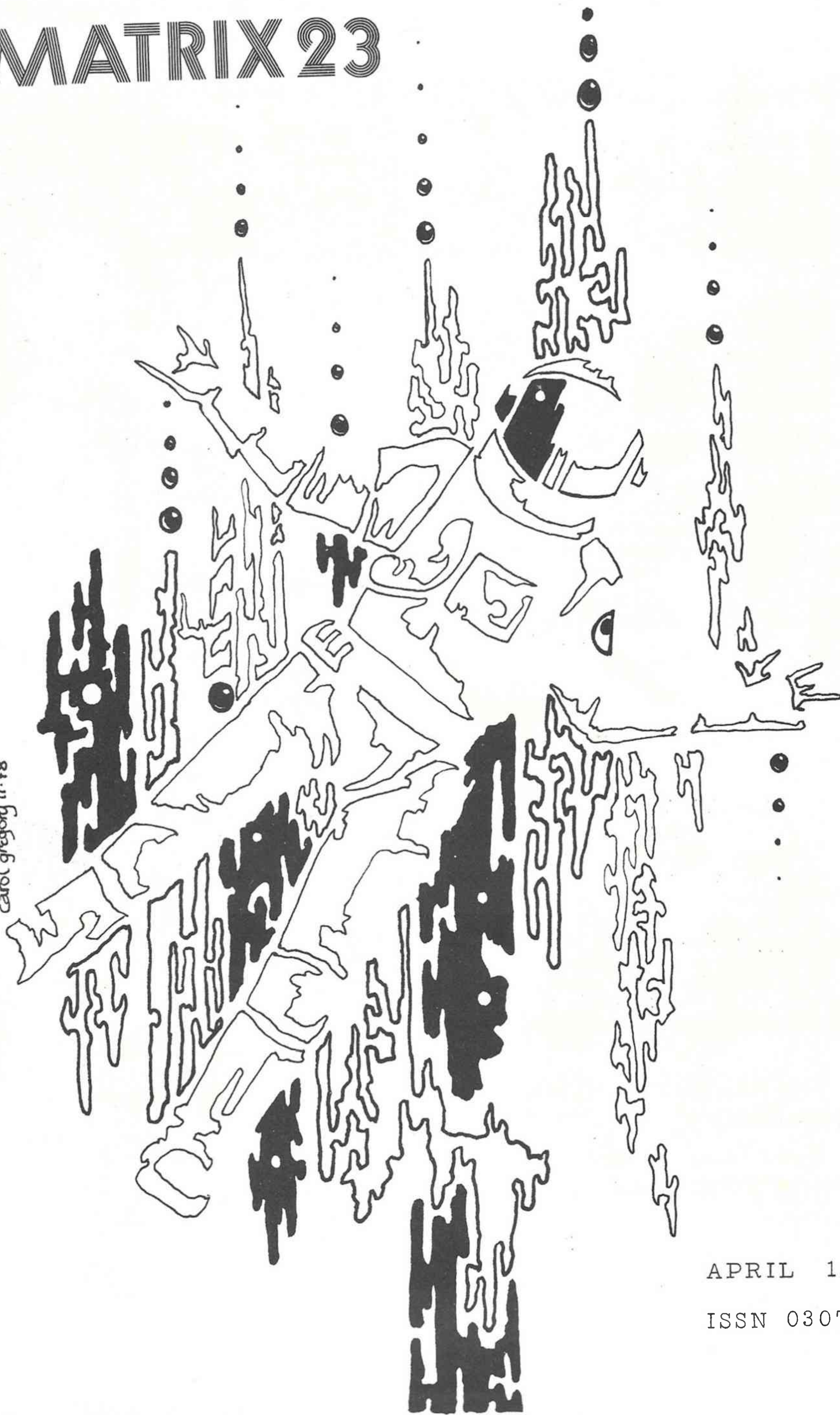


MATRIX 23

Carol Gregory 11.78



APRIL 1979

ISSN 0307 3335

MATRIX 23

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION - APRIL 1979

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EDITORIAL

One of the many problems of editing a bi-monthly zine such as Matrix, is thinking up ideas for the editorial. The simple way out would be to comment on the contents of the issue. Unfortunately I've taken to introducing each item as it appears, a format I personally prefer, which eliminates that easy solution. So let's talk about Matrix in general this time.

When Eve and I took over Matrix, one of my main concerns was how on earth to find enough material for 6 fanzines per year. Ironically, we found the situation reversed and space limitations give us more trouble these days. The standard size for Matrix is 32 pages and so far we haven't managed to stick to that limit. It's quite easy to see why that micro-elite typeface was so popular with previous editors, but I still feel the present one has distinct advantages in appearance and readability.

The last issue's mailbag was guillotined rather drastically in favour of 'The Captive', but this was a one-off situation. As a first introduction, we felt it necessary to print all five sides to set the scene but, as you see from this issue, the regular length will be one or two sides. So all of you who were frightened that we'd gone beserk with our pruning secateurs, can breathe a sigh of relief; it won't happen again, promise. This time it's the internal illos that have suffered!

This issue of Matrix has sneaked up on us rather quickly - it doesn't seem long since we were madly putting the last one together. It's an even shorter gap for the members since the last mailing was delayed, and that, together with problems in the London postal system, has led to a somewhat smaller letterbag this time. I can only hope that we can beat the response record with this issue.

With only a few days to Yorcon and the BSFA's AGM, it looks as though there are going to be some changes in the Council before the next issue is out; so in M24 will be a 'meet the new faces' plus Yorcon dissection edition!

Thank you to everybody who has sent in contributions - I'm sorry we've not used many so far but it's that space limit again. If there's enough room, I'm hoping to start a Review section in M24 and some of them will certainly appear in that. You'll see that in this issue the 'Comment' column is conspicuous by its absence, mainly because of apathy. Let's have a bit of controversy from somebody, eh!

From Paperback Parlour, you should have noticed that we are going to require a new editor for that publication if it is to continue. Any volunteers?

Well, that's all for now, till the next issue, bye.

John Harvey

So you've read M22 and followed Christopher Priest's advice to the letter. You've covered walls with rejection slips and then, one day, an acceptance cheque falls through the letter box. At last you've broken into print and the day you become a full-time author is just around the corner (well, possibly the one after). What's life going to be like? Sack-loads of fan-mail every day? Book signing sessions? Publishers clamouring for every word? Bob Shaw has been writing SF for some years now, perhaps he can enlighten us?

PRO LAPSE

The bedside alarm starts bleeping at 6.50 a.m. I waken and stare at it in disbelief. Surely to God it can't be morning already! I struggle out of bed, go to the window and part the curtains, half-expecting to find that the earliness of the hour has caught the sceneshifters unawares and that the Thursday morning world isn't ready yet. But no - it's all there, fully assembled, ready for another day's use. I turn away from the window, shivering, suddenly aware of how warm and snug the bed seems. What harm would it do if I got back in for ten minutes? Would it spoil some vast eternal plan if I were a rested man? Probably not, but if I get in I'll oversleep and that means that my son - who sees himself as a fully emancipated and independent adult, but who can't waken himself up in the morning or make a pot of tea - will be late for work. I go up to the top floor and give him a call, for which he fails to show proper gratitude, then make my way via the bedroom and toilet to the kitchen, where I switch on the radio and make tea and toast. Terry Wogan is in full throat, making a fortune out of being Irish. I repress a pang of baffled resentment, and wonder what the French think of Sacha Distel. I chew up a gin seng tablet, hardly noticing its grassy taste, drink some tea and help my son get out to work. By then I'm wide awake and committed to seeing the day through, so I look at the morning paper. The news is more depressing than usual and I wish I could be like some of my friends who never bother with it. How can I be a writer, though, if I don't remind myself every day of the idiosyncracies of my fellow humans? How can I write about the 21st century if I don't keep up with the 20th? The paper informs me that somebody wants to start a union for the unemployed, and my imagination is briefly captured. What will this union do when it wants to cause trouble? Will they declare a work? Will they seek out some building project that has been abandoned, barricade themselves in there and work on it until somebody hollers for mercy? I turn to the book review pages and glance over them to see if this is one of those rare weeks when six SF novels are reviewed in half the space that is normally devoted to the latest biography of some 1920s politician. It isn't. There's the usual "Crime Ration" or some such - people who enjoy reading about murder taking their rightful precedence over people who would rather read about the future of the human race. Perhaps it's just as well there are no SF reviews - there's nothing like a dismissive review of your latest book to curdle the creative flux for the rest of the day. It's now around eight o'clock and with any luck the post will have arrived, unless this is one of those awful days when there isn't going to be any and I'll have to waste hours hanging around the front windows, peering out every time a gate squeaks. Happily, there's a reassuring bunch of envelopes in the hall and I carry them back into the kitchen and pour out another cup of tea. Top of the heap is a bank statement, which I immediately tear up, unopened, and dispose of in the waste bin. This has to be done quickly in case Sadie comes down. She opens bank statements and actually looks at them. First thing in the morning! I don't know how she does it, but women are tougher

