



MATRIX 18.... Aug. 1978... ISSN 0307 3335

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CAN YOU HELP THE BSFA?

We would like to publicise the BSFA, with posters in Libraries, Colleges, schools and recreation centres, etc.

If you can place a few of these small posters in your area or town, please contact me by postcard, giving your name and address, with how many posters you can realistically use.

We would be most grateful for your assistance,

Write to: David A. Symes, 3, Hannington Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7 6JT.

Inhabitants of the Borough of Hyndburn will have been treated to an exhibition of Science Fiction Drawings by BSFA member Richard Bancroft; nice, one Richard! Cover: Dave Kirkbride/Interiors: Derek Harkness -2-

JACKSON'S ISLAND..... an editorial

I'd like to start by making an announcement I'd hoped not to make for some months. During the past few weeks a chance came to apply for a new job within the Wirral Library Service. I took the chance and got the job, but it will leave me with far less free time in the future. Hence, I am going to have to step down from MATRIX as soon as possible after the next issue. Instead of, as I had originally planned, after Easter. I'm reluctant to do this, especially as my attempts to improve MATRIX seem to be working (I now have more material on file or promised than ever before), but I am equally reluctant to give up all involvement in the BSFA, which is a position I may be forced into if a real clash between my home life, my work, the BSFA, and my other interests starts developing.

MATRIX, then, is looking for another editor. If anyone would like to take over, please contact me. The idea is that my successor and I collaborate in some way on an issue before I bow out altogether; in this way, some of the teething troubles which I found in my first couple of issues may be avoided. Of course, you (the next editor, whoever you are) may feel that you can do a better job completely on your own - if so, that's quite OK. Editing MATRIX is a job I have found rewarding; I must point out that it does involve a great deal of time-consuming work - especially the typoning! - but I have thoroughly enjoyed the feeling of contact with other BSFA members that I've gained from the job.

Maybe I could say a few words about what I have been trying to do over the last few issues. My aims in editing MATRIX have been to provide a BSFA members forum; through BSFA News, the clubs column, and readers' letters discussing SF, the BSFA, fandom and anything else members find of interest; to provide positive feedback to the BSFA. This means that your letters are a vital component of the zine, and I'm pleased that more and more people are writing in - even though this does mean that despite heavy editing (and if you think the letters are long you should see them when I get them!) the letters pages have a tendency to 'creep'.

Secondly, MATRIX should report on past major events in the SF world, and give an idea of what is coming up in the future.

Thirdly, it should provide interesting and informative features, short articles, interviews, reviews of non-book or film media, etc. contributed largely by members with perhaps the occasional 'guest piece'.

The success or otherwise of the MATRIX editor in attaining these aims depends very much on the participation of the membership, in either producing stuff directly or suggesting items which they would like to see. As I've said, I now have a fair amount of material on file or promised - with one exception. That exception is artwork! What has happened to all you artists??? Any of the above categories of material will be welcome, but MATRIX especially needs cover art and fillers.

And so, a brief look at this issue, which incorporates some of the long-term changes I had hoped to make. I have amalgamated the clubs column, the fanzine reviews and what I hope to be a regular series on other fandoms or national fan groups into a "FANDOM FEATURE" into which will also go short pieces on aspects of fandom, should any appear. Fanzine coverage is, for many people, a useful service and I want to run a 'Fanzines Received' column, giving basic details - cost, price, address - in conjunction with longer, in-depth reviews of selected titles or aspects of fanzines, such as that done by Roger Waddington in this issue.

MATRIX has something of a transatlantic flavour this issue, with Cyril Sims's report of his recent Canadian trip taking in the Vancouver Convention, and a look at the U.S. National Fantasy Fan Federation. Next issue we return home with a piece on the British Fantasy Society, written specially for us by the editor of its "Bulletin" (and former colleague of the MATRIX editor from my days in the London Borough of Newham Library Service - who said it wasn't a small world?), Dave Reeder. Also included herein for your entertainment and edification are another competition, an article by Mary Sawyer (what...? How on earth did that get here?), and an interview. At time of typing this editorial I'm not sure which interview; the one I'd scheduled for this issue doesn't look like coming so I'll probably bring forward that conducted by Paul Fraser which I'd originally intended for next issue! (Prospective editors please note - this is the sort of thing that will shorten the length of your fingernails considerably!)

My little polemic last issue drew a fair amount of response, most if not all, I'm pleased to say, agreeing with the stand I took. Considering that I attacked a book last time, maybe in the good old English tradition of balance and fair play I should find something to praise for this issue. Actually, I haven't had far to look.

Probably the most interesting book I've read this year - if not the best: that honour goes to Kingsley Amis' THE ALTERATION - is a new venture from the left-wing publishers Pluto Press. ECOTOPIA, by Ernest Callenbach, tells the story, in fictional form, of a breakaway society which sets out to solve the problem of how a rich nation can live in harmony with nature. It is very much a blueprint for a possible future based on socialist/anarchist values; featuring recycling, workers' control, Alternative Technology, feminism etc.; in fact, the sort of thing you get in magazines like UNDERCURRENTS, PEACE NEWS and the like. In fact, I strongly suspect that the author of the BBC TV Play for Today, STARGAZY ON ZUMMERDOWN must have read the book (it has been available in America since 1975 although it has only just been published here), if only because the play was so strongly ENGLISH while the book is so strongly AMERICAN, yet both deal with a future in

which the Alternative Society has become reality. However, even if you don't agree with the values the book proposes, it's worth checking out simply for its effective picture of a very different society. Call it, if you like, the positive side of which John 'runner's THE SHEEP LOCK UP is the negative.

Interesting what you pick up in junkshops. The other day I was browsing in a second-hand shop, looking for something to read, when I discovered a copy of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Now, I'm quite a fan of the Saint, or rather was - I haven't actually read any Saint books for some years - but what actually caught my eye was the fact that this issue (Nov. 1961) seemed to be almost entirely written by SF/Fantasy writers (Robert Bloch, Miriam Allen de Ford, and Philip Jose Farmer).

Naturally, I bought it. And found one item which should be of interest to Farmer fans. (Now I'll get Farmer fans and experts in SF bibliography writing in and saying "We knew all that already", but let it pass, I found it interesting.) The Farmer story, "Uproar in Acheron", concerned a theme which I knew had obsessed Farmer since very early in his career, but I wasn't aware how early. I'm talking of course of the 'Resurrection' theme which is the centre of his 'Riverworld' novels. In "Uproar in Acheron" a travelling quack doctor and his assistant run a racket consisting of 'demonstrating' a technique which will bring the dead back to life, and then 'benefiting' the community by raising everyone's dead relatives. Of course, things don't get as far as that, because everyone has some reason why the dead should stay dead, and Doc can be bribed...

An interesting 10p worth, and one which for me, has thrown a lot of light on Farmer's more recent books.

And that, as they say, is all for now. Keep the material coming, and - please - let's have a volunteer for my replacement!

(Andy)

** B S F A N E W S **

BSFA AWARD

Thanks to John 'runner for pointing out an error in the list of award winners, which should have said:

1969 STAND ON ZANZIBAR	John 'runner
1970 THE JAGGED ORBIT	John 'runner

THE LIBRARY

Malcolm Edwards has recently written from the SF Foundation kindly informing us that some of the BSFA Library books are in a poor condition due to their being loaned to members over a number of years (I'm not suggesting maltreatment, though no doubt that has occurred in some cases, just the wear and tear of heavy use). Consequently, some committee members intend to visit the SF Foundation to inspect the library.

It's the feeling of the majority of the committee that the damaged books plus the older, rarer books should be designated as not for postal loan (books have been lost in the post).

Knowing the feeling that the library seems to stir up I'd like some feedback from you before we take any decision on this.

COLLATION, ETC.

Following the AGM's suggestion that the committee buy assistance when needed, 3 students were hired to assist with collating, stapling etc. of the last mailing. These, along with Kieth Freeman, Dave Wingrove and Andy Muir managed to get the mailing out in one weekend. The students were paid £1 an hour and the outlay was £37.50. As far as the regular collators were concerned, this was money well spent and student labour will be used again until VECTOR returns to a litho format.

COMMITTEE MEETING.

These usually take place in London which tends to preclude the attendance of our northern colleagues, so to give them a fair crack of the whip the meeting on 11th June 1978 was held in Tranmere at the residence of Andy Sawyer. Thanks to Andy, his wife and offspring for entertaining us all.

The following major topics were discussed and some of the points raised were:-

(VECTOR) Dave Wingrove gave an outline of the likely material in the next seven issues. It was agreed the issue due out at the time of the 1979 Worldcon would be a special Worldcon issue and would be fully lithoed.

(MATRIX) Andy Sawyer gave details of what he intended to publish in Matrix, the committee agreed with Andy's aims and understood Andy's problems in getting suitable material. Andy announced his intention of resigning in the near future.

(TANGENT) It was accepted that the two requirements on Ian Arbuthott to print material from as many people as possible and to print the best material available were often contradictory, but it was agreed that this must be the ideal to aim for. To give scope to the contributors it was agreed TANGENT would aim to print one 5000 word story and for stories of less than 2000 words each. It was also felt that with the apparent demise of CYCLOTRON there was a place for articles on writing within TANGENT.

(ADVERTISING) Phil Stephensen-Payne was congratulated on obtaining the paperback advert which was (and still is) doing well. It was agreed that further paperback ads were an obvious priority. It was noted that ads to attract subscribers to VECTOR in the States had not done well whereas a mention in the GALAXY letter column of the BSFA (by Dave Wingrove) had produced good results; thus all future advertising would be of the BSFA. It was accepted that it was worth continuing with the News-shots (publicity material) but this would be reviewed in November.

(BIBLIOGRAPHIES) Philip K Dick had not responded to letters thus this bibliography was halted. Even though it was proving difficult to get material for those bibliographies to go with the listings of published material the committee felt it was worth continuing with them.

(THE CARNELL/BSFA AWARD) After discussion it was agreed to retain the same eligibility rules this year as last year. It was further agreed to try out 3 further categories:-

Best collection/anthology

Best media production (i.e. anything not printed)

Best book jacket illustration

Continuance of these categories would depend on membership response in nominating material & subsequent voting.

(VICE CHAIRMAN'S JOB) Tom Jones said everyone so far approached had declined to accept the post and no volunteers had come forward. Tom said he would continue to pursue the matter as he had no intention of staying on for an extra term.

(BUSINESS MANAGER) Phil Stephensen-Payne said he was happy to hand over to Trev Briggs who was already performing a considerable portion of the job as Vector Business Manager, particularly as a recent promotion at work had meant he had considerably less spare time.

(TRADE FANZINES) Bill Little had reported that few of the fanzines receiving trade copies of VECTOR were in fact trading. It was agreed a further final letter would be sent to these fanzines and any editor not responding would be removed from the trade list.

(COMPANY SECRETARY) Kevin Smith was co-opted onto the Council of the BSFA as Company Secretary.

(FINANCE) Chris Umpleby reported that the financial state of the BSFA was improving rapidly, the account at present being in credit to the tune of about £1,500. It was agreed that the deposit account would be increased to £500, providing an adequate backstop. It was further agreed to investigate the possibility of purchasing equipment, e.g. an electric typewriter, large electric stapler.

Well, I hope that gives you some idea as to what the committee talk about at their meetings. Next issue I'll give you an idea of the items (anything up to 60) covered in a typical committee Round Robin.

bye,

Tom Jones.

A STATEMENT FROM THE COMMITTEE

((LAST ISSUE FEATURED A LONG (& AT TIMES ABUSIVE) LETTER FROM DON WEST RAISING MANY POINTS ABOUT THE RUNNING OF THE BSFA. THE FOLLOWING WAS AGREED BY THE WHOLE COMMITTEE AS A REPLY TO SOME OF THE ALLEGATIONS HE MAKES.))

Separating your complaints and criticisms into some kind of order, we'll deal with them in turn.

1) (COST OF MATRIX, PUBLICATIONS) It is possible to separate out the cost of MATRIX and postage from the cost of VECTOR but it wasn't possible to do it on the spot as

requested at the AGM. For information, MATRIX costs about £30 and postage between £150 and £200 per mailing.

2) (THE VECTOR STORY) Several years ago, a separate VECTOR account was set up with the editor and treasurer as co-signees. £4 out of every £4.50 and £4.50 out of every £5 were paid into it, plus all advertising income from VECTOR and money from sales. It was then the editor's job to budget the spending on V to meet the income. During 1976 the budgeting worked satisfactorily but in 1977 V changed from A5 to A4 format with the editor's assurance that there would be no increase in costs because of the reduced page count; ie an issue would continue to cost £250 to £300.

Contrary to your accusations the committee takes its duties and obligations seriously and holds committee meetings at 2 to 3 month intervals, each taking a day of our time. At these meetings officers give details of their expenditure. For instance, at the 4th September 1977 meeting the following details of the publications account were given:-

Money owed to account.....	£400
Money in account.....	£190
Total.....	£590

Money owed from account for V81.....	£400
Estimate for V82 (invoice not received).....	£300
	£700

Deficit £110

The difference in cost was attributed to the metal plate required for V81 cover.

At the previous committee meeting, in July 1977, the committee had agreed that no more metal plates would be used unless used on and paid for completely by advertising, in order to minimise costs. Much to the committee's anger, V83 appeared with metal plated covers and after Chris Fowler's resignation it was discovered that his cost estimates as presented to committee were incorrect in that the A4 VECTORS were costing not £250 to £300 but £400 to £500. For example the V83 costs were:-

800 off.....	£248.00
Plate for cover & printing cover....	£133.70
3 plates for ads.....	£64.20
TOTAL.....	£445.90

As you see the cost of the majority of the magazine was about £250 but the cover pushed it well above this. The plates for the adverts were charged to the advertisers.

We also found that money was owed for V81, V82 and V83.

In retrospect perhaps the committee could be accused of negligence. But should the committee vet the magazine before it's printed? Should we stand over the printer making sure no metal plates are used or should we be able to trust our editor to follow instructions? Should the committee distrust an editor when there is no prior reason for doing so? Anyone who has served on a committee will know there is no way for it to function properly unless the members trust each other. Perhaps you do regard this as

"total dereliction of duty" and would want the committee to be suspicious of each other; the tone of your letter certainly indicates that you know little about co-operating with people or how to get information without insulting people.

Although it's shutting the stable door after one of the horses had bolted, we have put into effect measures to stop this happening again. The publications account has been closed and all financial transactions go through the main account, requiring the signatures of the treasurer and the vice-chairman. This is no slur on the present VECTOR editor who is more than happy not to have to bother with the nitty gritty of the finances. The committee also receive a detailed financial report from the treasurer bi-monthly.

3) (SALES OF VECTOR) Advertising revenue is included under the heading 'VECTOR subscriptions and sales'.

4) (ADVERTISING) During 1977, VECTOR carried more advertising than in any previous year, most of them paid adverts but some arranged on a trade basis. It is relatively easy to get advertising for a one-off item such as a convention booklet or even for a single issue of VECTOR, but to get regular bi-monthly advertising from publishers, etc. is not easy - especially for a magazine with a circulation of under 1000 copies. But we would be happy to be proved wrong if you could arrange 5 or 6 pages of regular advertising at our standard rates.

5) (ACCOUNTS) You have given no reasons for your assertions that the accounts are unsatisfactory and that the figures look suspect. The figures in the balance sheet and Income and Expenditure Account are matters of fact and can be disputed only on grounds of fact. They cannot be disputed because they show results that are not up to your expectations, nor because you are unhappy with the way the company has run its business during the year.

The nature of the double entry accounting system means that the Balance Sheet has an existence independent of the Income and expenditure Account. If you are happy that the Balance Sheet shows 'the correct figures for cash in the bank and so on' then that's it. There can be no further argument. The Balance Sheet throws out a balancing figure which is the surplus or deficit for the year. This surplus or deficit is verified by the Income and Expenditure Account which comes to the same figures as a necessity of the system, not as a fiddle. The only grounds for complaint are that the accounts had not been audited and that therefore there was no independent auditor's opinion on the.

Incidentally, the Income and Expenditure Account gives a lot more information than is required by the Companies Acts 1948, 1967 and 1976.

6) (REGULAR LITHO) There is only one person who regularly produces a litho fanzine which he 'gives away' and that is Rob Jackson with MAYA. We doubt if Rob considers it a negligible expense. We doubt also if Rob would wish to give away 800 copies a year.

7) (OTHER PRINTERS) The committee did check other printers and found little difference in cost. Certainly very small

printers can be cheaper, but they can also be less reliable. Jobs can frequently be late, sometimes considerably so - ask Malcolm Edwards at the SF Foundation about small printers if you want examples.

Fortunately Dave Wingrove had all of London in which to find a printer and was able personally to check out and find a medium sized reliable one, who we will no doubt use when VECTOR returns to a litho format.

8) (COMMITTEE J BS) Few of the committee jobs carry any glory but they do take a considerable amount of time and effort and after a year most of us would be more than happy to give them up. Tom Jones' two-year term is up next year and he is not staying for another; both Phil Stephensen-Payne and Andy Sawyer will be resigning as they can no longer afford the time the jobs demand. We very much doubt we'll be swamped with volunteers for the vacant posts.

9) TANGENT) Your comment on TANGENT is a personal one and is contrary to the feelings expressed in the membership poll. Our membership has diverse interests and we do not expect everyone to enjoy everything - one of the reasons TANGENT only goes to those who request it.

10) (FANZINES) If you read MATRIX you would see that until 2 issues ago it carried notes on most fanzines published in the UK and most of the major US ones (a feature which is shortly to return to MATRIX's pages) - information on contents, price, editor, etc. were all given. Under Keith Freeman's benevolent reign over the column the majority of fanzines were recommended to our members, who thus have had probably as much information on what fanzines are available as anyone.

11) (PUBLICATION STANDARDS) Contrary to your statement the membership questionnaire indicated that the majority of members are happy with the standard of the publications. Though all three editors would say that they could and will be improving the publications.

12) FANS & BSFA) Most active fans are members of the BSFA, even yourself, who for some time has been the most anti-BSFA fan in the UK. The BSFA is not "an object of derision" in fandom; if it were, would the 1979 Eastercon committee be cooperating with us and extending to us the facilities they are? Are you suggesting they are objects of derision also for so doing?

Undenably the BSFA's relationships with fandom have not been good in the past (our vice-chairman admits this is partly his fault) but that is changing and perhaps you are the only true anti-BSFA fan left. Perhaps that has something to do with your letter.... but we'll let people decide that for themselves.

12) (ADVERTISING) You are completely wrong on this. We spent about £200 on advertising the BSFA, plus arranging trade adverts with several publications. These ads have appeared in as diverse a range of publications

as NEW SCIENTIST and the paperback edition of Edmund Cooper's SLAVES OF HEAVEN, the latter being very difficult to obtain. Some worked well, some were disappointing. Understandably, the paperback did very well and we're trying to get another one.

14) (THE BSFA AWARD) Once we'd got the BSFA back onto a stable footing our first priority with the award was to get it back onto a democratic basis which was done last year. Of course we try to exploit the advertising potential of the award but we can't force people to mention it; and yes, we do have press releases (see last issue), let's hope they do some good.

As for calling it the Carnell, that was a democratic decision at the AGM (you could have come along and voted against it). As it is, publishers won't print THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION AWARD WINNER on their covers because it's too long and BSFA AWARD conveys as much information about the organization as THE CARNELL unless the publishers explain what the award is and who presents it. At least printing THE CARNELL is better than printing BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION AWARD WINNER which is the name of a completely different award.

15) (INFORMATION BOOKLET) You say this booklet contravenes the Trades Descriptions Act, presumably meaning it conveys no information. Well as it contains a short description of each service and the name and address of the person responsible for looking after the service we're not sure just how you define information. Surely you don't want many pages full of descriptions of each service when most members only use one or two of them, especially as you accuse us of being wasteful anyway.

16) (PAPERBACK PARLOUR & WAIF) Now if you'd read your information booklet you'd have understood why PP and WAIF were in your mailing, for amongst the services described is a duplication and distribution service.

