeat it. I only know that I lost my voice somewhere in that room. In fact, I damaged myself quite a lot during the convention, although I had a good time anyway. I'm still looking for this famous British reserve which seems to go into hiding whenever I'm around, and wasn't any more in evidence among the Mauls than it was with Malcolm Edwards or, for that matter, Stu Shiffman, to say nothing of Dave Langford.

I do remember Stu showing us his photos from the TAFF trip. I can't tell you how these delighted me. No one really looks as I expected them to, which is interesting...Kev Smith turns out not to be blond and slight, and Joe Nicholas—ah, well, Joe Nicholas doesn't look at all like the foaming hairy one-eyed creature he was supposed to be. Joe Nicholas, in fact, looks like a real sweetie. (Let's see you live that one down, Joseph.) Greg Pickersgill, on the other hand, still looks like Pickersgill, and Alan Dorey is pretty much the way I expected an Alan Dorey to look.



TIME MARCHES ON And the result is that more Locs have arrived while I've been not working on this. Let's see, we have something from Lee Pelton, who didn't know whether I intended to have a letter column in *Blatant* but wrote anyway. Actually, one of these days I do expect to have a real lettercolumn, but this isn't it. This is just short bits and quotes and things, which is not the same thing at all. But Lee is another fan of Kung Fu movies, which gives us something to talk about—like the fact that I saw *Kill And Kill Again* the other day, which was pretty hilarious. The fighting wasn't so hot, and it was really a Karate movie, if you ask me, but the Sci-Fi was certainly something. You see, Dr. Kane has been kidnapped because of his formula for making auto fuel out of potatoes. The formula has a by-product—it can also be used as a mind-control drug—which is why everyone wants our Doctor Kane. I thought the explanation there was just as good as the scene where the hero has a fight in a sani-john. Anyway, Lee also says that Ralph Bakshi's next film will be a collaboration with Frank Frazetta...don't bother to watch this space for further details, because I never pay attention and won't know unless someone tells me.

And then we have this missive here from a Mr. Langford, who says:

...an extract from *Adam M-1* (a Sci Fi novel by William C Anderson, 1964)—just to prove I received *Blatant* (thanks!):

"...They finally located the trouble in the diode that was part of the circuit. The mystery was, though, that this diode only malfunctioned during several days of each month...You know why?"

"I'm dying to know."

"I'll tell you. It was because of the cramps." He took another pull from his glass.

"Did you say the cramps?"

"Exactly. It was the job of one of the girls on the assembly line to install this tiny diode. It was so sensitive that when the girl had her period, believe it or not this change in the chemical composition of her body affected the delicate diode."

'Ah, when Apollo whichever it was went wrong it was just one of those fiendish women walking by the pad and wilting the diodes. Stands to reason...

'I enjoyed *Blatant* and thought you said some true things about fandom/fanzines/writing therein... the truest possibly being Willis's comment. Me, I feel vaguely grey and despondent about British fandom just now because it's in a restless, dissatisfied state wherein a lot of the old reliables have tired of publishing, and newcomers seem to be complaining about the lack of real excellence (eg. in me) rather than actually producing anything creative of their own. In the early 70s when Pickersgill & Co shook up the then stagnation of Britfandom, it was talent crying out against mediocrity: probably I'm prejudiced, but a number of the current attacks on 'established' Britfandom now seem to be mediocrity crying out against talent (albeit bored talent)...

Oh, groan;

where is old fart fandom now that we really need them?

And, lessee...here are some things from people like Sarah Prince, and Neil Rest (who wrote a letter to Ronnie to complain about the Nestle's-WHO decision) and Marc Ortlieb (gearing up for visits from DUFF winners), and Graham James (who actually remembers who Mike Bloomfield was) and Linda: "I agree about the men publishing for men only—I suppose that's what we women still have to face even in fandom... British fandom is still highly lopsided in the male-female ratio, something American fandom has gotten somewhat away from..." And then there is the ever-continuous J. Owen Hanner, who said some things like:



"I even found myself getting interested in Alexis Gilliland's essay on economics, a subject I seldom get that interested in. I mean, who can really understand it all anyway? All I understand is that ours is lousy and it makes me poorer every month. I am curious about the Federal Reserve System, though. Curious about how it works. It's kind of mysterious to everyone, even the high-finance types I know. Maybe you could get Alexis to look into that sometime."

On the other hand, there is Naveed Khan, who said, "I found that I couldn't agree totally with Alexis' letter, whatever, mainly because I am biased doing as I am a degree in Economics. Perhaps I could insert a word so it would read 'most AMERICAN Economists.' After all it was the American economists who developed quantification to such a degree while us simple poor British Economists only devise Empirical lows..." At least I think that's what he said. He said some more about economics, but you know how it is. I mean, *economics*, for Kris-sakes. He also tried to convince me it's better to run than to fight, which is easy for *him* to say, but I've never been able to outrun anyone in my life, and usually when some strange wierd person on the street decides to accost me it is such a surprise to me that I just stand there gaping in amazement. Anyway, that ain't the point—the point is all that lovely movement and power, Naveed, that's what's neat about Kung Fu.

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I don't seem to have any other locs floating around at the moment, but that's probably my fault for mailing them at such a snail's pace, a few this week, a few that week, you know. But I feel it is incumbent upon me (I have always wanted to use that phrase) to explain something. I suppose all that talk about menstruation may be responsible, but I want you (yes, you, Ted, Patrick, and the rest of yas) to realize that I just don't have the kind of resources necessary to produce and mail out a fanzine every month. I don't know what makes people think I'm crazy enough to commit myself to doing a monthly fanzine (Krist, I have trouble remembering to buy tampons every month. You want me to buy paper and stamps every month? Are you kidding?), but as strange as I may be, I'm not *that* nuts. Maybe I should remember in future colophons to include the phrase, "...is published whenever I get around to it" as I did with *The Invisible Fan*.

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AND ONCE AGAIN It seems  
I have  
with great cleverness  
managed to come close to  
the end of the fanzine  
without having enough  
space left over to  
force me to discuss  
the dread Science Fic-  
tion. This is a bles-  
sing, I'm sure. I might  
have found myself get-  
ting all serious about  
having recently final-  
ly read (as opposed to  
seeing the film) John  
Wyndham's *The Midwich  
Cuckoos* and perhaps even  
giving you my thoughts





on what it might be like to mail out copies of the book to the entire roster of the Right-to-Life movement. Or I might start telling you about how I've recently read *New Dimensions 12* and I'm about halfway through *The Best Science Fiction Novellas of The Year 1* and maybe you should read them and especially those Michaels Bishop and Swanwick. (But that's just my opinion, and what do I know? I'm still trying to figure out what those English boys seem to have against a nice guy like John Varley, who writes stories that delight me and sometimes even make me cry...) Worse still, I could start raving about what a great time I had seeing *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which is loads of great fun and the action never stops. Fortunately for us all, however, this is the last page and there just isn't room for that sort of thing. I couldn't possibly discuss Science Fiction at a time and place like this, could I? No, of course not.

Of course not.

(And not a word about the chocolate model of the Millenium Falcon, please.)

\* \* \* \* \*

*this fanzine supports Kevin Smith for TAFF*

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