than men in some ways. Next is a letter with a typeface and postmark that I don't recognise. I open it and find it's from a reader who has gone to the trouble of getting my address from the publisher and writing me a letter to point out that on page 87 of one of my novels I have referred to chlorate instead of chloride. Why do they do it? Why do people go to the trouble and expense of pointing out minor mistakes? During my time in newspaper work I wrote thousands of completely accurate news items and articles, and only once was somebody moved to write to the editor and comment on the accuracy. The few occasions when I fluffed something, though, brought in heaps of letters pointing out my mistakes. What gets into people? The other night I was watching DANGER UXB on television and they made a mistake I have seen in other plays set in the 1940s by showing a close-up of somebody using a box of Swan vestas, and it was clearly seen that the swan on the box was facing inwards. Anybody who knows anything about match boxes will tell you that the swan on Swan Vestas faced outwards till about 1960, but did I get on the phone and point out the glaring error? Did I write letters to the TV TIMES about it? Not on your nelly! I've got other things to do with my time. Also in the post are two fanzines, but I don't risk starting to read them, because if I do I'll be an hour or so late starting work. I put the fanzines aside for perusal in the evening, and go upstairs to my office. The first job is to turn on the radio and adjust the volume so that I can hear the music while I'm working, and at the same time not be distracted by the inane words between the records. This reminds me that we in Britain have been conned for years by various writers in the general press and the RADIO TIMES into believing that our radio service is far superior to that of any other country. But when I was over in the States in October and driving around Florida with Dave Kyle I found there were radio stations which played nice music continuously, without commercials, without chatter between the records, and which would have been ideal for keeping me company when I'm working. On Radio 2 I've to put up with Jimmy Young telling me how to make tripe meringues and things like that, and various people phoning him up to say the country is doomed unless people buckle down and do some work. These people must be the same ones who write to newspapers and point out minor errors. How can anybody who is crazy enough to spend time and money in telephoning Jimmy Young criticise anybody else for being unproductive? I put that imponderable aside and sit down at the desk, psyching myself up to write that vital 1,000 words which pays the mortgage. The first thing I see is the Hugo voting form sent to me as a member of Season, and which has been sitting there for days. Once again I scan the rules, hoping to find some guidance about whether one is allowed to vote for one's own work, but there is nothing there. Does that mean it's so obvious that every writer will vote for himself that it wasn't even worth mentioning in the rules, or does it mean that the very idea is so underhand and despicable that they wouldn't insult voters by telling them not to do it? Obviously the matter needs serious thought, so I set the form down again and, to get myself into the current book, I read over what I wrote yesterday. Almost at once I see a snag in the plot, one which can't be let go in case it sends the chlorate/chloride man into a frenzy of letter writing, one which has to be fixed. The snag is that I have equipped the villain with a pocket-sized teleporter, so there's nothing to stop him evading the trap the hero has set for him on page 184. What will I do? I know! The teleporter's batteries automatically recharge themselves one day a week, which means the machine doesn't work on Tuesdays, and it so happens that the trap was sprung on a Tuesday. Aw, Christ, who's going to swallow a thing like that? Besides, I'm not sure if it is Tuesday in the story. One of the hardest things in writing a novel is keeping track of internal time. If I don't read right back through the whole manuscript I could build in a discrepancy and old chlorate/chloride will come down on me like a ton of cliches. Like Popeye grabbing a tin of spinach, I reach for my pipe, fill it with Old Gowrie, light up and contemplate the problem again through a

wreath of aromatic smoke. All at once the problem is no more! It's amazing what Old Gowrie can do for me - it's well worth sending up to Perth for a new can of it every month. All I have to do is go back six pages and have the villain leave the teleporter in the pocket of his other suit. I fix that up, but the whiff of danger has had an adverse effect on my nerves and I begin to make lots of typing errors. This is something I hate because I have a compulsion concerning those little rectangles of Tippex correcting paper. I squander money left, right and centre on things like whisky and pictorial histories of SF, but when it comes to bits of Tippex - which probably cost about a penny each - I go to endless pains to make each piece last for months and months, using them until they only have about three molecules of white paint left, fitting hundreds of corrections in beside each other, sometimes getting so carried away by the intricacy of the task that my fingers get in the way and I type corrections on my thumb. Gradually, however, all the petty distractions fade away and I'm actually writing. I can't really describe that process. You've created this imaginary universe, and it's all there in a kind of inner space of the mind, and you're charged with the awesome responsibility of controlling that other continuum's fourth dimension - time. That's the big difference between the imaginary universe and the real one. The three spatial dimensions are similar in both cases, but in the imaginary universe time is different. The past is all those pages of manuscript you have already produced; the present is the word you are writing; and the future is a shimmering infinity of possible word combinations. You have to advance into that future a word at a time, guided by instinct and a few meagre rules, and every word you pick has to be the right word. It's the greatest game there is, and not one for dilettantes. A few hours of it can give you a sore brain. I get my 1,000 words done and am still numb from the nervous shock of having worked when the phone rings and a lady from the Townswomen's Guild comes on to confirm that I'll be giving a talk about science fiction that evening. She asks hesitantly about my fee and I tell her I don't expect one. Greatly relieved, she rings off. This is one of the sad geographic facts about living in the Lake District. Giving a talk to a science fiction group in the more populous parts of the country wipes out two days of my production time. I can no longer afford to lose two-day chunks of working time, so I have to ask for a fee of £25 a day plus expenses to make up for loss of earnings, and no SF club can afford to pay such a preposterous amount, and so I don't do talks to SF clubs any more. The trouble is that I like going along to fan meetings and nattering over a pint or two. I set the phone down and think wistfully about the time when my youngest offspring completes school here and we'll be free to move down the country a bit and get into the fannish mainstream again. That inspires me to think about writing something for a fanzine and, as there is a little time left before dinner, I try to find a suitable topic. What was that last idea I had? Oh, yes! In the back of the Automobile Association's handbook there's a page showing all the new road signs. With the worldcon coming up in Brighton this summer, how about doing a page of road signs for the benefit of visiting fans, but - chortle! chortle! - every sign will have a science fictional or fannish interpretation. Can't go wrong here - the idea is a natural. I dash over and take the handbook out of the bookcase and turn to the relevant page, already sniggering in anticipation of the funnies my mind is going to reel off. I stare at the signs for a few minutes, and nothing happens. Can't think of a thing. That silhouette of children waiting to cross the road - Trekkies Convention? Not very good. Maybe the whole thing was a rotten idea in the first place. I decide to do some professional market research, which in my case means going into the bedroom, lying down and reading an SF novel. I try that out, but within ten minutes I'm fast asleep and dreaming I'm writing an article for Matrix about a day in the life of a science fiction author. Shows you how crazy dreams can be. I've got other things to do with my time...

NEWS

BSFA FILE

AGM

Somehow with our bi-monthly publishing schedule the AGM at Eastercon always seems to come at an awkward time. This year it means a short interval between the February and April mailing which means the editors have to rush things. We always try to get a mailing out just before Eastercon so that we can distribute part of it at the convention thus saving the Association some money on postage.