Until a few issues ago, PP was paid for by Phil, but following the enormous response received when Phil announced he was going to discontinue it, we decided to distribute it as a service to our members when Phil decided to continue. Doing so allows VECTOR to print fewer paperback reviews and devote more space to articles.

Tom Jones paid completely for the duplication and distribution of the 50 copies of WAIF.

BSFA committee members certainly do not get privileges, ask the other members who've used these services.

This largely invalidates your points about postage, but we don't weigh all 700 plus envelopes; just a sample on our GPO approved letter scales.

LAST WORD

We make no claims to perfection and there are things we need kicking in the pants for, but we don't see how if we're as incompetent, lazy, stupid

and criminal as you suggest we could have:-
 Boosted the membership from 150 to over 500
 Produced regular bi-monthly mailings for 2½ years
 Obtained more ads for VECTOR than ever before
 Advertised the BSFA more than any previous committee
 Put the BSFA Award back onto a regular, democratic
 footing
 Introduced economic measures & financial controls
 to prevent further large deficits.

Whilst your letter contains points which
 needed answering most accusations are erroneous. The
 letter was personally insulting to the committee
 members; indeed, this seemed to be its prime aim.
 If it had been a personal letter it would have gone
 straight into the waste bin, insults not being
 the best method of obtaining information, but then
 your letter wasn't really after information, be-
 ing just propaganda to stir up trouble within the
 Association. After all, your attacks on the BSFA,
 its members and committee members are well known in
 fanzines.

The letter was printed so there could be no
 accusation of censorship and we have taken the opp-
 ortunity to respond so that the members can judge
 for themselves which side is presenting the true
 case. Should the members decide your case is true
 then we will all, of course, be happy to resign.

THE COMMITTEE.

((And now, after that serious interlude, let's have
 some light entertainment. Yes, it is:-

COMPETITION

TIME

and first, the answers to last issues crossword:
 not a heavy response, I'm afraid, and there were
 no fully correct entries. However, taking into
 account those entries with fewest errors, and
 leaving the final decision to the Gods of Chance,
 the winner turned out to be ROGER AUSTIN of
 Cardiff. I will be sending you a list of books
 to make your choice from, Roger - oh, and I
 liked your version of 15 across. If there isn't
 such an adjective, there should be! But now for
 the answers....))

ACROSS

- 1) Hart
- 3) Malzberg
- 5) Osmium
- 11) Merril
- 13) Lamps
- 15) Stochastic
- 16) Mask
- 19) Rasta
- 20) Gandhi

- 21) Tremaine
- 24) EE
- 25) Rad
- 26) Albedo

DOWN

- 2) Atom
- 3) Momentum
- 4) Lem
- 5) Barsroom

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| 6) Gil | 17) Aldiss |
| 7) Illustrator | 18) Kight |
| 9) Space-time | 20) Gold |
| 10) MS | 22) AE |
| 12) Ideas | 23) ERB |
| 14) CCC | |

ooo000ooo

And now for this issue's competition. I've tried to
 make this a bit easier, so there's no excuse for not
 entering! Below is a simple list of authors and titles,
 culled from my bookshelves. Except that I seem to have
 attributed the wrong authors to the books. Help! On the
 top right-hand corner of my shelving system is a pile of
 books, one of which will be sent to the member whose
 entry appears out of the hat when the draw of correct
 entries takes place on October 1st. So... all you have
 to do is match the right authors to the right books:-

A FAR SUNSET..... James Blish
 THE WORLD MENDEES..... Ursula LeGuin
 EARTHMAN, COME HOME..... Clifford D. Simak
 THE WRECKS OF TIME..... Edmund Cooper
 SHADOW OF HEAVEN..... Otis Adelbert Kline
 THE HEAVEN MAKERS..... Lloyd Biggle
 THE SWORDSMAN OF MARS..... Michael Moorcock
 THE NIGHT OF THE WOLF..... Bob Shaw
 CITY OF ILLUSION..... Frank Herbert
 THE NIGHT OF THE PUDDLEY..... Fritz Leiber

Entries to the MATRIX editorial address.

MEMBER'S NOTICE BOARD

ALEX PILLAI, 32, Mingle Lane, Stapleford, Cambs, writes:
 "I'd like to contact any BSFA member of the 16 - 18 age
 group to form a correspondence club. Please send SAE."

R. MOXON, 18, Albany Rd, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 3AY has
 produced some interesting photos showing spacecraft head-
 ing into galaxies "made from a half tone negative and a
 continuous tone negative" and would be interested to
 contact anyone doing similar work.

FUSION... is not a fanzine. FUSION ... is an experiment
 in literature. FUSION ... is a postal writers workshop.
 If you write humour, romance, sf, fantasy, detective,
 crime, experimental, prose poetry, vignettes etc. (any
 length up to 20,000w) and wish to take part, contact
 KEN MANN, 4, Arminger Rd, London W12.

PERIHELION 1 has come and gone; contributions for no. 2
 would be welcome, as would sae's and trades. Contact
 STEEV HIGGINS, 18 St. Austell Ave, Tyldesley, Greater
 Manchester M29 7FY.

TIOFART 2 is now available for an A4 envelope plus 12p
 stamp; from DAVE COBBLEDICK, 245, Rosalind St., Ashington,
 Northumberland.

THE MATRIX INTERVIEW.

** KEITH ROBERTS talks to **
** Paul Fraser. **

Keith Roberts is, amongst other things, the creator of one of the top three parallel/alternate world books - PAVANE. It is set in a world that develops from the assumption that Queen Elizabeth I was assassinated.

His first stories were published in Science Fantasy and in New Writings in SF around the end of 1964. He was a frequent contributor to both for about three years. The New Worlds Quarterly series also featured some of his work; nine stories in the eight volumes he appeared in.

His books are:-

THE FURIES (Pan)
THE INNER WHEEL (Panther)
PAVANE (panther, '70, '74; 40p)
MACHINES & MEN (Panther, '74; 50p)
THE CHALK GIANTS (Panther, '75; 75p)
THE GRAIN KINGS (Panther, '77; 65p)

He has also written a historical novel, THE BOAT OF FATE, and has another collection of fantasy stories concerning a witch called Anita that has not yet been issued in paperback, although Millington have done a hardback edition.

Anybody wishing to find out more about Mr Roberts is recommended an article in Science Fiction Monthly vol. 2 no. 10, by Mike Ashley.

The following interview was done by post around the middle of June.

PF: Children and adolescents play a large part in your work (teenage girls and young women in particular). Take THE GODHOUSE, THE BEAUTIFUL ONE, SUSAN, THE SIGNALLER, THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, THE WHITE BOAT, and the ANITA stories, for example. Could you tell us about your own childhood and adolescence, and why you think it appears in your

work to such an extent? Do you have any children of your own?

KR: Children, and young people generally, tend to have strong and simple views about good and bad, right and wrong, etc. I find this refreshing, and so tend to talk a lot about young characters. I use 'primitive' or unsophisticated communities for the same reason.

I suppose I do use female characters more extensively than is common in SF, which is still very much a male-oriented area. A lot of SF still tends to sublimate women as either angels or demons; while there's nothing intrinsically wrong with this, it's a challenge to try and show them as real people with lives of their own. This is a problem I tend to come back to again and again. Also of course with many stories it's easier to get reader sympathy by using a girl as a central character. One of the stories you mention, THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN is a case in point.

My own childhood was overall fairly ordinary. I don't think it has much relevance. I'm not married; I don't have any children of my own either.

PF: What did you read in your youth? What do you like reading now? Do you think any of it has influenced you?

KR: Everything I could lay my hands on. These days I sometimes feel I don't read half as much as I should, though I suppose my top modern author is still William Golding. Kipling and Wells were certainly the people who first showed me what words could do; and my love for the Bard survived doing him for O Levels, which may or may not be an achievement. On influences, gestalt philosophy tells us we're the continually-altering sum of all our experiences. I rather go along with this, so I supposed it's all influenced me. Or none of it.

PF: What made you start writing SF?

KR: Strictly practical; considerations. SF was booming in the early '60s; there was a call for new authors, and what seemed at the time to be an ever-widening market.

PF: Do you find that SF restricts you in any way?

KR: All genre writing is restrictive in one sense. SF I've found less restricting than most; or maybe I've just been lucky with my editors. Right now there isn't a good regular market for SF stories in the UK at all, and precious few in the States. I find that very restricting, of course.

PF: The first editors you sold to were Carnell (for New Writings) and Bognifelli (for Science Fantasy). What were your impressions of them?

KR: Ted Carnell was my first agent as well as my first editor, and I maintained a personal relationship with him that only ended with his death. I sometimes had the feeling; that the movement he had fostered had passed him at the gallop and that he had difficulty keeping pace with the many new writers in the field and all the new work that was being done, but his achievement in keeping his two magazines running for

so many years must never be under-estimated, and right to the last his enthusiasm was undimmed. Bon of course I worked with as assistant editor before taking over the final phase of the magazine. He was and is unique; a man of acute perception and taste, backed by a remorseless demand for accuracy in the use of language. He taught me to work with the Concise Oxford at my side. I still do it.

PF: Later, Science Fantasy changed to Impulse and you became its associate editor. Have you any anecdotes about your dealings with writers as an editor? What was it like to be on the other side of the fence?

KR: Anecdotes, of course abound. Like the lad who always submitted his stories on opened-out Woodbine packets, because he couldn't afford a typewriter. But every editor could tell that sort of tale.

I never really saw myself as being on the other side of the fence at all; I sympathised strongly with what the serious contributors were trying to do, and dealt with them as fairly as I was able. When the magazine finally folded several of them wrote to thank me for my efforts, so I couldn't have done too badly on the whole.

PF: What did your editorial work consist of? Did you ever do any more?

KR: Practically everything. There were no other staff, just me; so I found myself overseeing all stages of production, writing blurbs, reading proofs, laying out covers and doing artwork when I could find a moment to tie a brush to my right foot. SF IMPULSE wasn't the only title Roberts and Vinter were handling of course, and I found myself involved with the production of at least two other paperbacks a month. It was a fairly hectic period. I've never been sure whether I enjoyed it or not; I didn't have time to sit down and decide.

I never did any more editing, though in the main I enjoyed working with other writers. Looking back, I'm doubtful whether the functions of writer and editor could ever be properly combined. Each, if it's to be done well, makes full demands on one's energy and time. If I was given the chance to edit again, I don't know what I would decide. There's never been a more crying need for good SF editors than right now.

PF: Where on Earth did you get the ideas for the PAVANE and ANITA stories?

KR: I've always found the 'idea' for a story or novel is a fairly complex thing, a combination of factors some of which might have been dormant for years. So although there's a moment when several things click together and you realise you've got a book, tracing the notion back to its roots would be a long and tedious affair. With PAVANE, for example, I'd known Corfe and the Purbeck area for years and badly wanted to write something about it, but had

fought shy of doing a conventional historical. It was a stray remark overheard in a local pub that set things in motion, and suggested the idea of a double rather than an alternate timestream. I wrote CORFE GATE within a matter of days, and the rest of the book grew from it. Similarly with ANITA; the background was certainly suggested by my own childhood in Northamptonshire, but it's been overlaid with many other things.

PF: Why was THE WHITE BOAT not included in the book PAVANE? After all, it was a PAVANE story, wasn't it? Did you change the stories in the book version; they appear to be shorter than in the original.

KR: Hart-Davis wanted to keep the novel as short as possible for reasons to do with production costs. THE WHITE BOAT came along some months after the rest, and never seemed to me to be quite in the same spirit; so I wasn't prepared to fight too hard for its inclusion.

The stories in the hardback and paperback versions are not in fact shorter than the IMPULSE publications; no changes were made except some detail concerning place and character names. The only real change was made in CORFE GATE, which Bon and I both felt was not wholly satisfactory in its original magazine form.

PF: After SF IMPULSE folded you disappeared from sight until Moorcock started the paperback NEW WORLDS. I believe that you took the time to write a historical novel. What made you do this?

KR: I didn't really disappear from sight at all. I agree I didn't publish in the underground NEW WORLDS, because it wasn't, as they say, my bag. But I was still doing the odd story for Ted. I did spend part of the time on an historical; but I was also working on THE CHALK GIANTS, which was more or less written by the time NEW WORLDS re-emerged.

PF: How were you involved in NEW WORLDS QUARTERLY? Were your stories solicited? (I see one of your collections is dedicated to Michael Moorcock - he seems to be a sparking point for an awful lot of writers).

KR: I wasn't directly involved in NWQ at all, but Mike was always interested in seeing material for me, so as soon as he was in a position to accept it I sent the new work along. He's helped me a great deal over the years, so it seemed only right and proper to give the dedication of THE CHALK GIANTS, which he particularly admired, to him.

PF: Your work in the paperback NW is all pretty much 'downer' stuff. Even THE PASSING OF DRAGONS - a fairly light piece - finishes with the death of an entire alien race! Why were those stories like this?

KR: This is an interesting word, I hadn't come across it before. All the stories of the CHALK GIANTS cycle represent explorations of guilt in human relations, as PAVANE had explored the Kiplingesque notion of loyalty. I think it's natural to the process of writing to chance on a theme

and follow it through; and of course there are spinoffs, which lead to stories themselves. So these cycles are bound to occur. Some upbeat, some down.

PF: Is there any chance of WEINACHTABEND becoming part of a story-cycle like THE CHALK GIANTS or PAVANE? The author blurbs at the end of NWQ4 said it was the first of a series. What about the two canal stories: THE LAKE OF TUONELA, THE TRUSTIE TREE?

KR: Blurbs always tend to be over-optimistic. Certainly WEINACHTABEND could become part of a story cycle, and at one point I planned some of the other out; but whether they'll ever be written will depend on a lot of other factors. Not least, of course, their potential saleability in these very difficult times. I certainly don't think there'll be any more 'canal stories' for the foreseeable future; though of course one can never tell.

PF: I believe that you are also a commercial artist at times. Is there any of your work that we would recognise? What kind of work do you do?

KR: I work, and have worked for a number of years, as a freelance visualiser and copywriter. I was originally trained as an illustrator, though I have never been particularly interested in illustrating my own stories and have only done it on special request. It wouldn't, I think, be right to specify the clients I work for as an advertising artist. But if you go carefully through any caravanning magazine you'll usually find my initials on at least one advertisement.

PF: Another of your interests is machinery and firearms in particular. Could you tell us about both of these?

KR: Old machinery is often beautiful and usually sad. Which makes it an interesting subject to write about. And of course it's always intriguing to try and suss out how it worked. I certainly admire antique firearms, in a purely aesthetic way, but I'm not a 'gun man' in any sense at all, this comes from another not very accurate piece of blurb. I've explored the 'gun fetish' a couple of times, in WEINACHTABEND and of course THE CHALK GIANTS; but guns in real life are another matter. They tend to kill the person in front of them and deafen the person behind, and I'm rather afraid of them.

PF: You mention that you have a new collection going the rounds. What are its contents and title?

KR: I've got at least two books in circulation at the moment; one story collection, and a non-SF novel. But I never like talking about things before

they're sold. Otherwise it becomes like one of those pieces of blurb; promised, but never delivered.

PF: Novels don't seem to be your strong point as you have only produced two (THE FURIES & THE INNER WHEEL) and those were about 10 years ago. Do you find that you get more power out of a cycle of stories?

KR: I don't see why it should be, but most SF ideas seem to run out naturally to a length between 10 and 20,000 words. Which is why we have the novella, a form not paralleled in any other genre. Unlike many writers I neverpad; I might make more money if I did. So what comes out at novella length stays that way, and if the material has suggested other stories they get tagged on. Hence the story cycles, which do in fact have connected themes, and can be read as continuous narrative if you so choose. I don't know about more power; they certainly cover more ground than conventional novels of equivalent length. Which should add up to more value for money, though publishers don't see it that way. They find them, in the language of the trade, 'difficult to place in the market'.

The kernel of PAVANE, as I've said, was CORFE GATE, the climax story. The kernel of THE CHALK GIANTS was THE GOD HOUSE, from which the novel was constructed forward and back. In the latter case it's done in such a way that the reader could, if he or she chose, read the stories in reverse order without affecting their individual quality very much at all. The 'multi-girl', on whom the feelings of guilt are variously focussed, remains central throughout.

PF: You seem to show concern for the countryside in more than one story. Do you think that urban sprawl is still a serious problem?

KR: I'm very concerned about the countryside, what there is left of it. I'm also concerned by oil pollution, horticultural chemicals, the neutron bomb and practically everything else modern society seems to find essential for its own wellbeing. If enough of us shouted, perhaps something could be done to stop turning a pleasant, unassuming little planet into a slag heap for a fast buck. But enough of us, I fear, will never shout.

PF: Have you ever been involved in SF other than by writing it? Have you ever written any articles or criticism, attended any conventions?

KR: No, hardly ever. I think with every human activity there are two groups of people; those who engage in it, and those who talk about it. I always stand back in amazement at writers who, knowing from bitter personal experience the difficulties of their craft, can bear to put on a critic's hat. To me, it's a state schizophrenia. Equally, I don't go to writers' workshops; I reckon I've got enough problems with editors and publishers without taking voluntary hammerings from my peers. About conventions: obviously it's

my choice whether to attend or not. I don't attend for a variety of reasons; the only one that's relevant here is that I don't feel I cut a very good figure as a public speaker.

PF: Are you writing full-time at the moment? (If you are not, would you if there were a regular market for your work?) How prolific are you?

KR: I've never written full time, and can only take my hat off to those who do. I need the breaks too much, and a separate source of income. By the same token, there's no way of saying how 'prolific' I am. I can write ten thousand words a day, but there's hundreds of days when I don't.

PF: Have you any work awaiting publication anywhere? Is there anything being published in the States that the UK won't see for a while, if at all?

KR: I don't have any work awaiting publication at the immediate moment; though that situation might very well have changed by tomorrow. My last American publication was a novella, MOLLY ZERO, for Robert Silverberg's TRIAX.

PF: How much work have you on offer?

KR: Two novellas, at the last count; as well as the books previously referred to.

PF: ~ THANK YOU, MR ROBERTS.

POLL PROGRESS REPORT..... Richard Smith.

((Last mailing saw a questionnaire drawn up by Richard Smith, who sends along this progress report: final results will, I hope, appear in a future issue of MATRIX. Over to you, Richard...))

Best Novel: a close battle between Frank Herbert's DUNE, just ahead of Farmer's TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO, closely followed by LOTR. Best Authors is a straight fight between Clarke and Farmer with Silverberg just ahead of Eric Frank Russell, who, however, seems to be doing well in the inconclusive Short Story section. Best Short Story Writer is a really close fight between Clarke & Asimov with Ellison a good place behind.

Other points of interest: Haldemann is inching ahead as Best New Writer, Best Humorist seems to be either Russell or Sheckley; Best theme has 'Time Travel' in the lead and ASTOUNDING/ANALOG is sweeping the magazine/editor sections. Best SF personality: another straight fight between Asimov and Bob Shaw. Worst SF Writer: apparently too many - same is true of Worst Book.

I'm very grateful to everyone who has taken the time to fill in the poll, especially as it does take slightly more than 'a few minutes'. I would especially like to thank N.J. Howard and Vreni Shivpuri - Oleram who sent the first 2 responses, David A Symes who sent a massive detailed correspondence including the plots of the short stories and some very interesting detailed comments, and Martin Hatfield, who sent me some results from the Reading SF Club questionnaire from 1976 as well as some interesting comments and very knowledgeable answers.

ZINES SEEN.... (An embryonic fanzines received column.)

ALGOL: Spring 1978. (Andy Porter, PO Box 4175, New York NY 10017, USA. \$1.95?) Contains no less than 3 articles by Harlan Ellison including the resignation speech from Science Fiction Writers of America.

EXTRAPOLATION... Dec. 1977. A highly literate magazine published twice-yearly and edited by Thomas D Claeson. A special "Utopias" issue.