Resignations

1. Following the committee's letter to Ian Garbutt, printed last issue, he has resigned as editor of Tangent and from the Council of the Association. Ian indicated that he had one issue of Tangent almost complete and requested that the committee distribute that with the April mailing; after some deliberation the committee agreed to do this. Ian Garbutt also said he wished to reply to the letter and would produce something for this issue of Matrix; to date neither that reply, nor Tangent, have been received but they will be included if they arrive in time.
2. Bill Little, the Club Liaison Officer, has reluctantly had to resign, to quote from his letter, "... I'm very, very, active in my trade union and since I became Branch Secretary the duties are really beginning to dominate my life and, regrettably, I've come to the conclusion that I'm going to have to resign as Club Liaison Officer. I will continue to do the column/answer/queries/etc until you can find a replacement but, really, I can't do both CLO and union duties." Having until only recently served on my own union's Branch Council, I know the work involved and can understand Bill's problem. The BSFA had been accused of ignoring local clubs and thus sought to rectify that by appointing a CLO - Bill Little. Starting from nothing, Bill built up a host of contacts with local clubs and regularly produced the "round the Clubs" section in Matrix. We must continue to improve from the good start Bill has given us and I trust the next committee will be able to find a replacement as quickly as possible following the AGM.
3. The final resignation comes from Dave Cobbledick. Dave has been doing the membership secretary job for some time now. This job requires a lot of work, especially with the influx of members we had last year (it was bad enough when I did it with a much smaller membership). It requires a methodical approach, a willingness to write lots of letters and give lots of time. Dave did all this. Dave's reasons for leaving are three-fold: (a) a decision to join a rock band and the consequent necessity for regular practice sessions; (b) an interest in trade union matters including participating in several courses, some of which are postal and thus require time and attention; (c) a desire to use what limited free time is left for correspondence and Dave's own fanzine, Tiofart. The membership secretary job receives little acclaim (unless you make a mistake, when the armchair critics, of course,

descend on you) so let me just say, "Thanks, Dave, for all the time and effort you've put in."

Nominations

As at 1st April 1979, the following people have been nominated for the Council and have expressed, in writing, their agreement to stand.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Seconded</u>
Malcolm Edwards	Tom Jones	Dave Wingrove
Joseph Nicholas	Kevin Smith	Alan Dorey
David Langford	Kevin Smith	Alan Dorey
Alex (Sandy) Brown	Tom Jones	Dave Cobbledick

Sandy Brown has expressed an interest in taking over the job of Membership Secretary.

We have also received two offers to edit Tangent; one is from Paul Kincaid, the other from Rob Holdstock & Chris Evans who wish to jointly edit the magazine. If Council accept one of these offers, having talked to all three, at the Eastercon Council Meeting, they will be nominated by Council for Council Member posts (all editors of magazines have to be Council members).

Should all nominations be eligible then a vote will be required and ballot papers will be provided at the AGM.

Volunteers

Let me say a quick thank-you to those who answered my request for volunteers in the last Matrix, help is always appreciated.

Last Word

This is the last time I shall write this column, so I feel I'm entitled to a last little say. This wasn't a post I sought, in all honesty I was hoping to have a go at editing Vector after serving my apprenticeship with Matrix but with Dave Kyle going and there being no successor arranged, I got stuck with it. At times it's not been easy, perhaps I'm too willing to believe the best of people; every committee member I've served with has believed he/she has been doing the best for the Association, even if the rest of the committee don't believe this is so, as a consequence it has fallen to me to "play the heavy", it is not a role I enjoyed but it had to be done.

I do not wish to catalogue bad decisions and good decisions - armchair critics are quick to point out the former and the present buoyant state of the Association speaks for the latter. Let me simply say that I enjoyed it, and I'm particularly thankful for the opportunity it gave me to meet people I might not otherwise have met, some of whom eventually became my friends - that is ample payment.

Tom A Jones

MEDIA NEWS

The Trieste International Festival of Science Fiction Films, now in its 17th year, will take place from July 7 to 14.

Kilgor Trout fans (I think there may just be some in the Glasgow area) might be interested to know that 'Venus on the Half Shell' has been acquired by Italian producer Fulvio Lucisano. He intends to produce a "comedy sci-fi yarn" with an American actor.

The Backyard Space Ship still lives! A new adventure pilot film, produced by ABC, called "Salvage" features a junk man who builds his own space craft. The object is to zoom off to the moon to retrieve hardware left by NASA. No, it's not a comedy, it's supposed to be taken seriously!

A Stage version of "Charly" (Daniel Keyes's Flowers for Algernon) is reported to be appearing in New York. I've even heard that it's a musical! I wonder who plays the mouse?

Frank Herbert has recently scooped what is perhaps the largest financial deal ever to come the way of an SF writer. Dino DeLaurentis (King Kong) has bought the movie rights to Dune for over one million dollars. In addition, Herbert will get a percentage of the gross takings and will be paid an extra fee for writing the script.

Earlier this year, the Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool (responsible for the "Illuminatus" production) presented a 19 hour play-cycle entitled 'The Warp', at the ICA. Ken Campbell strikes again!

Whilst on the subject of the SF Theatre of Liverpool, their next production will be a stage version of "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy". This will be on at the ICA Theatre, The Mall, London, from May 1-19. Tickets £1-50. Now that does sound good!

EVENTS

Faircon '79. This is Scotland's second regional sf convention. This year it's being held at Glasgow's Ingram Hotel, 20-22 July. Guest of Honour is Bob Shaw (the real one) and if it goes as well as last year's, it should be enjoyable.

Still in Scotland and the news that many of those responsible for Faircon are planning an Eastercon bid for 1980, entitled Albacon 80. The hotel for this is Glasgow's Albany Hotel. Rumours of counter bids are flying around and the bidding session at Yorcon could well be lively! If you're at the con, don't forget to turn up and use the opportunity of deciding next year's venue.

Following on with Yorcon, the Ken McIntyre Memorial Award will once again be presented at this con for a piece of fanzine artwork. The original artwork and fanzine must be submitted to the judges at or before Eastercon. More details of eligibility etc from the award administrator, Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading.

June 29th to 30th is the date for a conference entitled 'Psychology and Science Fiction', to be held at Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic. The organisers say that, "the aim of this meeting is to bring together psychologists interested in science fiction and science fiction enthusiasts interested in psychology." Contributions in the form of papers, talks and

discussion topics are welcome. (Deadline 30th April). Further details from Dr Sandy Wolfson, Psychology Division, Department of Behavioural Studies, Newcastle Polytechnic, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

From the other side of the world comes news of a New Zealand Science Fiction Convention to be held between October 20-22 1979. No further details are available at the moment, but if you start walking now you just might make it in time!

Too late, too late they cried! As we go to press, the Astronomical Society of Glasgow are celebrating their Silver Jubilee by sponsoring an 'Astronomy Week'. The highlight is an exhibition called "Amateur Astronomy Today." Sorry we couldn't let you know sooner, but at least those of you in the Glasgow area now know of the society's existence, if you didn't already. If you're interested in it, Leon Davies, 8 Arisaig Drive, Bearsden, G61 2PE, will be only too pleased to give you details.

The One Tun is not the centre of the universe! A "Northern Tun", to be known eventually as The West Riding, has now been instituted in Leeds. This grand social gathering of huge-name fans, writers, critics and editors (together with the usual hangers-on) will take place on the last Friday of each month, beginning Friday 27th April 1979. The venue is a public house called The West Riding Hotel, a few seconds walk from Leeds City Station. The pub serves hand-pulled Tetley's bitter and mild. If you live anywhere within reach of Leeds please come along for a convivial evening of chat and drinks (7pm - 10.30pm). All welcome.

BOOKS

Scream Queens (Macmillan, \$15.95 - goodness knows what that would be in sterling) by Calvin Thomas Beck is a compendium of leading ladies over the decades of horror films. Plenty of illustrations, plot resumes and bibliographies.

Due to be published in time for Worldcon next August is Peter Nicholl's mammoth The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. There will be about 2,800 entries, 672 pages and the complete work is 740,000 words long. Let's hope Matrix gets a review copy!

Michael Moorcock has just completed a 250,000-word first draft of a novel entitled Byzantium Endures. This is to be the first part of a major new tetralogy collectively titled Some Reminiscences of Mrs Cornelius Between the Wars.

Thomas M Disch's outstanding new novel, On Wings of Song, which has just completed serialization in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, will now be published by Gollancz in May 1979 (it was originally scheduled for January, but has been held up by production difficulties).

Keith Roberts has just sold a new short-story collection to Gollancz. He has also recently completed a new fantasy novel.

Brian Stableford's forthcoming study of Blish for Borgo Press will be entitled A Clash of Symbols: the Triumph of James Blish and it should be out in October 1979. David Pringle is now under contract to write a study of Clifford D Simak for the same series.

The attending author line-up for Seacon 79, the World Convention to be held in Brighton this August, looks most impressive. Famous authors who are rumoured to be attending now include Ursula Le Guin, Frederick Pohl, Alfred Bester, Theodore Sturgeon, Arthur C Clarke, Michael Moorcock, Gene Wolfe and Robert A Heinlein - in addition, of course, to Fritz Leiber, Brian Aldiss and Bob Shaw!

SCIENCE FICTION INTO FACT

Clones Amid controversy about its accuracy, an American doctor is claiming to have created the first human clone. Unfortunatley, however, he says that the clone cells were destroyed at an early stage of development.

You may have noticed a recent article in the Sunday Telegraph Magazine which gave details of a machine termed a 'Replicator'. This amazing device produces three dimensional copies of any object programmed into it. It's all done with a chemical 'soup' and the ubiquitous laser. Shades of the matter transmitter?

'Death rays' are coming! Reports appear to be coming in from all sides about death ray weapons. Not long ago BBC featured them in a Horizon programme on lasers. Now the USA Defense Department have published a report giving a glimpse of the state of the Art in America. Other weapons on the drawing board are computer controlled missiles which go where the pilot of an aircraft looks and are fired by voice command. Bang! you're dead.

The NASA Space Shuttle moves closer to becoming the first real spaceship. At present the target date for its maiden flight is November 9th 1979, but some space agency employees doubt it will take place until early next year! The astronauts for the space shuttle have been in training since last July. The 29 trainees include 6 women, at last the Americans are catching up with the USSR! Eve's now wondering what you'd call an uplift bra in zero gravity. The various shapes and sizes of astronauts has now prompted a rethink in spacesuit design. Rather than custom-made ones, they are going in for mix-and-match, pull-apart unisex suits in three different sizes. Just pick the bit that fits. Who would have thought that Matrix would have fashion reports!

Turning night into day and it's all done by mirrors. A fantastic project from American scientists plans to place huge reflectors in orbit to deflect sunlight onto the dark side of the earth. Enter the 24-hour day! It's an interesting thought but there must be as many dangers, such as adverse climatic effects, as there are advantages, for example improved crop yields.

MEDIA NOTES REVISITED

HIERO'S JOURNEY This film is in the pre-production stage but it only has a meagre budget of \$3½ million. Such a great novel obviously deserves better but with Douglas Trumbell directing you can be sure that every penny will be wisely spent. The excellence of his Silent Running, also a low budget film will testify to that. The script is to be written by Stirling Silliphant.

THE ADVENTURES OF STELLA STARR. An American International (the foreign equivalent of Hammer) film directed by Luigi Cozzi. It stars Christopher Plummer, David Hesselhof and Caroline "Lamb's Navy Rum" Munro. The plot is almost an Arabian Fantasy. An evil Count is trying to conquer the universe; to escape, the Emperor transfers his city into hyperspace where his son, the Prince, rescues Stella Starr. It sounds pretty dire but I must admit that the advance stills look very impressive. Watch out for it. It could be a good film!

Thanks to the following for supplying the information: Dave Pringle, Mary Long, Dave Cockfield, Peter Nicholls, Andy Sawyer and Greg Hills. Keep it coming!

FAN WORLD

The honour(?) of fanzine reviewer for this issue falls to the BSFAs Company Secretary, Kev Smith. Whilst not accounting and auditing, he produces a personalzine, Dot which might yet win the Nova Award. Staff at his place of employ have also been amused to occasionally receive his work fanzine, "Thicky".

BIRD CN THE WIRE

A few years ago, when I started writing for fanzines (my own and others) I decided that I would rarely do fanzine reviews: when I did, I would only review fanzines I liked. Naturally this would show bias. At that time there were plenty of knock-'em-down fanzine reviewers who hacked apart the dire and awful. None were better than Greg Pickersgill and D. West, who used the fanzine review to express their ideas of what fanzines - and fandom - should be. Their basic motive was an abhorrence of mediocrity. Any fanzine editor who showed that he had learned nothing from the variety of good fanzines available, or who fell short of rudimentary standards of literacy or intelligence was summarily stomped upon - and quite rightly. There is no excuse to repeat the mistakes of the past, and cretins shouldn't publish fanzines. Other reviewers kicked the shit out of crudzines because it was fun, and easy; but they still made valid points.

The trouble was that editors took the criticism as vindictive personal attacks, and either refused to act upon it, or dropped out of sight, which were not the intentions of the reviewers at all. They wanted improvement, which shouldn't have been too much to ask. Because editors mostly refused to learn, I took a different view of fanzine reviewing. I didn't want to waste time on crudzines; there were more satisfying ways of getting laughs.

(I need only add that all that has changed since then are the names.)

The Matrix fanzine review column is more of a publicity piece than a usual one. Most fanzine fans receive most fanzines, and can compare their opinions with the reviewers'. On the other hand, most BSFA members don't see any of the fanzines reviewed, and are thus looking to the column for recommendations. (That's the theory. Joe Nicholas' favourable review of my own fanzine DOT in Matrix 22 brought just one request for it.) But having said all this, I have to confess to breaking my policy, and starting with a fanzine I didn't like at all. I do so because of the editor's involvement with the BSFA.

The fanzine is Waif 3 from Tom Jones, retiring vice-chairman. Waifs 1 and 2 consisted of a lot of short, uncredited pieces strung together and posted out. They were unconventional, as Tom meant them to be. Also incomprehensible. No. 3 is more conventional, and Tom actually gets round to explaining the first two: "Waif was meant to. . . consist of short, but interesting pieces. . ." Well, Tom, one out of two ain't bad: they were short, all right.

No. 3 is a better issue, in that Tom not only has an end or two in mind, but also manages to convey them to the reader. After a tewwibly tewwibly tharcathtic editorial about science presenters on television, and an

interview with Joe Haldeman about how well Joe Haldeman is doing, and Oh God! not another article about editing a fanzine - this one from erstwhile Matrix compiler, Andy Sawyer - we come to something prominently headed: 'Bitch'.

That title is probably the best thing in the fanzine. It sums up the next six pages quite beautifully, and I can just imagine Tom stamping his little feet as he typed them out. The introductory blurb describes it as an occasional fanzine review section, and the occasional fanzine Tom reviews this time is Sirius 1 (from Mike Dickinson and Alan Dorey) and also, apparently, Joseph Noeholas - but I'll come to that later. Tom spends two pages kicking and spitting and one comes to the conclusion that Tom doesn't much like Alan and Mike, or J G Ballard. Then Tom gets onto the contents.

Next, still under the heading 'Bitch' (the fanzine review section, remember) Tom starts to bitch about Joseph Nicholas, who has never done a fanzine in his life. Joe has had the temerity to say in print that he doesn't like Waif or the writing of Samuel R Delany - two things of divine perfection in the eyes of Tom. Because Joseph doesn't like these things he obviously doesn't understand them, and is therefore a simpleton, says Tom. Simpleton.

Finally, magnanimous Tom allows a reader to express a contrary view on the relative merits of the films 2001 and Solaris. Tom likes 2001 and does not like Solaris, and cleverly destroys his opponent's argument as follows:

"2001 is a true epic, an attempt to examine the eternal question 'just what the hell are we doing here'/'where are we going'. On the other hand, Solaris was a first contact story with an intelligent ocean causing hallucinations amongst the humans."