DELAPS F&SF REVIEW Feb 1978 and Mar/April 1978. (11863 West Jefferson Blvd., Culver City, California 90230, USA. \$1.50) The reviews are stimulating and virtually the whole gamut of the SF scene (books, films and records) is covered. The Mar/April issue is a special movie issue - for views of Spielberg's E.T. including Bradbury's "...in all probability, the most important film of our time"

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW May 1978. (Richard Geis, PO Box 11408 Portland, OR 97211, USA. 4 for \$4? Contains interviews with Poul Anderson, Ursula LeGuin and George Scithers, as well featuring the novel version of Geis' ONE IMMORTAL MAN.

((THANKS to Bill Little for the above, butchered from longer reviews.))

MAYA 15 (Rob Jackson, 71 King St. Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5XR. 50p.) If you don't subscribe to any other fanzine, get this!

TILL DDU 12 (Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks, UK.) The lives & times of everyday fannish folk.

TICFART 2 (Dave Cobbleadick, 245 Rosalind ST, Ashington, Northumberland NE 63 9AZ. SAE/Trade) Fiction/articles/reviews and a long and lovely poem involving an Irishman & 2 Martians.

SCOPE 2 (Phil Wain, Student Pigeon Holes, University of Keele, Staffs. 10p). Reviews/Fiction/Articles.

G U F F - Get Up&over Fan Fund which has been created to send/bring a popular Australian fan to the 1979 Worldcon. Anyone who has been active in fandom (fanzines, conventions, clubs etc.) prior to January 1977 and who contributes 80p to the fund may vote for the candidate of their choice. For details, contact Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks.

* DON'T DREAM IT, BE IT. *

~ a report on V-CON VI, held at the Gage Residence of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver B.C., Friday May 26 - Sunday May 28, 1978.

by CYRIL SIMSA.

NOTE: helene (hen) flanders is spelt in lower casing throughout; this is correct. It is not a typo.

Poor British innocent that I was, I didn't fully appreciate what I held in my hand, when my enquiries re V-CON VI elicited a response by return of post that read: "Come on over, we'd love to see you. helene." By the time of the Sunday morning banquet-brunch I knew better, and I applauded riotously along with everybody else when hen flanders collected a special Elron award for "latent degeneracy realised" on behalf of the BC SFA. (British Columbia Science Fiction Association)

The Elrons are a fine and fannish institution dating from one drunken morning several years back when somebody had the bright idea of presenting awards for disservice to the science fiction field; any similarity between their name and that of L.Ron Hubbard is quite clearly coincidental (as Ed Beauregard explained with considerable vigour to V-CON's GoH A.E. Van Vogt). Other recipients of Elrons this year included the perennial John Norman, who narrowly beat the equally perennial Lin Carter into second place; unfortunately Mr Norman was unable to attend, and so the tribute of a plastic lemon on a plywood stand that he so richly deserved went uncollected. Ha pily, the audience did not seem to be overly disappointed at Mr Norman's absence, indeed, they continued to be confused by V-CON's programme as if nothing had happened...

V-CON VI suffered from treble programming. With non-stop video and a minimum of two other items running simultaneously, it was difficult to decide whether to take yourself here or there, for fear of missing out on the one you didn't choose. Such was my dilemma that I frequently ended up by missing everything equally, making my way into the bar instead. However, I did manage to hear a talk by Susan Wood (which, I believe is scheduled to appear in the December 1978 ALGOL where it would be well worth looking up). I also caught a short (ten minutes) movie entitled HARDWARE WARS which became a runaway favourite of the con and had to have several extra screenings arranged (give it time and it might develop into a cult all of its own, with badges and posters and maybe even a soundtrack single). The film tells of a certain

Fluke Starbucker and the quest for the beautiful Princess Anne-Droid. On his travels, he is chauffeured round the galaxy in an ancient, battlescarred, but trusty steam iron by a pilot named Ham Salad, and several times they do battle with squadrons of Imperial electric toasters. The dialogue contains such classic lines as:

"Don't worry kid, it's only a movie."

and at one point, when Aubie "Ben" Dogie experiences a twinge, Fluke enquires of him:

"What is it, Ben? Is there a sudden disturbance in the Force?"

and recieved a peeved reply of:

"No, it's only a headache."

Then, of course, was the Great Trivia Quiz, which was more trivial than I would have believed possible, and which, on occasion, conveyed a distinct impression that some participants might conceivably have been taking the contest a weeny bit less than 100% seriously. Not that I would be so brash as to point my finger at any specific instances, but when the Edmonton team is asked:

Q: "In the books of Edgar Rice Burroughs, what was the name given to Venus by the Venusians?"

and gives the answer "Home", a reply both succinct and wrong... well, no matter; that wasn't the worst of them, anyhow. There was one poor soul who claimed that MERLIN'S RING and MERLIN'S GARDEN had been written by Andre Norton (H. Warner Munn being one of the Big Name Pros attending V-CON, not that he would have minded the blunder. H. Warner Munn is a thoroughly charming and amazingly spritely old man who went to the parties with all the rest of us, and still had the energy to get up on Saturday morning to participate in a 9.30 a.m. panel on the role of flying creatures in science fiction, during which he told us about a love-bird he once kept as a pet. Apparently, whenever he ate poultry for dinner, this love-bird became uncomfortable and it used to fly away to sulk. So he'd always reassure the bird by telling it that he was having a pork chop, after which it seemed to settle down.)

Another WEIRD TALES writer who attended V-CON VI was H.P. Lovecraft. Along with H.G. Wells and Mary Shelley he made a brief appearance at the "one and only" Dead Authors Panel, which proved to be the most popular programmed item and went very smoothly considering the age of the participants (the only glitch was the tardy arrival of a gentleman who described himself as "the late Hugo Gernsback"). Most of the authors expressed disillusionment with contemporary SF; Mr Lovecraft in particular expounded at some length his disgust at the sexual attitudes that pervade modern writing, and spoke with yearning of the more wholesome subject matter which was to be found in the fiction of his times: "I have myself described rotting corpses rising from the grave," he stated, "but I have never portrayed that sort of romance." Mr Lovecraft went on to shed some considerable light on his own writings. "Now that I look back on my work," he said, "I realise that it is all trash. The role of the gentleman is to do nothing. I'm not much good at anything; that's why I became a gentleman..."

Simultaneously with the manifestation of the four dead authors the Society for Creative Anachronism held its Moyer Tea, an event which I am sure would have met with Mr Lovecraft's stern approval: ladies and gentlemen attired in

prim silk dresses and britches respectively conversed politely, sipped on cups of tea, and danced, displaying some elegance, whilst children dressed in Fauntleroy suits sat around and played with each other quietly. It was so genteel that I left.

On the other hand, the S.C.A.'s Head-Bash - a mediaeval tourney held the next afternoon - was more in keeping with V-CON's atmosphere of incipient orgy. Here, a group of brawny warriors, encumbered by padding, armour, and enamelled helmets, clubbed each other on the head until they dropped. They started circa 1.00p.m., and they were still going at 3.15; I'm not sure of the precise time that they finished. This kind of grim persistence in the pursuit of happiness was one of the most appealing characteristics of V-CON. It was most obvious at the nightly room parties, but it was also evident elsewhere: in the apparently-endless trivia quiz, for example, or in those resilient few who sat in the movie room long enough to watch 2001 not once, but twice. Witnessing this, it occurs to me that social rapacity was what V-CON was actually all about, and science fiction be damned.

The parties at V-CON were festive. They'd start quietly enough in the early evening, maybe with a discussion. I remember that on Friday night I discussed the shape of my nose with F.M. Busby ("Buzz" Busby is quite a funny bloke. On Saturday night I met him again, and this time he was singing lewd songs in a most raucous manner). Later on, my memories become a trifle blurred (there is this magnificent Mexican brew, tequila, which, I believe, was originally invented as an aid to DIY lobotomy), although I do recall that I devoured somebody's giant-sized bag of taco chips, because the only thing I'd eaten since lunch was one hotdog (and returning to the convention centre after getting that hotdog, I met a woman who had been wandering around the university campus for three-quarters of an hour, unable to locate the con. She told me that when she phoned the information service of U.B.C., some irate bugger had started shouting at her: "I don't have the faintest idea where it is, and I wish you people would quit bugging me.") I think that I eventually gravitated to a party hosted by a bunch of fen from Edmonton, where I came across hen flanders dancing wildly to the strains of the Rocky Horror Picture Show, and Ken Wong (the BCSFA's semi-official - it depends who he's been photographing recently - club photographer) dancing around behind her, trying to follow her minutest movements whilst keeping his camera still.

There's this thing about Rocky Horror in North American fandom at present: everybody is into it. People brought cassette decks to the convention just so they could play the soundtrack over and over again (and again, all night), and every single member of the Edmonton group has a

black T-shirt with their favourite line from Rocky Horror emblazoned across it in white (it's quite possible that if you lined up Edmonton fandom in the right order, you'd know the entire text of the Picture Show without ever having to go and see the movie).

The RH fans became even livelier on Saturday evening. Immediately that the judges decided on the winners of the costume Bacchanal (which - with the exception of the speech given by Darth Vader's younger cousin, Ralph - was rather more like a visit to Great Aunt Hetty's for high tea), the Time Warp came blaring out of the PA system, and helene flanders made a spectacular entrance dressed up as Frank N. Furter in a black corslet, a frilly suspender belt, and little else. She was followed, a teensy fraction less flamboyantly, by David Greer (the convention treasurer) who was disguised as Rocky Horror himself in newt but a pair of goldbriefs. (I tell a lie, actually, and I do Mr Greer an injustice. Of course he wouldn't make a fool of himself by wandering into a crowd of two-or-three-hundred-odd people garbed in nothing but a pair of golden Y-fronts - he had a fair quantity of glitter glued to his torso, too, and someone had painted a heart on his arm).

The Edmonton party was pretty strange that night, what with hen flanders dancing timewarps in the corridors, assorted folks dressed to go to Darkover, and others perching party-hats on their heads to celebrate Harlan Ellison's birthday. And, believe it or not, these V-CON parties were nothing compared to a party thrown by some BCSFA members the next weekend, the primary purpose of which seemed to consist of unrestrained indulgence in Dionysian hedonism (but nuff said about that, before I get people breathing down my neck for defamation).

Vancouver fandom is very much a party fandom, and V-CON VI was very much a partycon. Even the Sunday-evening Dead Dog Party (open to anyone who was still alive after the convention had been packed away), carried on through till Monday morning. That Dead Dog Party was perhaps the best of all: people had got beyond wanting to flaunt themselves and so you could sit down and talk to an awful lot of interesting people. Or you could listen to Shawn sing Irish folksongs (Shawn, whose surname I never knew, was a Dubliner who came to V-CON by one of those fortuitous improbabilities that do happen after all. He hitched a lift from a Denver fan, Paul Angel, and decided to drop by. He stayed.)

A.E. van Vogt looked in on the Dead Dog party, too, so Shawn sang him a song about a fairy-tale beast they call "the silkie."

I think I went home after that.

A week later, recovering from that hedonistic BCSFA party, somebody asked me:

"Well, how do you like decadent West Coast Fandom?" and I had to reply:

"It's fun, in a perverse sort of way."

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Fandom Features

 ** ROUND THE CLUBS..... with Bill Little **
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Keele University SF Society is the featured group this time round, and my thanks go to all there, but especially chairperson Phil Wain.

Just before we get into a biography of the club I thought it best to warn you all, and fandom at large, that, due to the close geographical proximity of Keele, Stafford and the Stoke on Trent groups, it came to pass that we all managed a get-together when the irrepressible Bob Shaw lectured to the SoT society and what transpired from the after-talk matter was that all three groups had a burning desire to stage a convention in the area. Although we didn't go into details, the intent was serious and still has yet to be properly explored. So, maybe around 1980 or '81, you'll all be queuing up to attend the very first POTCON mounted by the three groups! You have been warned!

Keele University SF Society first got off the ground at the instigation of Phil Wain and Dave Penn around the end of the 1976 Autumn term, after Dave had announced to all and sundry that he was bent on producing a fanzine for campus circulation. Phil suggested forming a society to launch/complement the zine.

(University SF groups are springing up all over the place - I have five or six on record, and if anyone will be going to university and wants to know whether they have a society, drop me a line. Anyone out there who's in a university group that is newly-established - I'd like to hear from you).

Back to Keele. Phil reports that - in common with just about everyone else who has ever launched a group - they were certain they could do 'great things' once they got going. As he now says: "This belief has since been somewhat modified!"

The group is not regular in its meetings, and this is specifically because they try to cater for the 'casually interested' rather than the true-fen who would like to spend forever and a day in endless esoteric discussions on every aspect of SF. This is an interesting philosophy for a local group. As far as I'm aware, most

everybody else likes to meet very regularly. The problem here is that if response is bad then the organisers get downhearted and wonder whether the whole bloody thing is worth it. So I can see Phil's point about meeting only when a lecture or film show is scheduled and avoiding holding the usual 'discussion' type meeting.

Among notable events they've managed to stage are lectures by Ian Watson and Peter Weston and a showing of 2001

Informal gatherings of the fans at Keele tend to take place when the society's library of 300 paperbacks and magazines are available for loan, usually once a week.

As I mentioned earlier, Keele do produce a zine, SCOPE, which appears once a term. From the tone of Dave Penn's editorial in the attractively-produced first issue he would welcome contributions from outside the society. He's interested in news, reviews, stories and poetry. Items in the first issue include fiction from Andy Darlington, Robert Murray talking about the stage production of ILLUMINATUS! at the science fiction Theatre of Liverpool, and a critical appraisal of Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS by Dave Penn. All of these items are interspersed with varied and interesting illustrations from Ashley Walker. And the magazine is only 10p.

In co-operation with the Keele film society, the SF group staged a season of SF films including ROLLERBALL, SOYLENT GREEN, and THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN.

The Keele SF Society is now well established on the campus with close to 60 members, and, Phil says, it's still growing. Maybe it's because the group are trying to interest the casual SF reader that they seem to be doing so well. They try to cover the broadest spectrum ranging from the 'hardest' of traditional SF to fantasy and spec fic.

Phil concludes his letter/article to me (as most group chairpersons do, but I wonder how many others respond?) by saying that he'd be only too pleased to hear from other people in groups around the country, and that any queries should go to him, Phil Wain, Students Union, Keele University, Staffs.

Thank you, Keele SF Society.

Just as an appetiser: when you read this in MATRIX many of you might well have seen and bought a copy of a very interesting and exciting book called MAN AND THE STARS by Duncan Lunan, which is now (at last!) out in paperback. That will give me the ideal opportunity to take a closer look at ASTRA, the astronautics /sf group based in Scotland, which is headed by Duncan. Dave Cobbledick has already done a brief piece on this group but I thought the time was ripe to have a closer look at them. I've been fascinated by what Duncan has so far filled me in on, and I'm sure you will be, too.

(Bill Little: 183 John St., Biddulph, Stoke on Trent.)

 ** FOCUS ON FANZINES **
 ** with **
 ** Roger Waddington **

There have been many discussions of the place of humour in SF and fandom, almost for as long as fanzines have been in existence; indeed, any time that an editor is faced with a gap to fill or a floundering lettercol to revive, he picks out some random thoughts on humour, or strings them together and makes his own manic effort, and then sits back and waits for the letters to fall in a torrent through the letterbox. And it can be a thorny, many-sided subject, not to mention an object lesson for budding psychologists; your response may be "What's this got to do with SF?" in which case you take your SF seriously, study it for trends and meanings, and might be happier with Riverside Quarterly than the crudzine you're so obviously perusing! And the letterwriter who asks for more is likely to be the one who says "I like SF, but it isn't my whole life", and who will prove to be the more omnivorous reader. And that doesn't include all the different shades of opinion in between, clamouring to be heard.

But it is a fact that the SF authors who write with humorous intent are never quoted as belonging among the big league in any discussions, in polls of the best-selling authors, of all-time classics. It could be said that they make up in warm regard what they lose in sales, but that's little consolation to an author who sees the sales of his rivals take off with a Book-of-the-Month choice, or even film rights! Eric Frank Russell is a case in point as not having the success he deserved, though at times he seemed to write for the sheer joy of it; certainly his stories read that way, and the enjoyment is very much shared. What do they write for? Robert Sheckley had a succession of clever, pot-boiling stories in Galaxy and elsewhere, which are now hammered out into novel-length and raise hardly an eyebrow; that almost lunatic flood that was R.A. Lafferty seems to have subsided into a trickle, the bitter humour of the Malzberg brand is still with us even though you can't tell which way the author is going, either back into SF or out again; but where is the vision that they have for us, what is the message? Without going to the thesis-length of considering the aims of the writer, the picture given here is of writers writing because they have to, because they can't help themselves, because they can't stop and do something more paying instead; no one has ever written a humorous novel with their eye on the film rights, or even the advance from the publisher!

And this is the way it is in fandom, and maybe even more so; for most fanzines are written with no thought of an eventual Hugo in mind, no desire to be top of the poll in Checkpoint; they come unannounced

because there's a fan behind them who wants to communicate, who enjoys setting out his thoughts and creations and wants to share them. The fan writes because he can do no other - though he could maybe pour his money down a drain, which is the other true vision attained when publishing a fanzine - he has to communicate, to let the rest of us out here know what he's thinking. It is only a secondary matter that we might like it.

TWILL DDU (Dave Langford: 22 Northumberland Ave, Redding Berks.) is a totally humorous zine both in deed and intent, one of a rare breed where the humour comes out of the situation, rather than the written word. Dave Langford has an instinctive regard for the follies of fandom, for the things that fen do in spite of themselves, be they at Cons, pub meetings, or even let loose on each other's homes, and as such has carved himself a niche in fandom as a slightly lunatic Boswell to everyone else's Johnson. Certainly, from the evidence of the past few issues that I've seen, if you want to keep your reputation intact, it's best to be at least the length of a carpark away when he hoves into sight; though I'm not sure that you're safe even then! If Andy from Pottstown, Pennsylvania hasn't permanently burning ears, if Joseph Nicholas isn't prowling around with his hand on his stiletto waiting for a chance to wreak his revenge, then I've misread the intent of TWILL-DDU, the intent of Dave Langford and what must be the most malevolent duplicator in existence! But more than most, this is a fanzine where you have to match the wit and intelligence of its perpetrator with your own: if you can't come up with a loc full of wit and grace, of finely balanced insult and innuendo, then you might as well take up something else as mind-destroying, like watching the TV test card. Though it's amazing just how many fen there are writing into its pages all eager to be quoted no matter what sort of treatment they get - much like the doubtful honour of being lampooned in Private Eye: whoever remembers the good guys of fandom?

It's one of the thinnest of zines, but then he takes care not to spoon the mixture too richly; there'll be some more to look forward to later, but is this enough for now? he seems to be saying; and I suspect that with a dose of 30 pages or so the brain might cry enough!, the funnybone might complain of tennis elbow through following the quips back and forth, and in general it might prove to be a penance rather than a delight. Little, but often, seems to be his motto; and I'm sure he'll agree with me!

FLEDGLING (Andy Firth: 185 Osborne Rd, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne) on the other hand, mines its humour in the literary vein rather than the jugular, helped by its editor who seems to have read almost every SF novel in creation and pillories them all indiscriminately. The treatment and the effect can be indescribable, though, without quoting great chunks which might lose some of the original flavour - well, maybe just this one from the ever-present Problem Page, otherwise known for this fannish incarnation as Doctor Jekyll's Surgery:

"Mr H. Farnham of the Freehold writes: My family hates me. My son hates me because I screwed his girl-friend and made him drop his pants at gunpoint. My

wife hates me because I was too busy building a bomb shelter to give her any affection. My daughter hates me, because although I know everything else I'm not too hot on obstetric surgery. Even the dumb n----- I saved from the gutter is sulking because I beat him at bridge. What's wrong with them all? P.S. People say I talk too much, but I know I'm perfect."