Good on yer, Tom! And Perry Rhodan is an attempt to examine the eternal question of good and evil, whereas The Left Hand of Darkness was a first contact story about people who can be both male and female. Right?

This is the most obvious example of Tom's great talent for selective interpretation. Anyone who can pull the ontological question out of 2001 (particularly when it was answered - if that's quite the right word - in such a trite and banal fashion) and then fail to see past the surface storyline in Solaris is doing it deliberately, because his argument will collapse if he doesn't. He uses the same technique elsewhere in Waif. Tom is also a dab hand at imputing motives to people so that they appear to be great fools, and thus easier targets. In this Tom shows scant regard for logic or fairness - just for winning.

Of course, Tom himself says that everything in 'Bitch' is 100% subjective, so that makes it all all right. Well, no; actually it doesn't.

Let's get onto some good stuff before I'm accused of usurping the title currently held by either Alan Dorey or Joseph Nicholas of 'shit-kickingest fanzine reviewer of them all'.

Seamonsters 3 from Simone Walsh is good stuff. Not brilliant, not inspiring, not the last word in fanzines, but good. Chris Priest writes on how he was asked to write a Doctor Who script. His best idea:

"The Doctor gets trapped in a blast-furnace, and K9 goes in to rescue him. The Doctor escapes, but K9 doesn't, and gets melted down."

Oh, nice, says I. Oh no! said the BBC. K9, apparently, gets more fan-mail

than the Doctor. I wonder how much of it is signed Spot, or Rover.

The other guest article is from D West - a con report of Novacon 8. Typically, it is very well written and highly entertaining, as was the Priest piece. Both, though, are closed-ended. You read them and say to yourself, "Good!" and that's it. Nothing in either one stimulates you to put pen to paper and write to the editor.

Provocation, such as it is, comes in the editor's own piece. Simone wants to know why fans, particularly fat, American fans, go skinny-dipping - something that horrifies her - and whether American women fans are really much more predatory than their British counterparts. While they might generate some amusing, and amused, correspondence (and some deadly serious letters from America, if this issue's letter column is anything to judge by) they are hardly issues to set the world - or even fandom - alight.

When Seamonsters 1 came out, it was wondered aloud whether it could become the much wanted 'focal point British fanzine'. So far it hasn't. You won't find much better fan writing than the West and Priest articles here; both are at least the equal of Bernard Levin in facetious mood. But no-one writes to the Times when Levin goes on about Wagner again; they wait till he tackles Russian dissidents, repression in Cambodia, or South African banning orders. To become the 'focal point fanzine', Seamonsters needs the vital spark of guest articles that provoke as much or more than the editorials. Then Simone's rather plaintive command to write to her would become unnecessary.

John Collick describes his new fanzine 101 as a means of keeping in touch without too much grind whilst his A-levels come and go. Yes, he really is that young, but despite this he has already produced five issues of Procyon so he isn't exactly a newcomer to the fanzine field. In a number of ways 101 shows this. It's well written and well produced, for a start.

Mostly it is a personalzine, with John writing about this and that: Novacon 8, a party in Leeds and university interviews all get a mention. (He also wants to know what 'mulligrubs' are, but I'm not going to tell him.) His big piece for the issue is about fandom and the barriers some people claim to meet when trying to join. He presents some good arguments why these barriers seem to exist and rightly puts a lot of the onus for breaking through on the neofan who wants to, rather than on fandom. He hasn't got it quite right - his insistence on 'Fandom with a capital 'F' as a single entity is wrong, for example - but there's a lot of sense in what he says, and some good advice for vanishing the barriers as if they had never been, which they hadn't.

John does let in a guest writer this time - the ubiquitous Alan Dorey. Alan follows up John's piece on fandom with a vivid description of various types who fail to get into fandom and are too crass to realise why. It is written in his usual subtle-as-a-ton-of-bricks style, with a cast of expletives, insults, rhetorical questions and exclamation marks. Jolly good fun, and all that, but after five issues of Gross Encounters and seemingly dozens of guest articles it does become just the teensiest bit overpowering. The pace is breathless and unvarying; cheap insult is substituted for wit in the search for laughs; and the tone is hostile throughout. Understandably so: Alan is right in what he says, and his victims do deserve it, but I wish he'd try a different way of saying it now and again. His output is ridiculously high, and it shows in slackness all too often. Must try harder.

For 35p in new stamps you can become the owner of a remarkable publication

from Dave Bridges, who is known for his rather good fanzine One-Off. This is called A Ragged Trousered Pedalcyclist and relates the saga of Dave's bicycle trip from his home in Sheffield to London. It may not seem the greatest subject for the world's first bicycle fanzine, but under Dave's careful guidance it yields a lot more than most fanzines. He has a sure, rather delicate style, writing about himself and his friends without playing hard for laughs in the manner of a Langford. But the smiles and chuckles come anyway, from Dave's way of looking at things, and writing them down.

A feature of One-Off has always been the effort Dave puts into the presentation; I fondly remember a gift-wrapped Christmas issue, complete with tinsel. This is maintained in A Ragged Trousered Pedalcyclist. It looks like a thin paperback book, with a squared-off spine, good printed cover, clean duplication and - amazingly - a fold-out map of his route glued to the inside back cover. When it is folded out you can look at the map whilst reading the book.

Send him the 35p and hope he has a few copies left.

There you have it - three of the better fan publications of recent days, and one awful one. I have no doubt that the review of Waif will do anything but reinforce the prejudices of Mr Jones. However, I hope some of you will take a look at the others. All it takes is a polite letter, and maybe a 9p stamp. (Pedalcyclist is a bit special) I suppose the addresses would be useful.

Waif Tom Jones, 39 Ripplesmere, Bracknell, Berks RG12 3QA
Seamonsters Simone Walsh, 7a Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W5
101 John Collick, 'The Goosewell Gallery', Westbourne Drive, Menston, Ilkley, Yorkshire
A Ragged Trousered Pedalcyclist David Bridges, 130 Valley Road, Meersbrook, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S8 9QA

Anything after this is nothing to do with me, boss.

Kevin Smith

FANZINE ROUNDUP

TANJENT 6 & 7, Greg Hills, 22a Polson St, Wanganui, New Zealand.
This is the "Oracle of the Science Fiction Fan Confederation" (confed). It's roughly equivalent to Matrix containing letters, fanzine reviews/listings, articles. Tanjent 7 contains the first part of a two-part article on how to edit a fanzine - a must if you can actually read it! Available for the usual, 60p single copy (NZ p, I assume) or as a member of Confed (membership \$3.00 per year).

BLACK HOLE 16, Leeds University Union SF Soc, Leeds 2
Now under the editorship of Tony Berry and John Nixon this issue contains a Yorcon preview, plus the usual bag of contents. In my (biased) opinion, the best University zine around at the moment. Available for 35p (£1.35 per year including postage).

WHATS UP - The Scottish Space Society Magazine Nol Vol 1.
Plenty to interest space exploration addicts here, including news, book reviews, stamps in space and a NASA space index. 35p from Bob Shaw (the other one) 3/L 11 Barrington Drive, Kelvinbridge, Glasgow.

CHECKPOINT 93 and 94, Peter Roberts, 38 Oakland Drive, Dawlish, Devon.
A fannish newszine, published irregularly but always something of interest in it. These two issues contain a plethora of fanzine reviews which will be useful to you fanzine fans. 50p for 5 issues.

MAFUNCTION 12, Pete E Presford, 'Ty-Gwyn', Maxwell Close, Buckley, Clwya, Nth Wales. A personal zine with fanzine reviews and letters. Available for the usual.

OCELOT 1, Graham James, 12 Fearnville Terrace, Oakwood, Leeds and Simon Ounsley, 13A Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds 6.
A genzine with a Novacon report, film critique of 'Cramped Encounters with Field Voles'! Plus lots more. A good fun zine, available for the usual, I assume.

THE WHOLE FANZINE CATALOG 3, Brian Earl Brown, 16711 Burt Rd #207, Detroit, Mich 48219, USA. It's just what the title says and provides another way of finding out about new fanzine titles. 35¢ per single copy, \$1 for 3 or trade.

NOTA 27, Terry Hughes, 4739 Washington Blvd, Arlington, Virginia 22205, USA. Many consider this the best American zine and I've seen no reason to disagree, yet. This issue has Peter Robert's Taff report part 5 & 6. Terry is one of the Taff candidates for this year - don't forget to vote, Eastercon is your last opportunity.

SKRACZES & YCZ3, R I Barycz, 16 Musgrove Road, New Cross Gate, London.
The first is a letter supplement for Richard's regular zine YCZ. Available for the usual.

CROK 6 & 7, UMIST SF & F Soc, Student Union, PO Box 88, Sackville Street, Manchester. Another university zine. I've not seen either of these 2 issues but I expect they have the usual mixed content including fiction. No 6 10p and No 7 15p or the usual.

TWLL DDU 15, Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berkshire.
Another fanzine in the inimitable Langford style. Still the best "fannish" fanzine in Britain (or the world?). All contents written by the maestro himself, except the letters, of course.

TRIPE PICKERS JOURNAL 2, Paul Kincaid, 20 Sherbourne Ro Middleton, Manchester. Paul, who is sitting behind Eve while she types this, says this zine is "brilliant, witty...", but then he always was a liar.
Written entirely by Paul, it contains several short pieces on such topics as his views on fanzines, a meeting of the Leeds SF Group and a friend at work getting drunk. Looks like there's something for everyone here!

Not many zines around at the moment - it must be the post Christmas blues. But no doubt we will return from Eastercon inundated with the little so-and-so's and these pages will be packed again.

Don't forget that Peter Roberts' Little Gem Guide to fanzines is still available from the Checkpoint address. This gives a reasonably comprehensive listing of fanzines from all over the world and is a must if you want to find out what's available.

ROUND THE CLUBS

Before we get to the article about the Cidereal SF Society, let me first apologise for missing (by a bloody mile) the deadline for the last Matrix. In mitigation, all I can say is that a number of circumstances conspired to delay me: house-hunting, and a very rapid removal to new premises at 10 Healey Avenue, Knypersley, Stoke on Trent, and, primarily, my trade union activities. Year's end/beginning is always a traditionally hectic time for trade unions what with AGMs, and pay campaigns, as well as a little canvassing for votes because I do like being a Branch Secretary.

It's for this reason that I've had to notify Tom and John and Eve that as soon as a replacement Club Liaison Officer can be found I'll have to resign. I will however keep plugging away answering your letters as they come in, or with as little delay as possible. So, just because I'm resigning, please don't stop writing.

I quite often get requests from members asking for details of local clubs or groups in their areas and quite often I have to write back saying, sorry, there aren't any. And quite often the members write back saying, "Well, how do we go about forming one?" So, in a longer than usual article, I'll put down a potted guide which has been culled from the multifarious experiences of other clubs and my couple of years as secretary of Stoke on Trent SF Society.

1. ORIGINS... Forming a club must be something most fens have thought of doing at one time or another simply to fill the vacuum in which sf readers generally tend to live. We've all had the feeling that surely! there must be other sf readers around and they must be interested in getting together.

Well, frankly, I don't think that starting a club is something that can be done on your own. You need assistance in doing the groundwork. You may know a few folk that have like interests and these people are obviously the best to help out. If you don't know anyone who likes sf, then try Keith Freeman who will give you a listing of BSFA members in your locale.

If there aren't any in your locale, and you will want to go ahead, then try posters in local bookshops, who are usually quite obliging. Having got an informal committee together, what comes next?

2. THE MEETING PLACE... A lot of clubs use rooms in pubs. This has distinct advantages; one can quench a raging thirst quite easily and the atmosphere is usually very informal. However, there are drawbacks. Hiring rooms in pubs can be quite expensive, and money is a commodity most fledgling groups are perilously short of. Also, using a pub may effectively bar any persons of the under 18-age group from taking part. As a compromise, why not try the local Worker's Educational Assoc? (WEA) They are run under the auspices of the local authority but for payment of an annual affiliation fee one can usually get a decent sized, well-heated room whenever you want one. The perks are that you can usually get access to WEA facilities such as projectors and slide-projectors, tape recorders etc.
3. THE BACKGROUND PREPARATION... You need at least an established programme of event if you are to entice visitors to your first meeting and meetings thereafter. Essentially, the initial six-monthly programme

must consist of home-grown entertainment because of sheer lack of money and know-how, but it needn't be at all bad and the usual book, author, film discussions usually help break the ice. Why not discuss "2001" (both book and film), why not ask members to discuss their TEN BEST STORIES? This always opens the New Year for us at Stoke on Trent and always goes down very well. You might well approach the local astronomical society to provide a lecturer, or the local polytech, who might have some whizz-kid expert on microprocessors? Such lecturers will usually do the engagement for petrol money and a pint afterwards at the local hostelry.

Just as an example, let me list the first six meetings SoT SF Soc had in 1977: Jan/Favourite Ten Stories; Feb/Television SF - a discussion; Mar/Film versus Book - a discussion; Apr/The Continuing Search for Life in Space - a lecture; May/2001 - a discussion of book and film; Jun/Science Fiction Art - discussion with slides... Not bad for home-grown entertainment, and what's more is that it got us a regular audience.

4. PUBLICITY FOR THE INAUGURAL MEETING... Pester the local press and radio who are usually quite obliging first time around. Send a horde of posters, well in advance of the first meeting, to the local central library who will distribute copies to their branches. Don't forget polytechnics and universities and sixth-form colleges. Above all, don't forget to state clearly the time, date and venue of the meeting.

Be prepared for the usual goons who turn up to the first meeting and ask when you're going to show Dark Star or 2001, or when you're going to publish the first issue of a two-hundred page litho-offset fanzine. Point out patiently that at the moment you just don't have the money to do that (thus preserving the wishful thinker optimism).

5. FUNDING THE GROUP... Ah money. Lovely stuff. Invaluable in getting a group together and keeping it going. It's in short supply though, so just how do you raise the capital to start Doing Things?

For a start, most people coming along will accept that there should be a basic subscription fee for joining the group. That will usually net you about £25. This will just about pay fees for premises, use of; and programmes and posters, printing of. But you still need more. Here are just a few ideas that usually work: try a paperback raffle at every meeting; you may well be able to raise thirty bob/two quid each time. What about holding some sort of annual sponsored event? We do at Stoke. We have an annual sponsored walk and we've raised up to sixty quid that way. Most lucrative of all, why not collect waste paper and sell it to merchants for recycling (you'll find them in Yellow Pages). The only drawback is that you will need storage space - but if someone has an empty garage... and for a good money-raiser why not stage a jumble sale? Believe me there are some people who are inveterate jumble-buyers.

6. THE FUTURE, or, WHAT TO DO WITH THE MONEY YOU'VE JUST RAISED... After the first year, you'll probably want to do something different and if you've stayed healthily solvent why not co-sponsor a season of sf films with the local film society. It will make a hole in your finances, but if you choose wisely, and the film society are anywhere near half-organised you will undoubtedly actually make money on the project.

There can be little doubt that most fans would love the opportunity to meet their idols in the flesh and most groups soon turn their attention

to the idea of inviting guest authors to chat to the members. We've just approached our third author and he has consented. It wouldn't be proper of me to say who they were and local groups will just have to use the trial-and-error method. Generally speaking, most guest authors quite naturally insist on their expenses being paid and the group providing a roof over their heads, either in a hotel or at a member's home. Maybe we've just struck lucky but so far no author has turned us down. I hope you have similar luck.

My thanks are due to Allen Boyd-Newton who gave me all the details of this Somerset group.

Allen founded the society in late 1977 more or less on his own by doing the usual things: posters in libraries, articles in the local press, adverts in bookshops, and by that ever-reliable method of disseminating news -word of mouth. When Allen had ten or so people interested, he booked a meeting place. He tells me that it looks like he's going to have to do the whole business all over again, what with members leaving for one reason or another. A fairly typical state of affairs for a local group. You have to constantly think of ways to attract new members.