And the answer to that will be found in the second issue! Also a continuing series of Song Titles from SF, like There is Nothing Like a Dane by Holf Krakí; Climb Every Mountain by Jack Summers and the Grey Sister (must look up my Zelazny) and even "Dr Phibes, playing his own decompositions at the organ....."

That he can turn his talents in other directions is shown in the same issue by the mastery demolition job he does on BRONTOMEK by Michael G. Coney, and certainly the impression gained is that of a person who knows and loves SF, with all its faults; and who while eager enough to take advantage of these faults, can never be very destructive. If there's one major failing, it's that instead of laying it down with a chuckle, you tend to be gasping at the end of this marathon of humour, and maybe Andy might be better advised to take a leaf out of Dave Langford's book!

Though all-over straight up-and-down humorous zines might tend to be in the minority, there's scarcely a zine you can find that doesn't have a space for something humorous, something light, be it the most serious and constructive of all. And speaking contrarily, it might be the one great difference between the world of SF and that of fandom, that we hold our humorous writers in a higher regard, that we accord to them a greater immortality, than the most well-meaning, constructive critic who might make contributions of great value to the field. It's easy to forget Claude Degler, and even easier to forget Walt Liebscher; and who will remember George Hay or Leland Sapiro once this stage of SF and fandom has run its course? Whereas the names of Walt Willis, of Charles Burbee have long been inscribed in fandom's Hall of Fame, even though their writing is no more than a memory or a few faint lines on a hectographed page; even Bob Shaw might be yet remembered more for what he wrote for the fanzines than for his more solid body of SF work! The lesson might seem to be that if you've got a sense of humour - no, more, a sense of the ridiculous - and can share that vision, it's a certain passport to fame!

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OTHER FANZINES RECEIVED:

GANNETSCRAPBOOK 5 (Trade or LoC)

The most regular one-shot fanzine in the business.

(next issue from) Ritchie Smith, 69 King John St, Heaton Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5XR.

SCOTTISH 75: (Trade, show of interest or 50p an issue.)

One of the oldest and most respected of zines, put out by the First Lady of Fandom.

Ethel Lindsay, 6, Langley Ave., Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 5QL.

MAYA 15 (trade, loc, contrib., or sub: £1.50 for 4, 50p for 1)

Hugo nominee, major and minor contributors, lively lettercol, fun to read: A MUST.

Robert JACKSON, 71 King John St, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5XR.

THE FRIENDS OF KILGORE TROUT MAGAZINE no 2. (Trade, LoC, contrib. or even 25p)

Zine out out by the Glasgow SF group; a definite reason for devotion!

Bob Shaw, Top Flat Left, 11 Barrington Drive, Kelvinbridge, Glasgow G4.

TRIBE 26: (Trade, LoC, contrib. or 50p/issue)

One of the Golden Age fanzines, brought back to show how it should be done, and so very often isn't.

Eric Bentcliffe, 17 Riverside Crescent, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire CW4 7NR.

FANALOG 1:

Published by the same fan, and with the same conditions, and dedicated to those who still find fun and enjoyment in SF, rather than material for theses.

(((((FOCUS ON FANDOM S:- ((
((THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION ((
(((

Thirty years ago the National Fantasy Fan Federation was conceived by Damon Knight and other active fans as an organisation to help SF fans, both neophyte and veteran, to gain more enjoyment from the hobby of fandom. Perhaps the purpose and aims of the club are best stated in the preamble to the NFFF Constitution.

The activity that centres around science fiction and fantasy has grown to require organisation in order that desirable objectives beyond the achievement of single individuals may be attained through united effort. Under this Constitution, the National Fantasy Fan Federation is established as an association of persons interested in promoting the progress of science fiction and fantasy."

The membership of this group has always comprised a cross-section of its field, with a full range of tastes, abilities, ages and interests. It has therefore operated as a broad channel of communication, subject limitations

of space and time imposed by our wide dispersal (mainly the US Post Office).

The words 'enjoyment' and 'progress' have kept our policies in the direction of amateur endeavours as a group; although our membership has listed many great names among the professional writers in this field, the amateur spirit is so very strong among the writers of SF. We also sponsor other activities for collectors and readers of the genre. All work is by unpaid volunteers, and is thus subject to some hazards of circumstance, but in a good year we publish a fanzine a month, alternating a letter-zine where members express themselves (TIGHTBEAM) with the official organ (THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN) where the various bureaus report on what they are doing and other members review books, fanzines, and send in articles of general interest.

The NFFF (or N3F) has a bureau that will cover almost any interest you have in SF. There is the COLLECTOR'S BUREAU, the INFORMATION BUREAU, the MANUSCRIPT BUREAU, the clubs amateur press association N'APA, a NEW FANZINE APPRECIATION SOCIETY, TAPE BUREAU, and the TEACHING SF BUREAU. Plus more. The club also sponsors a Short Story Contest every year.

Dues have been set as low as possible to cover the cost of materials and some prizes and awards. Dues are based on the calendar year, but if you join after April 1, you can pay for the rest of the year and the following year and thus get reduced rates. The actual cost of subscription is not to hand: it was previously \$ a year but Joanne Burger writes

(13.6.78) "We are currently undergoing an election to decide what the dues should be." Anyone interested in further information about the N3F is welcome to contact Joanne Burger at 55 Blue Bonnet Ct, Lake Jackson, TX, 77566 USA.

((Compiled by Andy Sawyer from material supplied by Joanne Burger.))

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++      THE ULTIMATE CONTRACEPTIVE....      ++
++                                         ++
++              or                          ++
++                                         ++
++      Life with a micro - elite....        ++
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Throughout five years of marriage I'd always known that Andy had a mistress, but when last summer he finally left me to embark on a full-time affair it was the first time I'd ever seen my rival in all her unappealing nakedness. Although I've rarely seen Andy over the last year, Matrix in her various bodily manifestations has been omnipresent. The typewriter has squatted menacingly in the baby's bedroom, in the dining-room, in the sitting-room, and

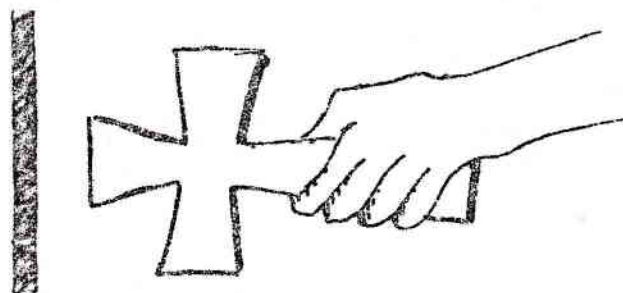
despite my own jealousy, I've spent hours protecting it against marauding earthlings in the shape of Rosamund and her cronies. Carbon paper has polluted every room in the house, and Rosamund has experimented with the correcting fluid as nail-varnish. Andy has never needed it. Three postmen have collapsed with heart-attacks before they've reached the top of our hill, and I've papered the walls with Hungarian fanzines. (Before he left, Andy had promised to paint them....)

SCIENCE FICTION, which does not include John Wyndham (a human interest novelist), Brian Aldiss (an imaginative short story writer), 'Close Encounters' (kinetic art and a quasi-religious allegory), and whatever of Andy's I accidentally pick up and enjoy, I have always considered a complete waste of good timber. Never until this year, however, have I been forced to confirm my prejudices by close observation of Fandom. And a horrendous experience it has been. Most of the fans write EVEN WORSE THAN MOORCOCK! And ABOUT LESS! I've enjoyed the news of girlfriends - (many of them seem to have had the sense to leave) - and suffered for you all during sickness and examinations; but as to the issues.....Is Heinlein a fascist? Or is that Han Solo. And am I allowed to swear about it? These are the eternal issues of the past, present and future.

Honourable exceptions, though, I must make. Cyril Sims, I have pounced on your letters and devoured them, SF and all, before Andy has even caught sight of your immaculate script on the envelope. Alison Hutton seems too intelligent to be an SF fan. And David Strahan I've a soft spot for, as my sister lives in the next village, and there's so little to do there, it could drive even me to Moorcock.

To wives and girlfriends of aspiring editors I would just say, "Now's your chance to come off the pill for a bit." Matrix is the ultimate contraceptive. For a year I've fallen asleep to the clatter of the typewriter and woken to the crackle of vituperative letters. I must get an appointment at the Family Planning clinic, if Andy's really coming back.....

(Mary Sawyer)



The Key to the Universe?

NEWSOUNDS OF THE BSFA

** MEDIA Compiled by **
** NOTES Martin Hatfield **

1) LORD OF THE RINGS

Bakshi Productions are currently shooting location footage for the film of LOTR in Spain. Meanwhile, back at the studios over 200 animators are tracing and duplicating the live action.

Director Ralph Bakshi, in a recent interview (Screen International, 6.5.78), commented that he had wished to produce the Tolkien epic for over 13 years. Throughout this time, the film rights passed through various directors and companies, including Kubrick, Boorman, Disney and United Artists, while Bakshi was learning his trade as an animator, producing such features as FRITZ THE CAT, HEAVY TRAFFIC, and, more recently, WIZARDS. He has perfected the Rotoscope technique whereby live action is traced, frame by frame, and duplicated in animation. Apparently, Disney used this process a great deal in animating human figures.

The live action stars in LOTR include Paul Gale, (Gandalf), Sharon Baird (Frodo), and Tray Wilson (Aragorn). 1000 extras were filmed as the Riders of Rohan on the plains of La Mancha. The film will be split into two parts, each two hours in length. Bakshi has been inundated with letters from Tolkien fans, pleading that he should stay true to the novels. He comments: "There will be scenes dropped. My problem is... trying to stay as close to Tolkien as possible... to be true to the imagery and the story. He said that it will be "a legitimate cliff-hanging film - that doesn't end."

2) HUMANOID

Stars Richard Kiel, Barbara Bach, Donald Pleasance, and Corinne Clery. A 20-week production schedule (10 weeks location, 10 weeks special effects) started on June 10. The \$4.5M "SF epic" will be directed by George Lewis for the Italian producers Giorgio/Venturini. The 'humanoid' of the title is

the mutant produce when a man is involved in an atomic explosion. He becomes the possessor of superhuman powers and is indestructible.

3) STEVEN KING MOVIES

THE SHINING (EMI -Elstree. Stanley Kubrick has completed the pre-production filming of the Steven King horror novel, and has commenced the principal photography. All filming is taking place behind closed doors and the whole project is surrounded by an air of mystery. The leading role of the precognitive young boy Danny Torrance, is being played by an unknown 8-year old, Danny Lloyd (the son of an East Coast steelworker). Jack Nicholson and Shelly Duval (NASHVILLE; THREE WOMEN) co-star as Danny's parents.

FRIGHT NIGHT is the provisional title for a set of three stories to be filmed from the story collection by King, NIGHT SHIFT. The film includes 'Quitters Inc.', 'The Ledge', and 'Sometimes They Come Back'. A further three stories from the anthology have also been optioned by Sword & Sorcery Productions (see below) based upon the theme of sentient machines; 'The Lawnmower Man', 'The Mangler', and 'Trucks'.

4) SUPERMAN SPIN-OFFS

While the SUPERMAN movie is undergoing its final dubbing, editing and effects, Warner are planning a vast merchandise tie-in. Besides the usual T-shirts and posters, plans are for TEN paperbacks: 'Superman' - a novelization of the mardo Puzo screenplay; 'The Making of Superman' by David Petron; 'The Great Superman Book' by Michael Fleisher (an encyclopaedia of Superman); 'The Superman Blueprints'; 'The Official Superman Quiz Book' by Bruce Nash; 'The Superman Portfolio'; 'The S. Cut-Outs'; 'The S. Calendar'; 'Crossed Swords' & 'Superman Supermovie' by David Petron (literary advisor to the film). The movie will be shown in two parts, the second half a year after the first, which will end on a cliff-hanger situation.

5) BATTLE STAR 'GALACTICA'

An alien federation, determined to destroy the human race, springs a 'Pearl Harbour' surprise attack upon Man's 12 colony worlds. The survivors board the space cruiser GALACTICA to search out the last remaining outpost of the human race, Earth.

That paragraph describes the plot behind the most ambitious SF film made for TV. BATTLE STAR 'GALACTICA' is a 7M dollar, seven hour epic being produced by Glen Larson (p. THE OUTER LIMITS) and Leslie Stevens (p. THE INVISIBLE MAN TV series) for ABC TV. Over 300 special effects are being produced for the film by John Dykstra (STAR WARS) including 45 different spacecraft and a mechanical dog (similar to K9) called 'Muffit the dogget'. Production was to have been split into 8 episodes, but now looks scheduled for showing as 3 movies, the first 3 hours long and the others 2 hours each.

Stars include Dick Benedict, Richard Hatch, Donald Pleasance and Lorne Greene. Richard Colla has directed a script written by Larson. Special effects include a close encounter with three of the rings of Saturn, the destruction of a city by 50 spacecraft, and a computer simulated 'bridge' where all the action from 12 planets can be viewed simultaneously.

6) THE KIRLIAN WITNESS

The world premiere of this independantly financed film, produced and directed by Jonathan Sarno, was shown recently at the Cannes film festival. The \$0.5M film, four years in the making, is based upon a true story. In 1968 a young woman was murdered in New Jersey. With few leads available police recruited the help of a lie detector expert and believer in the psychic power of plants. A houseplant was wired to the lie detector and was able to 'identify' the murderer. The film concerns the efforts of a woman who possesses a telepathic sensitivity to plants which she uses to track down her sister's killer. The film "deviates from a conventional Hitchcock-type thriller in its use of Kirlian photography". This is a technical process, developed in Russia, which reveals the hidden auras that surround various objects.

7) CAPRICORN ONE

This film, directed by Peter Hyams for Warner Bros., despite mediocre reviews seemed to be attracting reasonable audiences at its recent opening in the U.S. It has been dubbed the 'Watergate in Space', involving a faked space mission to Mars after the planned NASA mission goes wrong. The three astronauts Brubaker (James Brolin), Walker (O.J. Simpson) and Willis (Sam Waterston) are required to act out the mission on a movie sound stage in the Mojave desert. All proceeds well until reporter Robert Caufield (Elliot Gould) and NASA controller Elliot Witter (Robert Walden) stumble to the fact that the TV transmissions, supposedly from Mars, are being beamed from a mere few hundred miles distance. Thereafter, the film includes much action, with a car chase (described as "the most spectacular ever filmed") and an air chase between two jet driven choppers and an ancient bi-plane crop duster, flown by Albain (Telly Savalas).

Where the script, penned by producer Paul N Lazarus 11(p. WESTWORLD, FUTUREWORLD) is especially controversial is in its hints that NASA may be pulling a cover-up at present, or did so over the Apollo lunar landings. NASA cooperated with Lazarus to a large extent in the actual production of the film, loaning various pieces of Apollo hardware such as docking probes, crew couches, capsule mock-up and a wooden command module. They were understandably somewhat embarrassed when the film portrayed them in an unfavourable way.

8) THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

The Ray Bradbury novel, written in 1951, is to appear on U.S. TV as a 6-part mini-series. NBC will present the film which has been written by Richard Matheson (THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN + many 'Twilight Zone' TV scripts.) This is not the first time that a Bradbury novel has been televised. In 1961 he dramatised his own I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC for the U.S. 'Twilight Zone' series.

9) THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

The Canadian CTV network are planning a series of half hour 'Future flicks' inspired by the H.G. Wells novel THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME. The project is under the control of British producer Harry Alan Towers, who says: Wells wrote TSTC in the later years of his life. He dealt in fantasy, in terms of fact, thus relating the life people lived, fantasized on the future, and we've adapted this to how people will adapt to a future world. We've taken the title and are trying to present an entertaining look into the future, based on how people understand life today."

Stars presently hired include Koo Stark as the independent half-Moaner, half-Earthie, Nicholas Campbell and "Sparky". The latter is a robot designed by Kohn Stears (creator of R2D2). The plot centres around the investigations by Koo & Sparky of a post-holocaust Earth. Her mission is to track down water supplies for the lunar colony. Production starts in autumn.

10) SWORD & SORCERY PRODUCTIONS

S&S Productions is the brainchild of Milton Subotsky and Andrew Donally. Subotsky has long been associated with British horror productions. His works also include DR WHO & THE DALEKS, DALEKS INVASION EARTH 2150AD, THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, and AT THE EARTH'S CORE. Plans are well developed for a S&S film: THONGOR IN THE VALLEY OF THE DEMONS. \$3.5M budget movie will be directed by Harley Cokliss from a script which he co-wrote with Subotsky.

Filming commences in October. The title role has not yet been filled, though David Prowse (Darth Vader) has been approached.

Options have been taken on several SF/horror films; forthcoming may be SOLOMAN KANE (a R.E Howard hero) and SEX IN THE 21st CENTURY.

11) FLASH GORDON

The film rights to FLASH GORDON, based upon the Alex Raymond comic strip, have been obtained by Dino de Laurentiis. He is planning a \$20M film, to be directed by Nicholas Roeg (THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH) from a script co-written by Roeg and Michael Atlin. Meanwhile production of the animated version of FLASH GORDON by the American Filmation Studios is proceeding. The first Alex Raymond story has been scripted, by TV writer Samuel A. Peeples, into a 2-hour TV movie. Showing is scheduled for Spring '79, on NBC.

12) PARADISE LOST.

A full-colour tabloid sized ad in the trade press proclaims: "One step beyond STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS - Milton's PARADISE LOST". The title letters form an unusual logo; the background a sea of stars plus a glowing horizon. The film is to be produced, commencing late 1978, by Oliver A. Unger (FORCE 10 FROM NAVARONE). A screenplay by John Collier has been published in a book form. Unger is quoted as saying "We plan a world-wide hunt for the perfect Adam and Eve and will hopefully cast two unknowns; an 18 years old Caucasian boy and a 17 year old Eurasian girl".

13) DISNEY TIME

After PETE'S DRAGON, a \$6M mixed animation/live action

fairy tale, Walt Disney productions' next film will be a £7M SF adventure, SPACE PROBE, going into production this summer. 'Probe' a mile-long spaceship which tangles with a Black Hole while seeking life in remote galaxies. Still in the treatment-writing stage is THE BLACK CAULDRON, a fantasy adventure based on Lloyd Alexander's 5-volume 'Prydain Chronicles', based in turn on Welsh folktales. CAULDRON is unlikely to appear for some years, but promises a return to the "elements of magic, wonder and terror" of early Disney.

14) CREEPING TITLES

SF sequel now being simply referred to as 'episode' 2.... TAKE OFF is a porno version of THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GREY.... Steven Spielberg is reported to be very angry that 10 minutes of edited scenes from the movie DUEL have appeared in an episode of the CBS TV series THE INCREDIBLE HULK.... THEURANTUM CONSPIRACY - "terrific tension as a mysterious hi-jack shifts the world's balance of power" DEATHFLIGHT - s. Peter Graves, Barbara Anderson; "virulent flu germs are let loose on the inaugural flight of America's first super-sonic plane".... METAMORPHOSES - "animated treatment of Greek mythology accompanied by 10-plus UK & US rock groups" MOONRAKER - s. Roger Moore; the new James Bond film (11th) which will closely follow the novel - the 3rd Oxford Film Festival hope to feature its world premiere in June 1979... DAMIEN: OMEN 2 d. Don Taylor; s. William Holden; "...not a sequel, but a progression of Damien's life 7 years later... a mystery-suspense thriller" Richard Donner (d. THE OMEN, SUPERMAN) has been hired to direct OMEN 3 SATURN 3 s. Farrah Fawcett - Majors; to be filmed in the UK TAKE OFF s. Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko as the scientist Tsiolkovsky, who paved the way for modern space exploration Comic-strip heroes CAPTAIN AMERICA and DR STRANGE are in production in US as TV movie characters ALIEN filming at Shepperton has been hit by union problems. Equity has banned two of the US stars. The film was hit further when actor John Finch had to retire due to health problems. John Hurt has replaced him.... A TOUCH OF THE SUN s. Oliver Reed, Peter Cushing is filming in Zambia and relates the story of two US astronauts who are held to ransom by an African emperor after they crashland in his territory.... OVERLORDS d. Marvin J. Chomsky begins production in August. It will be a "time and galaxy spanning adventure" and a sort of James Bond SF movie. Available May 1979 Production designer John Alves will direct WEATHERMAN, a SF film for producer John Chavez. Alves designed the shark for JAWS and worked on CE3K.... Carl Foreman ('High Noon', Bridge on the River Kwai, 'Guns of Navarone') has announced he will make the film THE WEATHER WAR Arthur C. Clarke's RENEZVOUS WITH RAMA is being animated for a US TV screening in Dec. BRAVE NEW WORLD is being filmed for Universal. Based on Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel, it will be somewhat updated....

 ** WHAT ARE THEY DOING?? **
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E.C. TUBB has a 'Dumarest' novel due from DAW Books (USA). It is called Incident on Ath.

EDMUND COOPER says that Hale have a novel of his due to be published in October. It has the intriguing title of Merry Christmas, Ms Minerva! At the moment, though, he is working on a collection of short stories called Jupiter Laughs. He has 3,000 words more to write before he can give it to Hodder & Stoughton, who have been waiting patiently for nearly a year...

J.G. BALLARD is finishing a new novel. The title is, as yet, undecided.

FRED HOYLE has the two following collaborations being published in September: Life Cloud (a serious textbook) with N.C. Wickramasinghe and The Westminster Disaster (a novel) with Geoffrey Hoyle.

JOHN BRUNNER is having trouble with a long historical novel. He says that it is giving him more bother than any two of his previous books combined. Meanwhile, The Suicide of Man has just been published in Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine. It is a novelet.

HARRY HARRISON's The Stainless Steel Rat Wants You! will not be running as a serial in Isaac Asimov's SF Adventure Magazine as I said before (M17). It will appear as a complete short novel in the first issue along with a novelet by Paul Anderson called Capture of the Centurianess and a short story by Isaac Asimov among other things. This new magazine is quarterly, 112 A4 pages, and retails in the States for \$ 1.75 (which will probably mean 95 to 100p for us). It should get here during July or August.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK informs me that Pierrot have The Entropy Tango which is an illustrated novel featuring Una Persson and various other characters. It also includes songs from the as-yet unproduced album of the same title. It is a large format book and the artist is Romain Slocombe. Due in Autumn '79. The same publishers, in conjunction with BigO, have The Swords of Heaven - a large-format, full-colour comic strip (art by Howard Chaykin) and Heroic Dreams, Enchanted Worlds, a large-format critical book on epic fantasy, including most of the best fantasy illustrators' work. Among them are Chaykin, Frazetta, Jones, Burns, and Matthews. Many of them are original. Both of these around the middle of '79. BigO by themselves have Elric at the End of Time, a large-format book with 20 colour and a number of b/w illos by Rodney Matthews. Again, coming in '79 (Wouldn't be anything to do with the Worldcon.... would it?). Savoy Books have a comic strip version of The Jewel in the Skull, which runs to 70pp in large format and is done in b/w by Jim Cawthorn. Late '78/early '79. They also have Moorcock's first novel The Golden Barge (written 1958). This is due to be pub-

lished this year with illios by Cawthorn and an introduction by M. John Harrison (who doesn't write nearly enough himself). The first paperback editions of THE CHINESE AGENT and The Condition of Muzak will be forthcoming from Mayflower (early '79) and Fontana (Spring '78). Fontana will be re-issuing (in uniform editions) all the Corneliuss books. Granada will be publishing the 2nd Corum series in '79. Moorcock says that Allison & Busby will probably not be doing any more of his books. I think that they have the following books though. One is a critical/bibliographic introduction to the work of MM written by John Clute (which will be objective rather than subjective). This is due in '79 along with a definitive NEW WORLDS anthology. This will contain a complete index and a long introduction. Talking of NW, the magazine has restarted life as a large format quarterly. Number 212 was distributed free on a limited basis and number 213 (summer) contains material by Charles Platt, Michael Moorcock and Richard Glynn Jones. Number 214 should be out soon. The magazine was restarted due to a continuing dissatisfaction with the conservatism of the literary establishment. It will be published by a consortium including all the contributors and Charles Partington, who will be printing the magazine. Distribution through speciality shops, bookshops, and mail. Letters re NW should be addressed to Michael Moorcock, c/o Anthony Shell Associates, 2/3 Morwell St., London WC1. Last but not least comes the news that Moorcock may be working on a collaboration for a childrens animated series with Alex Harvey! He says that he's discussing it.

HILARY BAILEY's new novel Mrs Mulvaney was published in April and her SF novel Outlaws should be out from Condor (USA) at the end of the year.

GARRY KILWORTH's third novel Soul-Brothers has had a title change and is now Split Second. It is due out from Faber & Faber next June. At present he is working on a 4th novel called Trinity. It is two and a half chapters young and concerns a human telemetry system that involves the use of an empathic relationship between twins. And what happens when it goes wrong....

ROBERT HOLDSTOCK has sold a novelet called Earth and Stone to Ursula Le Guin's collection called Interfaces, and he is still working on his 3rd SF novel, Remembering,

BOB SHAW's new novel Vertigo is due from Gollancz and Ace at the end of the year. He's

currently at work on another novel as yet untitled. Meanwhile, he has sold a short called Wellwisher to F&SF, and a novelet called Frost Animals which Terry Carr is using as the lead story in the forthcoming Universe 9.

STEPHEN JONES & DAVE SUTTON inform me that the third issue of Fantasy Tales is now available from them at 60p & 12p p&p from 33 Wren House, Tachbrook Estate London SW1V 3QD. In this issue there is work by Patrick Connolly, John Wysocki, Andrew Darlington, Brian Lumley, Pat McIntosh, Marion Pitman, Peter Coleman and Denys Val Baker. Artwork from Fabian, Lloyd, Hunter, Pitts etc.

RICHARD E. GEIS has expanded his novelet One Immortal Man into a novel which he is currently serialising in SF Review.

MICHAEL ASHLEY tells me that the latest news on his History of the SF Mags is that Vol 5 will appear in paperback only. Publication around March '79, from NEL. He has also obtained permission to research for an Algernon Blackwood biography and is now researching for a complete bibliography of British SF. The latter will be a long-term project and he's aiming at publication in 1984. (Who says that this column doesn't give you advance news?)

Thanks to all who replied.

((Paul Fraser))

EVENTS EVENTS EVENTS

NOVACON 9 (WEST): GoH Bob Shaw; Fan GoH Jack Cohen, Toastmaster Wilson Tucker. At The Turf Inn, Albany, NY, USA. Billed as "The first British SF con in Albany since prior to 1776." Information from P.O. Box 428, Latham, NY 12110, USA. (Dates 2 - 4 Nov '79)

BRUNEL SCIENCE FICTION FESTIVAL: 8 - 10 Sept. '78. Philip Strick heads an investigation into the past and present meanings of SF cinema and its signposts towards the society of the future. Films & discussion sessions. A choice of Residential Weekends (£17) or Non-residential (£8.50). At Brunel University, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge UB8 3PH. For further details ring Uxbridge 39125.

CHAPTER: Cardiff's workshops & Centre for the Arts, are planning a season of SF films for November, hopefully between 30 & 60 films. Member Nicholas Browne has been in touch with the organisers, and says that they would welcome suggestions of particular films to include. So if anyone has any ideas, contact Nicholas at 44 Bronwydd Ave, Penylan, Cardiff CF2 5JQ and he'll pass them on.

SEACON: the 37th World SF Convention, to be held at Brighton 23 - 27 August. Rates £9 attending, £4.50 supporting, but they will increase after the end of 1978. Enquiries to 14 Henrietta St, London WC2.

NOVACON 8 at the Holiday Inn, Birmingham, is 3 - 5 Nov, 1978. GoH is Anne McCaffrey. £3.50 attending, £1.50 supporting membership. Dave Holmes, 1222 Warwick Rd, Acocks Green Birmingham B26 6PL.

BOOK NEWS.....BOOK NEWS.....BOOK NEWS.....BOOK NEWS.

Forthcoming from GOLLANCZ:- Frank Herbert's THE DCS? ADI EXPERIMENT (£4.95; 20th July); Vonda McIntyre's DREAMSWAKE (£4.95, Aug.); A & B Strugatsky's PRISONERS OF POWER (£5.50, Oct.); James Tiptree jr.'s UP THE WALLS OF THE WORLD (£5.25, Aug.); Ian Watson's MIRACLE VISITORS (£4.95, July); A.C. Clarke's FOUNTAINS OF PARADISE (£4.25, Jan '79); Terry Carr's BEST SF OF THE YEAR 7 (£5.50, Nov.); Algys Budrys BLOOD & BURNING (£4.75, Jan '79); Bob Shaw's VERTIGO (£4.50, Nov.)

Penguin issue Richard Adams' THE PLAGUE DOGS on Aug 17th. (95p). The film rights have been secured by Martin Rosen, the producer of the cartoon version of WATERSHIP DOWN.

An illustrated guide to the SOLAR SYSTEM is being published by Allen Lane in Nov. at £9.95. Text by Peter Ryan, over 20 paintings by Ludek Pesek, as well as the latest space photographs.

The recent Second World SF Writers' Conference in Dublin voted Fred Pohl's GATEWAY winner of the John Campbell Memorial Award. Runners up were ROAD-SIDE PICNIC (A. & B. Strugatsky) and A SCANNER DARKLY (P.K. Dick).

What look like a new cult novel (every mention seems to bring in comparisons with LOTR) is published by Fontana: THE CHRONICLES OF THOMAS COVENANT, THE UN-BELIEVER by Stephen R. Donaldson. It comes in 3 vols LORD FOULS BANE: THE ILLEARTH WAR: THE POWER THAT PRESERVES. Price £1.25 each.

Futura are bringing out Michael Moorcock's GLORIANA in paperback on Oct. 30th. MM is signing books in the Paperback Bookshop, Oxford on the publication date and may be doing other signing sessions. Futura also have Paul Victor's WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS (75p) while Orbit/Del Rey have Alan Dean Foster's MIDWINTER (85p); Jerry Pournelle's BLACK HOLES (95p); Pournelle's THE MERCENARY (85p); Terry Carr's BEST SF OF THE YEAR VOLS 1 & 2 (80p); James Tiptree's STAR SONGS OF AN OLD PRIMATE (75p); H. Rider Haggard's PEOPLE OF THE MIST: WHEN THE WORLD SHOOK: & THE WORLD'S DESIRE. Not to mention PERRY RHODAN 36. Further recent publications from Orbit/Del Rey are BE STS (John Crowley) THE BEST OF ROBERT SILVERBERG; ICEWORLD & STAR LIGHT (Hal Clement); THE MEZENTIAN GATE & A FISH DINNER AT REMISON (E.R. Eddison)

W.H. Allen have 3 DR WHO books out this autumn; DEATH TO THE DALEKS & THE ANDROID INVASION by Terrance Dicks and THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT by I. Marter. Dicks also has a childrens SF tale out in Sept. STAR QUEST is the title. Also issued that month is E.E. SMITH'S Lord Tetric.

HODDER's autumn list includes VIXEN ZERO NINE by Clive

Cussler (author of RAISE THE TITANIC); THE WOLFEN, by Whitley Streiber; THE MAKING OF THE STONE by J. Lymington. Edmund Cooper's JUPITER LAUGHS is set for Jan '79 release.

Film rights have been optioned for Halemann's FOREVER WAR.

John Varley's collection PERSISTENCE OF VISION will appear in the UK from Quantum Books titled IN THE HALL OF THE MARTIAN KING. His second novel, TITANS, is to be serialised in ANALOG.

Andrew Stephenson's 2nd novel THE WALL OF YEARS is complete. It is a time travel tale about attempts to tamper with Anglo Saxon history.

Robert Silverberg has signed a contract for a new novel, LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE. Silverberg is also editing the SF line of Pinnacle books.

Harlan Ellison has a new collection out from Harper, called STRANGE WINE.

Dell Books are to publish the full-length version of STARDANCE by Spider & Jeanne Robinson, as well as new novels by Ben Bova, Marta Randall and Greg Bear.

NESFA (New England Science Fiction Association) has a short story contest, closing date Oct 15th. Entries to go to NESFA, Box G MIT Branch Post Office, Cambridge MA 02139, USA. The rules are many and various so write for details first.

Isaac Asimov's SF Adventure Mag is, or should be, out. NOVA will be out soon. Print run of the latter will be nearly one million, with 150,000 destined for this country. Publicity budget is £250,000. NOVA will contain stories and articles. SF editor is Diana King, former associate editor of ANALOG. First issue is scheduled for September 19, but in order to launch the magazine properly there will be a special SF edition of PENTHOUSE on sale Sept 1.

Ben Bova has quit ANALOG.

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RADIO RADIO

Of interest to SF/Fantasy fans may be the following BBC radio programmes scheduled for this sept. BOOK AT BEDTIME (Radio 3, 11pm) 18 - 22 Sept is the Henry James classic supernatural story THE TURN OF THE SCREW; more ghosts in the play THE GIRL WHO DIDN'T WANT TO BE by Frederick Bradnum (R4, 16 Sept; repeated 18 Sept.). SCIENTIFICALLY SPEAKING (R3: 6 Sept & 20 Sept) repeat programmes on "What do human genes look like" and "Cosmic Rays". There will be an interview with cartoonist (remember "The Addams Family" comedy-horror TV series?) Charles Addams on R3, 16 Sept.

LETTERS



JACQUELINE Y. COMBEN, 27A, Herga Rd, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 5AX.

Star Wars is pantomime, and rather bad pantomime at that - I enjoyed the amateur production of Sinbad The Sailor more!

I entirely agree with James Parker that this film and the following bandwagon are very bad for SF. So are TVSF series of the ilk of Logan's Run. Of course the general public will dismiss SF as childish trash if that is what they see! I enjoy an escapist story, but that does imply the presence of a story and believable characters - there was neither in Star Wars. Cardboard cut-outs postured in a never-never land. It was painful.

I do not think, however, that it helps at all to shrug the whole thing off with anti-American remarks and vague hopes for the future. SF should be extrapolation, and being hide-bound by one's own cultural myths is not extrapolation - it makes no difference whether the myths are American, British or Outer Mongolian - and not all American SF is bad! Even Star Trek tried to challenge some assumptions, at least in series 1, and that it did not continue was not Gene Roddenberry's fault - not that I agree with the hopeful assumptions he did make, I do not believe humans will ever turn into angels! However if the Trek film tells a good story and does not paint its characters with too saintly a brush, it may do some good as a counterbalance to Star Wars. What is happening to the film of Dune? That may do some good if it is well made.

SF should catch the imagination of kids and kindle interest in the future, in science, in finding out, in seeing different cultures as fascinating rich and wonderful. Star Wars was unscientific, racist, unbelievable and stagnant. To cap it all, at the West End cinema where I saw it, there was an exhibition of pictures - the entries in a competition for kids. The winners were all pictures of tidy space ships painted in great detail, exactly like stills from Star Wars. The original, thought provoking, unearthly pictures won nothing - and some were very good indeed.

Is it really impossible to make good films or TVSF? The BBC does not have to please sponsors, yet it produces a poor copy of Star Trek, calls it

Blakes 7 and shows it when the kids are watching. Anything remotely good turns up on BBC2 or radio at 10.30 p.m! Can anyone in BSFA think of any way to get the BBC interested in filming stories by the best authors?

Re BSFA Ltd. The only advantage I know in being a limited company is that if you make a terrible financial loss and go bankrupt you do not have to pay your debts, only £1 each - so if we expect to go bankrupt and do not mind leaving our creditors holding the baby, we stay Limited, but if we either look forward to solvency or have a conscience about the payment of bills, we might as well give up that status.

PHILIP MULD VINEY, 28 Moorland View, Derriford, Plymouth.

MATRIX and VECTOR reminded me of a picture that my little girls have. A Clown's face; one way up it is happy and sloppy, the other very correct but rather sad and dreary. I liked MATRIX!

I found the news very interesting and helpful. Things like the full list of Nebula and Hugo nominees are very useful for reference purposes. As, indeed, was all the news section.

Not too sure about the interview with Terry Jeeves though. It seemed a trifle disingenuous. Dave Cobble's questions were not exactly rapier darts of inquisition that would produce earth-shattering answers. For instance: "The page count of ERG seems pretty consistent; have you ever had thoughts of expanding etc. etc." Eeesh. What sort of reply can you give to a question like that??? Also with no disrespect intended for ERG or Terry Jeeves, longevity in itself does not necessarily breed a fanzine that is exceptional or that one would like to emulate. This assumption seems implicit from the introduction onwards.

Ian Garbutt, I think it was, mentioned that MATRIX needs editing. The letter column certainly does, it adds up to a rather boring, overwordy whole. Some of your correspondants could do with being a bit more concise, and not using 10 paragraphs where one would do. They fall into a trap of writing a chatty personal diatribe. Fine in a personal letter, but not so effective in a letter in a magazine.

Someone somewhere was tacking on about TVSF; the old Sturgeon's Law of "99% of everything is crud" still holds true. The majority of television is mindless moving wallpaper. Quick, without thinking for a minute, name half a dozen TV programmes that stimulated/excited/enthralled you in the past 10 days??? I can think of very few - I CLAUDIUS and PROFESSIONAL FOUL by Tom Stoppard. Both repeats. What else???? Crossroads? ARGENTIA V. BRAZIL? It is ironic that the Dictator of Argentina was able to get onto the end of the biggest world audience ever, because of a football match....

DAVID STRAHAN, Cox Farm, Boxford, Colchester Essex.

Exams have prevented me reading the last two BSFA mailings until very recently: I accept Paul Frase's point that you cannot review anything without having read it entirely, and that for that reason my review of the F&SF June '77 was shoddy. Thanks Phil Stephenson-Payne for expanding the point; I see now the speciousness of the

reasoning in my #16 letter.

I see looking back through the letters that I was guilty of over-reaction and that Paul Fraser's criticisms were very largely justified. My reaction probably resulted from the tone of Paul's first letter (which I still think was obnoxious) although the points made therein were valid. I should have regarded his points impartially and ignored his tone. I didn't.

I think there's a place in MATRIX for the longer fanzine reviews, as written by Roger Waddington, but I'd also like the short capsule reviews or contents lists back again. Why not have both, selecting what you consider to be fanzines worthy of longer reviews? ((This is in mind.))

The Newshounds of the BSFA is an excellent section now that Paul Fraser and Martin Hatfield are doing it; it has so much more form than it used to. The headings mean that you can skip about forgetting what you're not interested in; before you had to read the lot for fear of missing something good - well, almost!

PHILIP WAIN, Students Union, University of Keele
Keele Staffs.

I have been a member of the BSFA since May and have received 3 mailings so far. Apart from forming an SF society here, this is my first excursion into fandom and my first impression leaves me dismayed. Are fans really so critical of, not only authors' works, but each others' articles? You seem to pan everything and anything. I suppose you will tell me that criticism raises and preserves standards but psychologists have shown that credit where credit is due is much more valuable.

You are forever making pleas for new people to become active fans. Can't you see that this unilateral slamming of everything may result in turning less critical fans away from writing to you? They may feel that their pieces will be unmercifully torn to shreds too. For example, that piece on "SF in the under-fives". It was obviously a light-hearted piece not meant to be taken too seriously (Although it is easy to see the roots of SF buried in that childish fantasy). Yet fans were seriously criticising it. Star Wars and Blake's 7 got critical status too when these are also meant to be taken as a bit of FUN. Incidentally, most fans seem to have got the wrong impression from the ending of Blake's 7. The 'Liberator' was not destroyed at the end as you seem to think. The computer they had just captured was making a prediction on the fate of Travis, which duly appeared on the screen. Then it predicted the end of the 'Liberator'. Aron disconnected it, and then, Jenner screamed "Look!" (AT THE SCREEN) to see the 'Liberator' blown up, (ON THE SCREEN). You'll see I'm right when Blake plus crew appear next autumn with a new

series.