The society is in a healthy state of affairs and even has a bank balance in the black. Allen refuses to say exactly how much in case, he says, the BSFA wants a loan.

The group meets once a month, on the first Friday, at 7.30 pm at the Brewhouse Theatre, James Street, Taunton. For a rural area possessing a high average-age, what with the area being a popular one for those who are retiring, and a high-level of unemployment, there is a reasonable membership with meetings attracting about 15 or thereabouts. For anyone in the area on hols, then Allen extends a welcome if you drop in.

The meetings are informal while Liz Nightingale, the chairperson, keeps order if things get out of hand. Members can sell paperbacks and zines through the meeting with the society taking a percentage. Membership fees finance regular issues of the society fanzine Cidereal Times. Sometimes John and Marjorie Brunner attend meetings and John has, in the past, donated some signed copies of his books which were auctioned for club funds. Other projects which the club are working on include a group-entry for the Fancy Dress at Seacon and a group story for serialisation in the society fanzine.

Allen concludes his letter to me, "I don't really know where we go from here except to keep the membership up and continue to improve the quality of the fanzine while giving the members exactly what they want.

For a local group that seems like an admirable philosophy.

Bill Little

MAILBAG

Last time I was a little over-zealous with the editing of the mailbag, judging by some of the comments received. So let's see if editing the letters before the rest of the zine helps! Here's one person, at least, who found inspiration from the lettercolumn.

DAVID LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks
Tom Jone's letter in Matrix 22 should be an inspiration to us all. Already I am composing a letter along similar lines, for Vector. You may be interested to see the first draft...

"Books. There's a touch of overkill here. It's essential that Vector deal with books, and even more essential that there be one permanent reviewer so that one can correlate one's own taste with the reviewer's. I would like to see a comprehensive listing, plus short comments, plus one reviewer doing a more detailed look at a small number of books. Whom you choose is, of course, your prerogative - but I would tend to avoid anyone who is heavily into the science-fiction set. This is because I personally view their reviews with suspicion, believing that personalities sometimes bias a review: in fact it would be impossible for this not to be the case at times. That fact that you know and like Brian Aldiss will tend to make you give him the benefit of the doubt, whereas the fact that you know and dislike Perry Rhodan ensures he doesn't get a second chance..."

A similar letter on the BSFA Poll will run along these lines:-

"The Poll. There's a touch of overkill here... I would like to have just one person answering the poll. Whom you choose is, of course, your prerogative - but I would tend to avoid anyone who knows anything about SF or fandom. I view the opinions of such people with suspicion, since this background knowledge must inevitably prejudice them..."

In later reforms, we can perhaps go further along the line you are already taking, and strip down the letter column to one representative letter writer with whom we can "correlate our tastes". I hope these suggestions will be useful.

***** How can you add anything to that?
Let's see if Tom can prompt more letters.

TOM JONES, 39 Ripplesmere, Bracknell, Berks

I feel I have to respond to your comment on my last letter.

Yes, it's biased. How could it be otherwise? I see the world from my viewpoint, with all my prejudices thrown in. If I made an attempt to do otherwise I would not be being true to myself. (Okay, I sometimes take the devil's advocate position to produce a good argument but that's just playing games). That's not the serious bit, the serious bit is your



intimation that I do not like fannish fanzines. Strangely nothing could be further from the truth, apart from Vector and SFR, I read no other "serious SF" fanzine regularly and SFR I get largely for Geis's right-wing libertarian ramblings (I often agree with his arguments until he gets to the conclusion whereupon I totally disagree with him). The other 4 fnz I look forward to reading fall into the "fannish" tradition, i.e. Matrix (well it does now you're editing it), MAYA, Twll Ddu and Dot (Kev Smith is an acquired taste but he writes an excellent pastiche of everything from Runyon to "Autocar").

From this viewpoint I know I'd have difficulty judging most fanzines which fall into the general interest category fairly.

Staying on this subject I find myself agreeing (well 90%) with Joe Nicholas's fnz reviews but eventually finding the whole thing devalued by Joe's value judgements on people, his attempt to impose "rules" and his inconsistencies. Perhaps I'd better expand on this.

- 1) Dave Wingrove got slated for producing a very serious Kipple 2 and on the other hand Dave Cobbledick gets the chop for, in Joe's eyes, not taking the production of a fanzine and bring it up to standard (Joe's standards) seriously enough.
- 2) Joe says fnz are communication and communication "must be a two-way process" thus a faned "has no option but to take into account the whims of his readers as well as his own". But Joe also says "No such constraints apply to fannish personalzines." What? All fanzines are personalzines, vanity presses, their main purpose being to produce positive strokes (to use a term from transactional analysis) for the person shelling out the cash and whether these come from producing the fnz or getting the complimentary letters is unimportant. If you insist on applying standards of criticism to a literature it applies to all facets, exceptions aren't allowed.

Even Joe backs away somewhat from his statement, "... mainly because the audience at which they're aimed is pretty much in tune with the editor anyway." But surely that is true of all fnz (of all literature, even), the audience a fnz attracts read it because they like it (plus the reviewers and masochists). Any fnz editor is bound to find souls of a like mind whether they produce a fannish personalzine or Tiofart (Joe in his destruction of Tiofart neglects to mention it gets a good readership response, mostly favourable, so it's audience is "pretty much in tune with the editor").

Joe's "rules" come to the fore in the last paragraph in which he castigates the present new generation of faneditors thus "a generation that seems to neither know nor care about what they're doing," and "to be at all worthwhile then it must be pursued in a reasonably serious manner...". I take it this means Joe is not pretty much in tune with these new editors. Joe's comments spring straight from the "critical parent" part of our character, he's saying that there's only one "right" reason/motive for producing a fnz any other reason is wasteful, wrong. This is the same reasoning Mrs Mary Whitehouse and the Spanish Inquisition used. Damn it, fanzines are fun, why do some people insist we need to go beyond that?

For my final comment on Joe I'll speak from my critical parent. Joe says of the new generation of faneditors "It's as though the actual making of a decision to produce a fanzine has so exhausted them that they have no energy left to devote to the mental and physical mechanics of carrying that decision through." Well, Joe, at least they had the energy to eventually

produce a fanzine which is something you have yet to do.

***** Well Joe Nicholas certainly provoked some response with his fanzine reviews; here are some further comments.

PETER NICHOLLS, 23 Laurier Rd, London

Joseph Nicholas is always entertaining, but I'm a bit disturbed to find that under his benign exterior there lurks the heart of a George Orwell type Big Brother. His latest feat is the perfection of a device which, when applied to the loc column of any fanzine, can instantly detect the ersatz from the real thing. Of the 14 locs in Geoff Rippington's Arena 8, it seems, only four were from "genuine fans"; clearly a very bad thing. Frankly, I'm terrified; I've been getting away being a fakefan for years now, and so far only Pete Weston has noticed. What will I do when Nicholas catches me; am I to be forced to wear a badge of shame, and shunted into the next passing cattle car? What can be the nature of his device? Can it be that he has copied the Frenchmen of the Dordogne? Has he tied D West or Greg Pickersgill to a leash and sent them snuffling and snorting round the letter columns like pigs seeking truffles, ready to disinter the delicious fungus only to find Nicholas snatching it from their very snouts? Basic to Nicholas's thesis is the view that once a fan has sold anything at all, he is no longer a fan. This news will distress Bob Shaw. Mystifyingly, though, all but one of the locs in Arena 8 are from published writers. It is up to Nicholas to tell us which three of these have passed his stringent test, and come the apocalypse, which three will find grace as members of the elect.

On another matter, it ill becomes Nicholas to savage poor Cobbledick for his "Vaccum" in the very same piece in which he, Nicholas, shows clearly that he believes "approbation" (which means approval) to be the antonym of "admiration".