I find MATRIX much more accessible and chummy than VECTOR, but it does seem to me that it is more than a little cliquish, dominated mainly by BSFA committee members. I enjoy your editorials and Bill Little's Round the Clubs. Member's Noticeboard and Newshounds are particularly useful, and the humorous articles are nicely entertaining, but do you really have to have so many pages of letters?

SIMON R. GREEN, 37 St Laurence Rd., Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts.

I found your piece on ALTERNATIVE THREE interesting; I didn't buy the book because much as I loved the programme, the book just had to be drawing the thing out to a point where it just wasn't funny any more. One interesting reaction on my part to the programme; as things progressed, and it turned out that there WAS life on a habitable Mars, I began to think, Wouldn't it be nice if this was true. OK, Earth's in trouble, but at least Mars is habitable, and from their accounts sounded rather like ERB's Barsoom... wonder if I could qualify... At which point I began to be a little worried with myself. It's one thing for me to be paranoid, but when the whole world really does seem to be stacked against you, things are getting a bit out of hand.

James Parker's piece on STAR WARS came across as a wee bit pretentious and more than a little arrogant. This position is nothing new in SF and can be seen very clearly in VECTOR these days; that escapist SF is evil and childish and full of nasty inner meanings. It should be stamped out so that Art & Literature SF can take over. Bull. I like porcock, Ellison, et al, but a steady diet would be just as nauseous as a steady diet of escapist sword-swinging. I enjoyed STAR WARS because in many ways it wasn't a Planet Stories rip-off; it took itself just seriously enough and no more. Half the dialogue was jokes on the film itself, and the characters, though played pretty straight, were obviously conceived tongue in cheek. The more serious side of the film was to my mind quite realistic. Mr Parker makes comments about glorified violence, (no doubt with a few thoughts at Starship Troopers et al), but I found no trace of this attitude in STAR WARS. In the final battle, the rebel fleet was pretty much wiped out by the time Luke got his shot in. Obi-wan might well be dead; certainly the other characters thought so; and Princess Leia had already seen her home planet destroyed.

STAR WARS is neither Fascist, militaristic, or particularly escapist. People die, get hurt, fail as often as they succeed. Using the most basic sense of the word, I would go so far as to say that STAR WARS was Realistic; ie true to its world and ours.

No doubt I will now be jumped on by people screaming Idealist Romantic Escapist. Screw 'em.

I like the new Hulk series; admittedly I watched the pilot after reading the Marvel origin, and ended up playing 'Spot the Similarities', but the series is doing quite well. When I saw it was being produced by the people who gave us the Bionic Family, I was worried. When I saw that it was going to share the old 'Fugitive' format, I grew faintly nauseous, but it seems to be working. There's hope yet. Lou Ferrigno makes a very impressive Hulk, though I wish there was more of him. (Scriptually speaking, I'd like to see one episode where we start off with the Hulk and have only brief appearances of Banner, as in the comic.) Has anybody noticed that the Hulk

now appears mainly at night, and Banner at day. This ties in directly to the original comic idea, which symbolises the fact that the Hulk is the night side of Banner's (and our) character, the Hyde to the Jekyll.

MALCOLM R. WATT, 52 Eastfield Road, Benton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 9BD.

In both the letter columns of recent editions of MATRIX and the editorial of VECTOR 87 there have been pleas, from members of the Association for better editing.

Editors should not only collect material and arrange for retyping onto stencil, but they should first prepare the material for publication, by modifying the contributions to suit space, taste and legal considerations in a responsible manner. If contributors are not prepared to accept the editor's alterations, they should be asked to rewrite their material, a process which usually should make the end result better, as more time and thought will have been spent on the finished article.

Members are too important to the Association to be lost because of poorly written material. Steve Hawkins, a member of six months, hit the nail on the head when he said "BSFA's publications not only have to be good, but they have to be seen to be good." Dissatisfaction is rarely made public.

D.T ROWLEY, 33 Greensward, East Goscote, Leicester

Perhaps the most interesting editorial to date; your point about pretending fiction is the truth is a welcome criticism of many books. It didn't matter so much with the 'God is a spaceman' type, but it's rather more serious with ALTERNATIVE 3 and Rorvik's IN HIS IMAGE: THE CLOWING OF A MAN. Of course, books which purport to be true usually sell more than books which say the same things and are listed under fiction.

James Parker's 'Sonic SF' was interesting; I've never heard much of Kraftwerk's music but having read this I'd like to borrow their latest LP from the local library.

The interview with Terry Jeeves was informative. I have to admit I've never seen a copy of ERG, but it was interesting to learn a little about why someone produces a fanzine more or less regularly for 20 years.

(James Parker & STAR WARS): I too prefer the writers James prefers, Ellison, Ballard. But why be so dictatorial? You've got to give people the freedom to make mistakes, and that includes reading literature which you personally dislike. On a philosophical issue, I don't think it is sensible to say SF should be this, should be that. If you have just one book in the world there's no need to categorize it, but when you get more books categories come into existence. This book is

speculative, this is romance, this is left-wing, this is SF. Get the point? Explicit: the definition runs 'this is SF' not 'SF is this'. For anyone who wants a fuller discussion, check Popper's thoughts on the problems which arise when the order of a definition is reversed.

There's too many letters to comment on. No disrespect to the others, but I'd rather comment on Don West's.

General point. Why do we have to make so many deductions from the balance sheet? These matters should be stated explicitly. First point, Don says the sale of VECTOR to non-members brought in £854 and deduces that this is surprising considering that back numbers sold slowly. You're so right! That's 100 copies of VECTOR per issue to casual buyers. Second point, buying back issues is much better now. Keith Freeman was about two weeks sending the ones I ordered. A year though - that's ridiculous. Third point, as Don says, it's absolutely stupid to rely on a rise of over 150% to cover costs. Fourth point, how much freedom was Chris Fowler allowed? Fifth point, some of the stories in TANGENT are readable. Sixth point, I like Paperback Parlour whether it's produced by the BSFA or a member of the committee but it's obviously important to get the weight bracket right. Should the BSFA committee resign? Let's hear their explanation.

((A reply to Don West's charges has been prepared.))

Moving on to the BSFA file, I'd be most interested to hear what the advantages of being a Limited Company are, at least from the BSFA's point of view. The discussion about zero growth needs widening considerably. The committee (and members) really need to come to a decision on this important issue. If we're being counted, I'm for increased growth. I think there would be a corresponding rise in the quality of material the BSFA produces.

BILL J. FRASER, 36 Campbell ST. NE MILNS, KA16 9DT, SC TLAND.

The BSFA's current award winner is amusing as I chucked my copy of that book into the rubbish months back, as I considered it to be a load of mediocre crap, and decided its author would be best left on the bookshelf with other authors of mediocre piss-elegant novels such as J.G. Ballard, Ben Bova, Philip K. Dick, E.E. 'Doc' Smith and Ray Bradbury etc.

So I'll say the current BSFA award isn't a good judgement of what's best in SF at present. Not that I place any value on any of the awards, except for the HUGO which does come up with the odd good one more often than any other.... though it looks like the next one will be best left on the shelves also.

Guess to some crap like DARK STAR has some appeal, then again there are probably those around who like falling into a midden in a heatwave.... and I guess that to them. DARK STAR is a kind of 'sacred cow' as their kind of 'SF' goes; all I'll say is it's overdue for a trip to the knacker's yard.

Good examples of SF I'd say are: JEFFTY IS FIVE/ THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS/ THE NOTE IN GOD'S EYE/ THE BALLAD OF BETA-2.

((Hmmm, a mixed bag there, almost as mixed as those you condemn. Of the three out of the four you mention which I have actually read, I'd call two definitely outstanding, so we have common ground somewhere. I can't see how Dick and Ballard can be called 'mediocre', though, and we must continue to disagree on DARK STAR!))

GREG HILLS, 331 Featherstone ST, Palmerston North
New Zealand.

A vast content-improvement on *17. But that
blasted corner staple. The staple matter is the
number one- double-A-prime thing that bugs me
about MATRIX, cos there is NO tenable excuse for
a magazine that falls apart. Typing is still bad
and both you and Dave C confuse 'to' and 'too'.

And now the polemic begins: the letters!

Martin Macgilp: Nice letter and it lends me
some hope for the future of BSFA; someone, at
least, is content to ignore present issues and
drag their letters out of their own minds. Per-
sonally, I have never felt resentment when a maori
(read 'black' if you like, though there is no re-
lation except that neither is white Caucasian -
and hence, in the strange world climate, that makes
them somehow closer to each other than to Eur-
opeans. Strange concept.) got a job and I didn't.
It has happened. No, my thought at such times was
lucky sod, and why couldn't it be me? Maybe
next time it'll be my turn...? such thoughts are
exactly the same as when anyone gets a job I
didn't. (I am a student; holidays mean I have
tried for a quite inordinate number of posi-
tions.)

What the hell is James Parker getting at?
HE backhands every single item that made STAR WARS
enjoyable (and therefore Significant, in a differ-
ent sense from the normal usage of the term) for
me. I seee! He is one of those perverts who in-
sist on taking SF to the broadest possible meaning.
I am not impressed by verbiage such as 'the SF ghe-
tto', 'literary prison'. I feel that his 'widening
of the borders' is no such! It is just a dilu-
tion of the genre by gathering into it the old
death&drek stuff that killed 'mainstream' (null
term but I'll use it) literature. Keep that up
and you no longer have 'SF': you have 'mainstream'
under a new title.

What I could understand of T.W Francis' letter
was... interesting. I'm still giggling, and it's
not the nasty snickers many letters get!

Bill Little: heed his opening words! I echo
them 100,000% (pretty hard). I agree with the rest
of his letter too. Maybe #17 was just one wherethe
permutations of letterhacking happened to throw
up and extra-large number of loudmouths? Any way,
Bill spoke more sense than many a longer letter
does.

Richard Bancroft backs up my view that there
is hope for the future. I am fundamentally an op-
timist, but I doubt I am being optimistic in
thinking that Man will not, can not must not be
tied to this miserable little mud-ball (home
though it be) for his whole term of existence.
All things must end, but it's a helluva lot more fun
meantime for the adventurous!

Don West: PAPERBACK PARLOUR easily carries its
weight in the mailings. 'Twas worth more than the
TANGENT 4 that contained such utter drivel. Further,

my package had M,V,T,PP, trivia. Postage (airmail, mind,
was 1.97. Allowing for the productions cost of the mags,
the club is losing money on me. I figure at that rate
I'll have to LoC like hell to carry my weight. Revolting
as the zines were, I'm not complaining: I have seen one
or two worse, and I've been careful as to what I ask
after. M & V, despite their glaring faults, are rather
good as to contents (even if V is a little too sercon
for my tastes), while PP is unique in my experience: If
it didn't come with the BSFA stuff, I'd ask for it on
its own.

Datum: non-UK fen should see if the local PO's sell
British Postal Orders. That's how I paid my fee, and
so far as I know it cost the BSFA nothing to convert 'em
to exact cash - if it did cost, no-one has seen fit to
inform me of that fact! BPO's cost the sender more than
cheques (10% as against free, for NZ) but are seemingly
not affected by cashing charges (cheques) or currency
fluctuations (International Money Orders).

((Thanks for the info you sent with your letter,
greg. Now how about those other non-UK members follow-
ing suit and sending me news from their fair lands??))

WILLIAM BAINS, Crowland Lodge, 100 Galley Lane, Arkley,
Barnet Herts EN5 4AL.

This LoC is only going to mention Don West's letter
to say that he is somewhat hard on the committee: the
minutes of meetings, accounts etc. are published not just
for fun and because the men in blue require BSFA Ltd.
to do so but in order to attract comment, suggestions
etc. So your faithful members, seeing their organis-
ations finances laid bare before them, ignore them and
turn to the Loccol to see who is stabbing whom in the
back this ish. Oh, thinks (???) the committee to its
collective self, we must be doing what they, the 498
members who did not comment, want of us. Thus many of the
woes Don complains of. By contrast to the general mem-
bership the committee carry on esoteric hatchet jobs on
each other's hatchet jobs in MATRIX, their comments be-
coming ever more vitriolic and involved until someone
like self, receiving his first MATRIX in the middle of
a multi-ish battle, receives the impression that it is all
being run by a closed society speaking solely in Old High
Martian. This is not good: Some more involvement from
the membership (as in Don West's most comprehensive
polemic) would, I believe aid if not solve the ills of
the BSFA.

But truly amazing is not the troubles of our good
organization but the fact that, despite these it continues
to grow. This is despite lack of advertising, and I
mean almost total lack. I have been addicted to SF since
I discovered libraries: I cleaned out every library
within bicycling distance of home years ago. Never, in
the eight years between storming the school library and
entering University did the mystic runes BSFA cross my
path. And yet within two weeks of entering Oxford the
O.U. Speculative Fiction Group had located me as suit-
able material (stop laughing!), showered propaganda all
around, and signed me. together with 1% of that year's
intake. All, I might add, done on an extra low budget

and despite the fact that OUSFG is not really a dedicated fan group but only a small University society with the usual 90% inert membership. Oh committee members, regard then in awe the resourcefulness of that tiny group, succeeding in informing everyone in a 9000 strong undergraduate population of its existence at NO COST. What free publicity have we seen in the daily press for the BSFA? Has Dave Cobbledick taken his 'Better TVSF' campaign to the nations press? Has he written to the Radio/TV Times?

((Your comparison of the BSFA with the OUSFG is a bit ingenuous; for a university society wishing to attract members there are several easy channels - there's generally a 'societies Bazaar' or some such at the beginning of each year, and it's possible to get in touch with every student through central pigeonholes (I'm not sure what the situation is at Oxford but no doubt you can get in touch with people through the colleges), not to mention dozens of noticeboards scattered about. The BSFA doesn't have so much of a captive audience, and we have the whole country to cover! Our publicity was never good, admittedly (it took me several years to track down the BSFA!), but it has improved - our steady increase in membership is witness to that. On writing to the Press - I myself have written several times to local papers (and on one occasion got an interview) and members in the West Country might have noticed a letter by me in their regional edition of the Radio Times - with the reference to the BSFA edited out!))

PETER J. KERSHAW, 24 Broomflat Close, Standish Nr. Wigan, WN6 0NF.

I totally agree with Bill J. Fraser's point about any nut who expects SF in the mass media to be real SF. Films are made for mass media, and to do otherwise would be commercial suicide. STAR WARS in book form is like a written comic book to me. The same goes for CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. The only exception is 2001.

If only an SF author were well acquainted with a wealthy tycoon or millionaire who could win him over, to get money for a real SF film, and collaborate with a top Director who would share the same vision, and produce a real SF film. For instance, "Best Sellers" on TV is really good; if only we could have an SF best-seller in the collection, e.g. THE FOUNDATION TRILOGY: EARTHLIGHT: THE CITY AND THE STARS: CHILDHOOD'S END.

ALEX PILLAI, 32 Mingle Lane, Stapleford, Cambs

Yet another interesting Matrix. What a cover! (Though I must say that bloke looks sus-



piciously like Marvel's Conan).

Hmm, usual mixture, round the clubs, sf music, a crossword which varies from the too easy (The Doc's Initials) to the downright obscure (Anagram of sun: ask Bob Marley), an interview (really good), Newshounds (What has Godfather part 3 got to do with SF?) the BSFA file and the best bit of all, the letters.

I must straight away disagree with Bill Fraser. DARK STAR was a brilliant, funny and original film. Why's he running down 'hard core' SF? What does he think SILENT RUNNING (which he likes) is? Anyway, I like old fashioned SF as much as I like the new wave, and as far as I'm concerned there is still a place for hard core SF in the shape of books like MISSION OF GRAVITY and NEUTRON STAR.

I must completely agree with James Parker's idea that STAR WARS is the death knell of SF. People thought that it would open up people's minds as far as SF was concerned; it has, in a way, but only to the E.E. Smith type of stories. Soon enough the book market (and that means now) will be swamped with SW imitations and that'll stagnate the market for years to come. Also any projects for good SF films or TV series will be killed stone dead 'cos the film companies will only touch space opera.

The BSFA news brought up controversy over an increased membership. As far as I'm concerned, to grow is to be better. The more memberships the more money.

Oh yes, Don West's letter on the influence that an organisation like the BSFA could wield is true in that if all of us acted together then something might happen. However, he forgot the fact that most members just couldn't be bothered. For instance, you don't receive 500 letters after every mailing, do you? His bit about us buying hardback novels is utterly ridiculous.

vious. Does he know how much hardbacks cost? I haven't bought a first hand hardback in years.

BERNARD M. EARP, 21 Moorfield Grove, Tonge Moor, Bolton, Lancs.

First, what happened to "Half-life"? Just where was our beloved Elmer T. Hack? Have Jim Barker and Chris Evans split up or has 'Milton Munroe' slapped an injunction on them? Lets hear it folks, "Bring back Hack!" (yes I know he appears in VECTOR, but I'm trying to save postage)((Cunning blighter.... come to think of it, I enjoyed the saga of Elmer, to))

On Don West's point about the inclusion of other zines (Paperback Parlour & Waif) with the BSFA mailing, I would think that any zine going out to all members and without cost to the editor can easily be sanctioned as supplying a service to all. But a zine going out to a limited number means that the rest are subsidising the fortunate (?) few who do receive it.

((Distribution of WAIF - Tom Jones' fanzine - was carried out under the BSFA distribution service, which is frequently used for fanzines and fliers - and hence, it was paid for. Distribution of PP is a BSFA service.))

DAVE COBBLEDICK, 245 Rosalind St. Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9AZ.

ARTWORK: the cover was excellent, in fact it has been the best I've seen since that collection of mug shots that appeared on a litho cover in the days of old (young? youngish! Tom Jones. If you can keep up that standard of presentation, do so.

CONTENTS: hmmm, I afraid I can't raise much enthusiasm here. I dunno, but there seems to be less and less to pass comments upon and that which there is, is pretty awful stuff. SONIC SF: this wasn't bad, but very highly opinionated and that, to me, is a useless waste of energy. The reviews in M18 were so cold that I wasn't convinced that these reviewers were themselves convinced that these things were worth listening to or going to see. REGULAR FEATURES: RTC was good as was the Newshounds, but do we really need MEDIA NOTES? (sorry Martin). I mean, we have a full-time pro-mag which encapsulates the whole of the visual SF genre, and does it far more comprehensively than MN; I'm talking about STARBURST!

As I said, the regular features were OK, but then they don't seek to solicit any kind of comment other than of the appreciative kind. Being there for an informative purpose alienates them from the rest of the contents and only if they are mistaken in any way will someone speak up and say "Oy! You made a blunder!" Maybe it's not your fault, Andy, but surely, out of over 500 members, an improvement in the quality of the items intended to solicit response could be implemented. The last few issues have been a bit of a let down and indeed, the only thing which has kept M alive for me is the Loccol.

Sorry to be so depressing, but I feel that MATRIX is dying and unless we have a long sequence of vitamin shots (in the form of GOOD interesting articles) then the end looms near. The Loccol is full of vitality, but how long can the debates go on before becoming repetitive? All I can say to the membership is GET YA FINGERS OUT AND GET CRACKING WITH SOME DECENT ARTICLES.

So, to my usual contribution of vitriolic mumblings. First, I'd like to thank Steve Hawkins for expressing his concern over those who try-to-get-at-me; ta, mate! I also thought, for a little while, on the question Andy posed after you mentioned your affection for Niven & Pournelle's LUCIFER'S HAMMER. For me to answer such a question (what books would I save to rebuild civilization) I would need more than just ... "The civilized world has collapsed, what are you going to do?". The question is very vague and so no-one can really give a sensible and logical answer.

((True, it was a silly question; guess I'd been listening to too much DESERT ISLAND DISCS!))

To answer James Parker's letter I must resort to asking a further question WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF FICTION? To me, it is to entertain; to separate reality from fantasy even though the fantasy must be based upon factual human traits, failings, weaknesses, etc. (all literature is derived from the experiences, ethics, and hopes of Mankind.) The way that JTP's letter is written talks of fictional ploys as representational of reality and as such is dangerous. I would agree with him if people were to accept the theories and extrapolate philosophies as being undoubted FACT. However, I can't see anyone relating to FICTION as reality and so any dangers arising from the so-called gullibility of people are ill-founded. I dislike the idea of SF trying to portray the problems of the real world in a didactic and preaching manner. It doesn't make the world any better than it is. It doesn't make people in places of authority sit up and say "Christ! Do you see what's going to happen? We'd best do something about it." I revel in the yarns of the SPACE OPERA stories and, to a number of people, that makes me a snivelling unintellectual person. So what? I read SF, or any other kind of fiction, for the values I look to it for: entertainment. I care not for any political, ethical, scientific, technological theories that the author cares to throw in. I don't rate a book on how accurate its science is or how the author can play around with paradoxes. A book could contain all these, but if it doesn't entertain me, then to hell with it.

ALISON LOWE: I do not enjoy violence, nor do I wish it to flourish. However, violence in books/films/TV is there because we want it. Let's start with films; JAWS is a prime example. Why do you suppose people went to see it? To enjoy the story? I doubt it, as there was little or no story apparent. People queued up to see JAWS for the sequences which detailed the violence that the shark inflicted upon the innocent swimmers; arms, legs, heads being torn from bodies. People sat there, horrified, enjoying those sequences and waiting with slurping lips for more. A common street brawl will attract an audience who will cheer and goad the fighters to try and kill each other. Bringing it closer to home we will sit and watch two men bash each others brains out, twist arms and legs, bust jaws

and teeth and we will sit either at home (watching TV) or in a live audience watching these things happening in BOXING, WRESTLING, KARATE.... "SPORT". Jesus, when you take a real close look we absolutely love and desire violence. We're a barbaric race at heart and haven't matured out of the infancy of our beginning.

I agree with you that we should be trying to groom the violent streak out but it's part of our inheritance and as it was inherited from Mother Nature herself we have a hard little darling to fight against. So, don't say that I enjoy seeing broken beer bottles pushed into people's faces, or any other kind of violence for that matter. Only I (along with the rest of the populace of this grotty little world) can't help it if my hidden inheritance becomes excited at the thought of violence. Don't forget, MEN are naturally inclined to be violent whilst women are maternal and loving.... a solid fact of nature that no-one can disclaim. So, don't lash out so hard next time until you can accept that which we are and have been; what we will be all depends on who gives first..... US or MOTHER NATURE.

((I agree with you that there is a fascination in violence, especially when the observer is in no danger of actually being involved. But man is also capable of other reactions; our nature is a complicated one due to the fact that we are not only (if at all) natural competitors (and hence prone to violence among ourselves) but also social animals (and hence our lives are built up on co-operation.) As for your point about men being naturally violent and women maternal and loving, that is an even more complicated area. Try investigating that with an eye to the most fervent followers of these sports you mention above (mostly women) or the rising statistics for women indicted for crimes of violence. In such areas the difference between sexes is not as great as the difference within them))

KEN MANN, 4 Armingier Rd, London W12.

I have given up reading SF for the time being, the reason being that so much of it is crud. I do not see why I should waste my time on unadulterated mediocrity.

This mediocrity is due to two main factors: (1) the 'tradition' of SF. We are still suffering from the effects of Hugo Gernsback's aberrations. If I had a time machine, I would strangle him at birth. I feel it ironical that we should laud him - through the prestigious Hugo award - for his services to SF. The 'pulp' era is a millstone around SF's neck.

(2) In comparison with other fields, SF authors are underpaid. This is, of course, the fault of the publishers. This has two effects: (a) SF authors tend to supplement their work with other types of fiction and non-fiction, or move out of the genre altogether (Isaac Asimov is a prime example of this). (b) The best authors have no incentive to stay within the genre - and thereby improve it - but use it as a vehicle to express that which would be unacceptable to their normal readership then disappear forever from the scene. Hence, SF is a field of mediocre authors. A third effect to be noted is that underpaying authors results in a prolific output (e.g. John

Brunner, Isaac Asimov, etc.) just to keep the wolf from the door.

However, I am optimistic that one day an SF author will walk away with the Nobel prize for literature. Of course, by that time, science fiction will be known as 'fiction' and the barricades will be down. SF will have come of age.

My optimism is built on a handful of 'SF' writers: Brian Aldiss, Olaf Stapledon, H.G. Wells, J.G. Ballard, Ray Bradbury. There aren't any more. A pity.

STEEV HIGGINS, 18 St Austell Ave, Tidsley, Greater Manchester M29 7FY.

The inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality you described in the Island illustrates another facet of the human condition, that we're far better at using our methods of communication to do the opposite. Speech is a faculty which enables us to conceal our thoughts, and the more complicated our communications systems the better they are at concealment. In theory, there are ways to counter it; rational thought, the scientific method etc. but people do seem to prefer Bermuda Triangle books to Bermuda Triangle Disproved books. Okay, nothing wrong in that as it is, (and rational thought has its dangers, see George Martin's 'after morning comes Mistfall') except for the dangers that begin to accumulate in that process of wishful thinking and deliberate mythologising.

And now to James Parker. It's a bit late, but can I say something about his letter in M17? In real life people generally resort to violence to resolve injustices and moral conflicts, but 999.99 recurring times in a thousand that last resort is unsuccessful. And moral conflicts are never resolved overnight. That's just as naive as expecting the square-jawed hero to show everyone the error of their ways and bring peace, love and the American Dream. The aim of a revolution is, by definition almost, to get rid of the bad and to set up the solution in one sweep. It can't happen that way. Only sweat, guts, toil and a long, long time can bring about change. That seems to be the fact of life that both TVSF (and TV in general) and James Parker have missed.

As to your comments on STAR WARS, you don't have to be 'sophisticated' to understand what fun is, but I think you're right in saying that a certain degree of sophistication is required not to apply attitudes in escapist films to real life. There's a comment Chris Fowler made in VECTOR 82 about the Stormtroopers: "In their white thermoplastic armour, (they) are totally anonymous, as well as insect-like, so that when they are lasered down one can cheer without any feelings of guilt." He calls it a 'beautiful touch', but in fact it's horrible, like those little Vietcong who all looked the same, and very hostile with those vicious narrow eyes. Anyway, I'll now stop backing up your arguments

and point out that it is only reviving the tradition which is a lot older than Hollywood (e.g. the infamous pre-WW1 poetry of Rupert Brooke). Of course it's immoral (the sort of real immorality idiots like Mary Whitehouse have no idea of) but not as much as some glorifications of violence. But why must STAR WARS represent "the sick side of the death-culture perfected on Madison Ave." when surely it's just an insignificant part of something that has gone on throughout human history.

Writers like "Vonnegut, Ballard and Ellison etc." only produce work of meaning in the context of an alternative to the dark side of life they paint. So people are mean bastards, great, let's get on with it, unless you want to tell me we don't have to be. We're capable of love, compassion and sacrifice - that's the reality.

Thank to the same for his review of the Kraftwerk album, a band I've heard a lot about but nothing of (a cliché, but true). Comments on 'contemporariness' a little strange, though. The point of punk and the rest of the new wave is really just excitement and fun, but it does give a sense of the experience of kids in 1977/8, and some of the sufferings and aspirations they have.

As for the debate on politics, although I call myself an anarchist and would prefer a system without authority or central direction, I would like to see democracy tried out. Britain is far from a democratic country. A lot of other systems have been tried out and proved themselves unfeasible, but not democracy (except in Ancient Greece? Not in any way applicable to today.) The only hope for, and semblance of, democracy is the plethora of pressure groups (and Trades Unions, to some extent). The only way democracy could be tried is if the people get active themselves.

Wayback when in M16 Richard Dancroft made the shrewd observation that "Fans who would like TVSF tailored to their individual needs would probably be found down at the boozer on opening night." Where was Lester Hannington when RED SHIFT and STARGAZY ON ZUMMERDOWN went out? I think most of us agree with him, but why not encourage the examples instead of moaning at their absence! Both, if not as good as PROFESSIONAL FOUL, pointed the way to his 'adult SF televised drama'.

I liked the interview with Terry Jeeves. I was impressed by the way he listed his dislikes in fanzines, but then showed that he didn't object to them and appreciated that other people did like them.

The BSFA News section is a worthwhile feature. I'd like to take up the comment "SF is booming - there is no real need for the BSFA any more." Although the advert states that the BSFA is to encourage and advertise SF, it hasn't struck me that it really pursues any particular function. One thing it is is a sort of entrance for many people into fandom (myself for instance.) As such I think it ought to provide some sort of service to such neos. The 'Round the Clubs' section

ought to be given more emphasis, and there should be information provided of cons for people who have never been to one before, that is, as much information as possible; and MATRIX ought also to provide important details about as many different fanzines as possible. At the moment, without Fallible Freeman, and with only a minimal RTC and con news tucked away in the Newhounds, it is difficult to strike out beyond the BSFA. Suggestion: I've nothing against the usual type of con report, but they tell very little to people who've never been to a con. How about the revolutionary idea of a one-off serious con report as a sort of 'layman's guide to fandom'?

((Any volunteers?? There's Cyril Simsa's piece in this issue, of course, and I have an article on a well-known BSFA member's 'firstcon' to appear in a future issue, but I'd be pleased to hear from anyone who'd like to follow this idea up.))

PAUL FRASER, 51 Ivanhoe Rd, Aberdeen AB17HA.

It seems that all the previous locs I have sent have been as effectual as farting against the wind.

A case in point: thinking that the Carnell Award could do with what was basically a Hugo-like structure (four categories for fiction to begin with) I suggested as much and in the next MATRIX there were one or two people who mildly agreed with me and none who were violently opposed. Of course, Wingrove (Guardian of said Award) didn't say anything about it. However, I thought at least it would be considered, but, alas, it seems not. On one of the many pieces of paper lying in my mailing (you really shouldn't put them in dark envelopes - there's no telling what they get up to) I found that the Carnell now has four categories. Great, I thought, they've used my suggestion. Then I read it. After being infuriated, I started laughing. The ridiculous second suggestion - an award for the best collection/anthology - sounddd utterly absurd. Now, pray tell us, does one compare an anthology like ANDROMEDA 1 with Ellison's author collection DEATHBIRDSTORIES or Aldiss' GALACTIC EMPIRES? Did anybody think of that? Do the mysterious presences that decide most of the affairs of the BSFA think at all? It seems not. Whoever decided that the award take this shape would be better off asking the membership what they think rather than changing it to their own conception of what it should be. If they had any sense they would adopt the professional award structure of the Hugo awards but that's assuming that they are in possession of the first requisite. Now before I get some condescending reply to the effect that I am just bogged at the fact that my idea wasn't used (and I am. Oh yes, I most certainly am) let me say that I did at least use a public platform to express my idea and get, or attempt to get, some reaction to the idea. Unlike some....

A second case in point: the mild-mannered man in the street might wonder what it takes for those in charge to get their thumbs out of their arses and their brains out of neutral. Now how many people have written complaining about the staples holding their mailings together? There's probably more mail on that than anything else and what's been done about it? Yes, that's right, sod all. At this point in my letter I am beginning to wonder if the people

who put out VECTOR and MATRIX are not in fact half dead zombies operating in some dark subterranean caves endlessly plodding through the puddles of slime choked waters with bundles of mildewed back numbers. (Clark Ashton Smith eat your heart out.)

Well, let us get away from the topic of BSFA politics and the wholesome subject of necromancy, bestiality or... ah yes, MATRIX. It has more similarities to a corpse other than it stinks, y'know.

First of all the cover, which isn't too bad, but is not enhanced by a crudely drawn date, number and title. Inside the cover there is, roughly, an unbalanced mess. 'Round the Clubs' is too long considering the minority of people it serves; I can't really see why this 'important function' should take more than a page if it's at all necessary. Wingrove's review: "By the time you've read this it's probably finished", not to mention inaccessible for 90% of the members. Newshound mention. Nothing more. Newshounds and members noticeboard - strewn as usual all over the place, exemplifying non-existent layout, probably conceived to complement the typos which pop up everywhere like gnomes in a rockery. I really can't see any excuse for the unbalanced and messy disgrace that MATRIX is.

Now the letters, of which there are far too many (or too much, perhaps). For instance, Steve Hawkins' suggestion for a combined issue was impractical and didn't really need printing, did it? James Parker's letter was a good laugh. Idealistic crap always is. So's when you drag things out of all proportion. Here he is criticising STAR WARS because it isn't Deep and Profound and Realistic and scared shitless because he thinks that we're all going to trot off to war 'conditioned' by movies like this that make war seem sterile and clean. Anyone with half a brain knows that war isn't like that one movie. And as for his dictum that all films, books etc should teach/show/make us look at life, who the hell wants to? What does he think people read a d go to the flicks for? To get as far away from life as they can.

((I've given you my response to your comments in a personal letter, Paul, so I don't need to go over every item again. On your last point, though: I presume you're implying that most people live such lousy, rotten lives that, given the chance for vicarious escape, they wish to "get as far away from life as they can". Do they then really need to see the same attitudes that probably drove them to escape in the first place? Or are they actually looking for portrayals of these attitudes to confirm them in their prejudices? Or do you think that such discussion is meaningless and that any entertainment is nothing more than a cheap drug to stop us thinking?))

As to your question ((on discussing prozines)) about "who's going to wait for three months to get a complete novel when they can get it at once?", wellmost people will. The serial is a cheap (compared to a hardback) way of getting the novel and other reading AND IS AVAILABLE FIRST. You wait two years for the paperback if you want. Most people are too impatient, if it's something by

a favourite author. ((Point taken.))

And as for Don West's letter: Good for you, Don! I can't wait to see the suitably evasive, dithering reply the committee will give him.

I really am getting sick of this organisation. Never before have I seen such plain bad value for the 80 odd pence that each mailing costs. You can get an SF REVIEW for roughly the same price and it's infinitely better. Next year, if the standard isn't much improved I'm going to form an alternative organisation. And you can take that as a threat.

((From a further letter))....

It is my opinion that an anthology idea is a bad one when it comes to giving an award. It's far easier to judge stories of roughly the same length than it is to compare a reprint anthology against an original one or an author collection. What my main bitch is, is this. Why do the committee not take a vote through the membership on these things? That would at least give everyone a chance at expressing their own opinions whether they did so or not. And that brings me to another thing. How can the 25 people at an AGM manage to make decisions concerning 500 BSFA members? Both these topics point to a non-existent democracy in the BSFA. There should be referenda on any major decision concerning the BSFA. And cost and bother of arranging these is no excuse either.

RICHARD BANCROFT, 7 Woone Lane, Clitheroe, Lancs.

I intuit that the average SF fan (that's you) usually thinks in terms of SF that are or were created by someone other than him/herself. Are fans incapable of expressing their personal concepts of SF? Surely not! But it looks to me to be the case that great pains are taken to record in letters, references to authors, publishers, SF in print, TVSF, Music and the like. A sort of sight and sound expose of documented SF. This makes me wonder whether any fans have experienced SF via olfactory or tactile sensors. Taste bad SF even. The tactile angle is possible through 3D images of SF creations. Where is all the speculative thought that hasn't hit print yet? Who can truly bring new concepts to light? Could science (the baseline for SF) develop along a non-mathematical growth pattern? You don't need to be able to count to draw a circle or cut out a wheel; perhaps it's the maths that straitjackets experimentation only providing a convenient means of repetition of an event. There's a lot to speculate about. You can come quite bored by covering old SF ground unless you're hypernostalgic. Go on, read the stuff you are offered in the bookshops and accept it - as the be all and end all. Most of you will probably ride on the tightbeam SF that publishers would insist is the most economical for them and most entertaining for you. A nasty depopulating Plutonium device going off in your neck of the woods wouldn't be entertaining, revealing perhaps. But to see it go off in your pal's back yard - that might be entertaining if you were a psychopath. The nasty Plutonium thing was once speculated about and is perhaps a popular SF device. Why? It's old bunk now. We need more than spaceships and

political war games, we need to speculate about Science from an angle not yet referred to directly, from knowledge thought to be fact at the moment. It's like Alice might have said: "Get your leg over the threshold and take a look at the back of your head."

DEREK HARKNESS, 11 Westland Crescent, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, N. Ireland.

Good God I'm not Salvadore Dali. Hellfire, what'll I tell all those people who appreciate my work. I'm ruined, you fink. Seriously though, I take your point Ian Garbutt. Some of my work can be scrappy so just for you I'll try and improve. Since you raised the topic I might as well ask a question of all fellow artists reading. Just how do you approach drawing illoes for zines? E.g. do you sit down at professional drawing boards and draw out everything proportionally correct or do you sit down, draw out your illoe in pencil and when satisfied draw over in ink. I confess to the latter mainly because if I sat down to everything like a professional I'd be at it for ages. Also remember I'm not quite 17 and don't even know if I've passed my Art O level yet, so don't expect "A Masterpiece".

Letters seem to bring up a lot of controversy this ish. I cannot agree with James Parker on the whole about STAR WARS. The film is just a bit of escapism from the usual porno films that we sample at cinemas and although escapism may not be good in large doses I can't see all films which follow STAR WARS continuing that trend.

Don West: I find it hard to believe that the BSFA Committee members are responsible for the alleged mismanagement of the funds especially after the friendly atmosphere and helpfulness that I recieved when I initially joined. (and which is still there.))

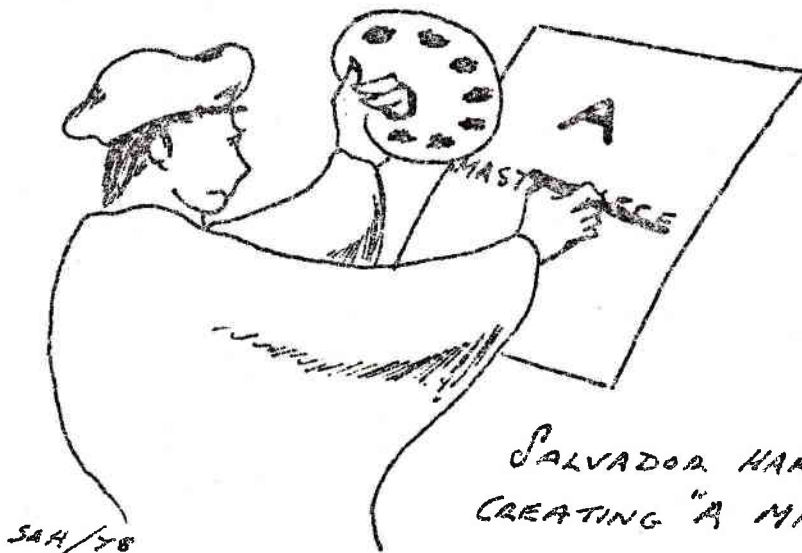
TOM JONES, 39 Ripplesmere, Bracknell Berks RG12 3QA.

Although I a prove of the occasional good hoax the finale is always the unmasking of it and to then pretend the hoax is real destroys the enjoyment. I have a theory. We live in a society where most people don't understand what is going on and feel they have no control over their lives, for example, from a technical viewpoint they/we are surrounded by magic boxes which produce a multitude of wonders. Is it thus surprising people are willing to believe in magic, in spaceships playing god. On TV you see a war film and then a news report on war atrocities in Vietnam/Africa - is it surprising people find it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction? Fortunately I believe this is an aspect of future shock and we'll come out of our collective daze and retain our scepticism. Until then we'd be easy meat for a cosmic con man.

The interview with Terry Jeeves was worthwhile and interesting as far as it went, ie dwelling mainly on fanzines, in particular Terry's zine ERG. Now Terry has been a fan for a long time and I'd have liked to hear some stories from the past. Look on this as a request for a follow-up rather than a criticism of Dave Cobbledick's abilities as an interviewer - he obviously had an aim in mind and achieved it.

The letter column continues to be a high spot, nice to see some new names. I must side with those who bemoan the slanging matches of the past few issues. Unfortunately this seems to be a fannish trait (there have been some fiery feuds in the past). Some of this is due to the form of communication used. It's very easy with a letter, particularly obe going to a letter column rather than the person concerned, to say something harsh about someone - to say something you would not say to his face. I suppose it's part of the classic effect which says it's easy to be nasty at a distance.

Most enjoyable & as long as I pay my £5 I'll damn well write locs when I fee like it! (Not that I'd dare say that to his face!)



SALVADOR HARKNESS
CREATING "A MASTERPIECE"

CYRIL SIMSA, 18 Muswell Ave, London N10 2EG.

First, a mild word of reproach: you published a long letter of mine in M17, and you re-punctuated it.

In the general run of things this wouldn't worry me, but in this case Ian Parbutt attacks me (both in his letter to M18, and in a personal letter to me) for something I never said. What you did was that you added a comma to my sentence "With the exception of some fiction in TANGENT (which consists of prozine rejects),..." so that it read "With the exception of some fiction in TANGENT, (which consists of prozine rejects),..." I hope you can see that the extra comma changes the meaning.

What I was trying to say was that my fiction contributions to TANGENT consisted of prozine rejects; what the published version quite clearly does say is that TANGENT as a whole consists of prozine rejects, which I never meant to imply.

((You are quite right: apologies all round, I think!))

ON CHANGING THE MAILINGS: Let me reiterate the sentiments I expressed in my (unpublishable) LoC on M17: some people just cannot tell a functional thing when they see one, and they feel they have to change it for the worse.

Unless I've missed something, there have been two ideas put forward with respect to changing the mailings: A) the AGM debate idea that there could be alternate all-VECTOR and all-MATRIX mailings; B) Steve Hawkins' idea of a combined VECTOR/MATRIX/TANGENT, possibly alternating editors every third issue.

I don't know how seriously either of these proposals have been taken by other members, but personally I consider both to be disastrous. The idea of having MATRIX (in theory our newsletter) coming out at four-monthly intervals is crazy. People complain (with some justification) that even on a bimonthly schedule, the news in MATRIX fails to be topical enough. So what would a four-monthly schedule achieve? (Total stagnation, methinks). Besides, don't any of you people out there like a bit of variety in your mailings?

Steve Hawkins' scheme is a good deal more ingenious, but no less ruinous, in my humble opinion. Whether you like their magazines or not, I think you'll agree that each of our editors displays differing skills (or lack of them, if you prefer to be cynical) and that each of their magazines has an atmosphere of its own. From a practical viewpoint, do any of our editors have the time to produce the kind of mammoth tome that Steve seems to want? It's all very well to say that you'd like the BSFA to produce a nice, big, pretty fanzine, a British equivalent of SFR or ALGOL. But who is going to do it? Dick Geis has a full-time job with SFR, and, the last I heard, our editors were all employed elsewhere.

OTHER MATTERS: James T. Parker, I love you (or words to that effect). I thought I was the only person in fandom who genuinely didnot like STAR WARS (that's not

100% true actually: I was over in the States recently, and I did meet a gentleman at Westercon who had a STAR WARS sucks button - quite the most eloquent piece of SW parapernalia I've ever seen. Westercon was pretty heavy for SW fans: lots of identikit Princesses, except that they all wore shades against the California sunshine, and the queue for the convention's screening of SW was so long that the hotel's fire marshal panicked and threatened to shut down the con if it wasn't controlled. Sitting outside the film room during that screening, I saw people moving their lips in time to the dialogue, and when I mentioned that I didn't like SW, I got piously jumped upon: "Yes, but..."

Ye Gods! I thought then, and Ye Gods! I think now. Because, unless you happen to publish Del Rey books, SW is an insult to contemporary SF - I agree, James, I agree.

We call ourselves the BSFA, but reading the Terry Jeeves interview, or Paul Fraser's classification of the genre, I begin to wonder whether I am talking about the same thing as they are. Which is why I was intrigued by Terry Park's suggestion that maybe we should get our members to discuss what it is that makes SF tick for each particular reader. We might well find out a lot of interesting things by doing that, and I have a feeling we'd discover that Lester Kinnerton is right when he says "SF" per se does not exist (I liked his analogy of a "sodden umbrella under which a variety of activities takes place").

Judging from what James Parker says in his letter, I imagine that my conception of SF is fairly close to his. And so I'm not too happy either that there may be a whole load of people (Out There in the Big Wide World of Fried Chicken Fingers and Underarm Deodorant) who think that SF=STAR WARS. Because if there is a sufficient number of such people, "SF" will, to all intents and purposes become STAR WARS. If enough people consider STAR WARS - or space opera in general - to be SF, it's no good a small minority of The Faithful screaming "but it ain't so". You may not like it, but it is so: effectively, science fiction will have defined itself as space opera. And it's already happening.

If the public at large thinks SF=SW and we consider SF to be something different, we should ditch the term in order to communicate clearly, without misunderstandings. All of which is easier said than done, because a lot of people - including myself, I suppose - preserve a fondness for the atrocities that they lapped up so eagerly in their misspent youth, and they have a perverse desire to justify the ERBs of this world in the name of Mary Shelley, Ursula Leguin or whomever. Brian Aldiss bends over backwards in BILLION YEAR SPREE trying to put a polish of respectability into sci-fi. Look at its antecedents, he cries, and look at the truly Good Things that have come out of it in recent times...Well, I honestly doubt that Capt. S. Meek was inspired to write his tales after reading Lucian's TRUE HISTORY, and as for the literary descendants, we are offered STAR WARS??? I am led to wonder why Aldiss bothered.

I suppose that in the eyes of many people, the foregoing will mean that I am not a "Science Fiction" fan. So be it: I'm really not that worried. STAR WARS sucks, and I'm off to read some Angela Carter.

DCN WEST, 48, Norman St, Bingley, W. Yorks .

(THE BSFA AWARD)

Some honour - what the right hand gives, the left hand snatches back again, and the whole muddled and self-contradictory charade seems closer to an insult than anything else. Having chosen a name which seems not entirely appropriate (for reasons given in my letter of last issue) but which could be justified as offering well-deserved acknowledgement of Carrell's past services to SF, Jones promptly poisons the pleasure and cheapens the gift by declaring the title to be 'purely an interbal shorthand'...

Perhaps there'll be another chapter in the BSFA Award Saga (revised edition) with the next mailing. Perhaps there will also be some answers to the questions I raised in my letter of last issue. I suppose it's understandable that the committee members needed time to get their story sorted out, but I hope they've used this time to such good purpose that I won't have to keep asking the same questions again and again. I also hope - for their own sakes - that they won't all be tempted to try and hide under a collective anonymity. Some committee members are probably guilty of nothing worse than being passive yes-men, but if they try to dodge responsibility under the umbrella of solidarity they will be judged on the same basis as the more active offenders...

((I'm not quite sure what you mean by that. This letter and your last one were both filled out with a great deal of personal abuse aimed at certain of the committee members. A collective response is the only reasonable response to your charges; I'm sure the last thing BSFA members want is a response to your insults on the same level as you hurl them - what they deserve is, instead, a proper analysis of what you have said. Are you attacking the BSFA as a body or are you making personal attacks on some of the committee members?))

The history of the BSFA is full of ups and downs - periods of growth followed by collapse. Usually the growth was either accident or enthusiasm, the collapse either apathy or exhaustion. There's always this problem with unpaid labour: the harder the officers work, the more likely they are to raise the membership, thus creating more work for themselves... and so on, until the spiral collapses on itself. Instead of this inverse-reward situation it would be more logical to create incentives for good management. Apart from a purely notional prestige any BSFA officer who isn't running a little graft on the side derives no benefit from the work he does. Much of it - mechanical production and mailing routines - isn't even interesting. This is tolerable only when the membership - and therefore the work - does not exceed a certain volume. Where you draw the line depends on the degree of enthusiasm and dedication, but once past it a rapid decline is inevitable. Volunteer labour isn't inexhaustable, and at very best, abrupt and frequent changes of personnel make for a lack of continuity which has bad

effects. There are greater opportunities with an increase in size, but to take advantage of these openings

calls for a corresponding increase in investment of labour, otherwise growth turns to a disorganised confusion leading to collapse.

Zero-growth - or some form of restricted membership - has attractions only if one considers the BSFA to be a variety of Exclusive Club, a haven for the Chosen Few. People whose egos are so fragile that they need this kind of sheltered environment should find their group therapy some place else. But the BSFA has certainly reached an awkward size. Either it can fall back to a membership level which makes fewer demands on the officers - in which case it will simply stagger on in its old and ineffectual manner, from one crisis to another - or it can expand further. In the latter case, some sort of paid help is essential. Various references to "professional assistance" have been bandied about in MATRIX already, conjuring up horrible visions of six shorthand typists engaged by the committee to take dictation of innumerable little memos. What I mean by "paid help" is very far from this Executive's power-fantasy - simply one person to work part-time handling production and mailing of BSFA publications, promoting VECTOR sales to non-members and wider publicity. There is a great deal which could be done - which should be done - but which is unlikely to be done satisfactorily (if at all) except by someone who is paid for the effort.

Having proposed a paid worker for the BSFA I must add that the suggestion is one for the future; the prospect of the way in which the idea would be implemented by the present committee is enough to horrify anybody. Even worse is the thought that one of these people might fancy the job for himself.

For these reasons alone, I'm not over-keen on the idea of the BSFA discarding Limited Company Status. The nuances of the position are outweighed by the safeguards: there's a definite dividing line between personal and BSFA finances, and the affairs of the BSFA are subject to at least some slight outside scrutiny. Without even these minimal checks, heaven knows what sort of a mess we'd be in by now.

((Seeing as how you obviously wouldn't trust us to organise professional help ourselves, have you thought of the cost, of the salary, qualifications necessary, amount of time such a job would take up etc.??))

DAVID LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Ave., Reading BERKS.

I wouldn't comment on D. West's recent pointed criticisms of the BSFA, but such indifference may give a false impression of members' thoughts. Or this member's thoughts. I hope no-one would be so complacent as to take silence for total support of the BSFA committee; it's more likely to indicate support for D. West, his comments being so strongly phrased that those who disagree are virtually bound to reply. Those who agree may think their case has already been put, almost too forcibly!

It's so easy for an argument like this to become cluttered with irrelevancies. D. West has made some good points which require response. It's irrelevant that he only rejoined the BSFA recently; it's irrelevant that

the committee has (and always has had) the myriad problems of an unpaid body. The central question is: how did Chris Fowler contrive to spend so much? From recent MATRIXes it seems that he was being made a scapegoat even as he departed, with genial Phil Stephensen-Payne and Dave Wingrove putting in the boot with vast enthusiasm. All our problems are the fault of Fowler, the decadent reactionary Gang of One. Now I met him many times and appreciate the problem: here, one felt, was a man who if his management of VECTOR was criticised by the committee might just have a tantrum and walk out, leaving no-one to edit our principal organ. But personal friction cannot be accepted as an excuse for lack of financial control. Who was keeping the records from which BSFA accounts must actually be produced? The Skycon committee may all have been good friends, but from the beginning we were careful to keep accurate records of income and expenditure so that Kevin Smith (our Treasurer) always knew how much we'd spent and what we'd spent it on. All cheques had to be signed by two committee members and entered in Kevin's ledger. And this was the administration of a single amateur SF convention, with no legal requirements to keep accounts and only an unwritten obligation to publish them. A limited Company like the BSFA must prepare full accounts (and must present them at its AGM, incidentally); it must therefore keep full records. Naturally I assumed all was well, and like many others didn't study the Minutes until D. published his analysis thereof. The shocking point is this "impossibility" of breaking down expenditure. I still find it hard to believe.

The very real issues raised should not be lost in a spate of reaction to D's somewhat overstated polemic (which, mind you, is highly entertaining for anyone not on the receiving end). It's true that being involved with fanzines outside the BSFA can give one a poor opinion of BSFA zine production. The problems of MATRIX are relatively few and could readily be solved by tighter editing (especially of the letter column) and closer attention to layout, spelling and typing. I begin to suspect that VECTOR, as the "showcase" publication, needs litho production - it should appear less frequently if the costs are too high. A good, meaty, litho-printed VECTOR every four months (with MATRIX bimonthly) could be both impressive and economical. I'd recommend that the BSFA bought its own electric typewriter, by the way: an IBM Executive as used for MAYA would be a worthwhile investment at around £100 - £150 (in the last Exchange & Mart I looked at). Indeed MAYA's impeccable layout and production puts to shame even the glossiest Fowler VECTORs: there's something to aim for! That leaves TANGENT, supported by so few members that I honestly don't think the rest should subsidise it, and PAPERBACK PARLOUR, a useful enough service with which I have no quarrel - though I could do without long reviews of reprints. The business of BSFA committee members sending out their own zines with mailings is surely a storm in a teacup; men of such integrity will obviously check whether

the inclusion takes the mailing over a weight-step and if so, will pay the difference themselves. Undoubtedly their consciences force them in any case to donate to the BSFA 50% of the postage they save.

(By the way, it does occur to me that BSFA material is produced by the praiseworthy Keith Freeman upon "quality" duplicator paper weighing 85gsm; the use of 70gsm paper would save nearly a gram per page per mailing. 50g or 60g less could drop the whole thing to a lower weight step... Of course I know that the 85 gsm paper is devoutly and cheaply obtained, and maybe the 70gsm stuff would even cost more: still, it's worth consideration)

Thus, at garbled length, some of my own feelings. The debate which must follow D's attack promises to be a fascinating highlight of MATRIX, but I trust that it won't involve too much fruitless abuse (In the States such fanzine controversy has led to libel suits, but "that can't happen here".) The BSFA is a worthwhile ideal which keeps running into problems, seemingly because too few people take a professional attitude to the job of running it. If frivolous, dilettante, fly-by-night fans can run conventions on strictly business-like grounds without forfeiting amateur status, can the stern idealists of the BSFA not do still better with their internal affairs? Perhaps we needed D. to take a fresh look at the old system (which I for one had grown used to) from the perspective of his absence from the BSFA, and stir us up a bit. If his attitude is too idealistic, expecting too much of the committee, then perhaps we should elect him onto the Council next AGM and let him supply all this missing drive and energy. Put up or shut up, as they say.

ALISON HUTTON, 23 Nowell Road, Rose Hill, Oxford OX4 4TA

Interesting "Jackson's Island", re presentation of "faction" - it's a common failing of publishers and producers to think of their audience as either 1) intelligent enough to recognise fiction, or 2) too stupid to matter. Most of them are unlikely to conceive of the paranoia that can arise from blank uncertainty.

I was glad to see from Steve Howkins' letter that he too feels that there is much to be said for combining MATRIX & VECTOR. I think a combined publication could be a very well-balanced mixture of members' contributions, interviews and articles. Retain letters, newshounds, & Round the Clubs from MATRIX; from VECTOR - critical articles and fictional contributions. Alternatively, you could make M much more different from V by developing it as a forum for discussion (an already noticeable trend, viz. the increasing letter column) & resist the temptation to include interviews & obscure competitions. (Or competitions and obscure interviews)

James T. Parker: yes, I agree with your opinions on the role and potential of SF, but you are putting on it some of those very limitations which you reject in principle in the "literary prison" paragraph. SF should explore all attitudes and prejudices, including your own. I think you have mistaken its aims and exaggerated its effects. Of course, it makes assumptions about good and evil which may not coincide with your own opinions, but to call it immoral without defining morality is to make

a very subjective evaluation, & to call it "jingoist-sabre-rattling tripe" is simply excessive. I note that you make no comment on CLOSE ENCOUNTERS - I'd be interested to know what you made of that. I liked the special effects & found the last 45 minutes especially tense & well-produced. Clever use of music. Thought the middle of the film a drag, except for the interesting parallel with the onset of paranoid schizophrenia.

Dave Cobbledick has successfully invalidated any comments he may make upon anything which may involve a difference between the sexes by his amazing capacity for stereotyping:- "Boys like adventure, war etc and all of them are, to a degree, violent by nature... girls like soppy romances and love stories." Good grief!

Thought-provoking letter from Don West: I feel the Committee should reply to his challenges. To hold and attract larger membership, I am sure that the quality of production must be improved - this includes printing, proof-reading, & endurance, (to staple or not to staple.) Improvement may, indeed, be necessary to hold present membership.

Incidentally, will anyone but me admit to enjoying Heinlein? ((Well, you're in agreement with Dave Cobbledick there!))

BILL LITTLE, 183 John St., Biddulph, Stoke on Trent.

You raised some interesting points in Jackson's Island about the hoax programme ALTERNATIVE 3.

What really scares me to death is the fact that I too could be taken in, not by this subject, but by similar propaganda about some other topic about which I am not so well informed. If "weekend World, This Week or World in Action were to present a case to me that all was now well in, say, Chile, and that all human rights had been restored, and that the democratic process was back in operation, then I'd probably believe them, thus remaining blind to the mass torturings and atrocities that are still going on. That sickens me: the fact that I could be manipulated to that extent and yet remain ignorant of it.

Another example occurs as I write. The debate about the validity or otherwise of the National Front's stand on race engendered a lot of comment in the press. The Daily Mail, famous for factual investigative journalism like the Leyland slush-fund affair, did a series revealing the "true facts about immigration". They featured an article about a man who was raised in some part of London, then moved away, and who had come back to view the changes. He was reported as saying that the changes were all for the worse and that the natural charm and camaraderie of his birthplace had been destroyed by dirty, violent, antisocial immigrants. A sobering thought, at least it is until one of the London Evening papers investigated this story and found that the guy who had been interviewed had never, ever lived in that part of London. Could it have been that there never was such a person and that the story had been concocted by a staff reporter following editorial directive?

FINAL SAY ... Additions and lastminute items.

Another EVENT:

EASTERCON (13 - 16 April 1979.) The Dragonara Hotel, Leeds. Contact Alan Dorey, c/o 20 Hermitage Woods Crescent, St Johns, Woking, Surrey GU21 1UE.

The TEACHING SF SOCIETY formed by a group of SF readers & teachers who intend to actively use SF in the classroom. Membership costs £1 per year plus ACTIVITY. Secretary: Keith Walker, 2 Daisy Bank Rd. Lancaster, Lancs.

There is a possibility that the BBC may be making a miniseries out of Bob Tucker's YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN.

Mark (Luke Skywalker) Hamill's new role is in CORVETTE SUMMER, "a romantic comedy about a high school student a girl and a car.

Hospitals in the USA are facing a shortage of organs for transplants and believe the hit horror movie COMA (in which doctors murder healthy young hospital patients to sell their organs on the black market) may be to blame.

Isaac Asimov has called for more saving of energy on a voluntary basis before rationing becomes necessary.

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BSFA SERVICES....

Information Service: Dr Roger Gilbert, Dept. of Genetics University College of Swansea, Singleton Park, Swansea
For that question you can't answer.

Magazine Chain: Keith Freeman, 269 Wykemah Rd., BERKS,

The Orbiter: (A postal writers' workshop) Reg Pile, 66 Trenoweth Estate, North Country, Redruth, Cornwall.

Distribution & Duplication (if you are thinking of producing your own fanzine) Contact Keith Freeman, address above, for details.

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Partly news/partly lettercol overflow: Peter Pinto, 42 Breakspear Rd, London se4 1UL writes:-

For those in the Lancaster area, Lancaster Community project 78A Penny St. Lancaster (0524 63021) has a fully working roneo and sell wax stencils, carbon stencils & duplicating paper at reasonable prices. SINGLE STEP BOOKSHOP in the same warehouse now needs a new SF person. They're not ordering or re-ordering any SF, and haven't for 3 months, since I left. Can be fun to work with: the group running the shop owns & controls it! I work (part time) for Hamlyn as SF person. First 2 of my advice are THE MAKE HIFT RACKET (Paul Anderson) and FURY (Henry Kuttner) I know *blush* FURY has been around before but they listened to the publishers & agents. We'll be doing a lot more Kuttner.