Pringle's guide to British chauvinist Hugo-nominators is useful, though sadly sparse, and even then fattened out with works that are surely fantasy rather than sf. I'm a great admirer of M John Harrison, for instance, but I can't see how "The Incalling" could conceivably be called sf. It's a pity that Ballard's "Having a Wonderful Time" has only appeared in Bananas, a magazine few fans are likely to have read, because it really is a wonderfully pungent tale. Turning to novels, I do agree with Pringle that Moorcock's Gloriana uses enough sf tropes to be just about eligible, and it is a good book. It was rather a thin year for novels in America, so far as I can see, though I haven't read Tom Reamy's posthumously-published Blind Voices yet; that made it to the Nebula nominations. A book that didn't make it to the Nebula nominations was James Tiptree Jr's Up the Walls of the World, but it's definitely eligible and worth thinking about.

Dave Pringle said very little about the Best Dramatic Presentation category. I suppose this year Superman is pretty well bound to win, and there's also The Boys from Brazil, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, and Peter Weir's The Last Wave, which although technically a 1977 production in Australia, did not get overseas release until 1978. But, closer to home, haven't British fans got a wonderful opportunity to get Dr Who a well-deserved Hugo at last? It would be difficult to bring off, because with a TV series, an individual episode has to be nominated, and British fandom would have, somehow, to get together and decide which was the best of the 1978 episodes. But I do think it's worth trying. Any suggestions as to best episode?

***** That's the trouble with the Hugo rules on dramatic presentation, do the Americans not have serials as opposed to series? How can you nominate one episode of a 4 or 6 part story? No doubt the best

story from the 1978 productions could be decided on by Dr Who aficionados, but the best episode would surely be a nominal one. As we said in the last Matrix, Eve and I are backing Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy for a Hugo, which is interesting since Douglas Adams is also script-editor for Dr Who. In our opinion this serial is so far and away above all other radio broadcasts it deserves support. If you compare Dr Who or Superman with other presentations of the ilk, are they really so much better? I'm sure there isn't as much of a gap as there is with Hitchhikers. And anyway, Hitchhikers isn't a commercial concern with the box-office as the main aim.

Enough of that, back to fanzine reviews.

KEITH FREEMAN, 269 Wykeham Rd, Reading

Reviews of fanzines in fanzines are a peculiar item. If one considers the uses and functions of reviews you'll soon see, I think, that they don't really cover very many of them. For example, one of the main purposes of "standard" reviews (eg books in papers etc) is for the 'public' to decide which of the reviewed items they want to see... but in the small world of fanzines the people reading the reviews are very likely to have already seen the fanzine being reviewed. Putting this another way, how many fanzine editors get letters asking for their fanzines "because of the review in XXX"?

***** Well, actually Keith, Kev Smith received one after Joe's review of Dot in the last Matrix!

Another reason for reviews (especially of the highly critical type) is for the people involved (in case of books - authors, in case of fanzines - their editors) to receive help (eg constructive criticism). How many fanzine editors take that much notice of reviews of their fanzines?

This, as I've said, is the position of fanzine reviews in other fanzines... Matrix, however, is different - its audience are very likely, in the majority of cases, NOT to have seen the fanzines mentioned. Therefore I was very disappointed with the Joseph Nicholas reviews... they were entertaining, undoubtedly, they might have helped the fanzine-under-review's editor(s)... though pointing out a fault without giving guidance on how to avoid it is not always helpful, but did they really help anyone to decide to write away to get a copy of one of the fanzines mentioned?

Let us study Joseph's review (of one fnz) in depth - as it's the last one and I've got it in front of me, let's consider Tiofart. See if you can answer the following questions from the review on page 19 of M22:

- (1) How do you get a copy (money?. envelope?).
- (2) Is it all written by Dave Cobbledick or are there others involved?
- (3) What kind of subject(s) is/are involved? If you were interested in
(a) Dr Who, (b) UFO's, (c) Films, (d) StarTrek, (e) S&S etc would Tiofart interest you or not?

I'll stop there, you'll surely have got the grist of my complaint by now?

On another point entirely - I like 'The Captive' - but it can't be by Jim 'Black' Barker... nowhere within 5 pages is there more than a tenth of a page that's entirely black! Other than that the style is a very good take-off of JB.

***** Well, the information part of the fanzine reviews is supposed to be in the listing after the in-depth section. The concept is: a critical analysis of the faults, failings and successes of a few zines, followed by a fairly long factual listing of fanzines available. Possibly

The listing has failed to live up to its promise, but that is no reason for curtailing the subjective, in-depth review section.

Right, next one please.

ALAN MATTINGLY, 7 Burns Road, Eastleigh, Hants

Please explain in next Matrix your comment following Andy Sawyer's letter - viz "(remember though, Chris Priest's remarks about MS presentation apply to us too)."

1. I CAN'T TYPE (VERY WELL)
2. I HAVEN'T ACCESS TO A TYPEWRITER
3. I CAN'T AFFORD A TYPEWRITER, A4 BLANK SHEETS, TO DOUBLE SPACE OR LEAVE ONE INCH MARGINS ALL THE WAY ROUND.

Does this mean that you won't pring my Locs, if so I'll stop writing the Buggers (then I'll be able to afford a typewriter). I suggest this occurred to a few other nonplussed, cowering neos too. (On 2nd thoughts, I do believe you refer to articles, don't you?)

Now: SF - definition or description?

Well, it obviously can't be defined because it would need fixed, observable limits (check it in the OED) and a description would take at least a decent sized book. BUT...

...To add something to the argument. Surely, you cannot divorce the present literature from its history. Perhaps it would be best to say that SF is not the correct term, but the popular term for this literature. Was it not coined by Gernsback (originally as SCIENTIFICTION) as a label for his brand, and the type he favoured publishing - which was a vehicle for the introduction of 'new' scientific ideas to a large audience in fiction form, as against the dry textbook form. It was only the economics of the situation that forced him to publish (often reprint) the popular Burroughs or Wellsian types of fiction .

Thus Science Fiction is a misused term, and certain other names should be substituted to cover the major facets of the genre (as is already the case with Space Opera, which can be reasonably well defined as a subgenre). So if SF is merely the type of fiction favoured by Gernsback, what other, more appropriate terms could be invented?

Perhaps future fiction or extrapolative fiction or Political, Social, Economic, etc fiction (why should science alone inspire a vision of the future - OK there are reasons - the others all contribute!) The list could become quite extensive, if self explanatory, and would serve only to increase confusion rather than resolve it. So in its 'popular' use, it is obvious that SF is not one homogeneous genre full-stop; but rather a synthesis of a large number of subgenres - compare, for instance, Star Wars with The Sands of Mars with 1984 with Slaughterhouse 5 with The Day of the Triffids with... So, I think, it is a little foolish to attempt to define what SCIENCE FICTION is, simply because its range is so great.

Finally, liked the cover illustration on M22, but I would like to enquire whether the helmets of the stormtroopers are meant to contain phallic symbols or whether it was a subconscious inclusion on behalf of Mr Hanson (suppression is a terrible thing).

***** The comments on MS preparation for Matrix were a little tongue in cheek, I must confess. Matrix cannot really expect beautifully typed submissions just as you don't expect lp a word, eh? Still, I know

it would make Eve's job much easier if people could.

The SF definition game still lives! Here's some more...

WILLIAM BAINS, Crowland Lodge, 100 Galley Lane, Arkley, Barnet
SF definitions: chapter 2. A definition, Phil Wain, is that which precisely limits the essential characteristics of the defined so as to distinguish it from contiguous but non-overlapping areas of interest, and so should be both necessary and sufficient to partition all phenomena, known or yet to be encountered, into the defined category or its converse - the rest of the universe of discourse. It thus performs functions of explanation and prediction as well as classificatory description. Having properly defined SF we could say whether any new book/film/LP was SF and rationally defend our position without recourse to 'Well, it's like...'. Because of its base in argument and explanation a definition is therefore refutable by the form 'That's crap because...'. A description of SF, on the other hand, would merely be an exercise in line drawing between what I read and what they read, and as such must both describe all current books, films etc. and be unassailable in argument without recourse to 'You have as much taste as a... and you're opinions are... and it's your round.'

And that is why I consider defining SF futile, as it is not a discrete entity in itself but an arbitrary subdivision of all fiction, in which it sprawlily resides and of which it is an integral part. You may, if you wish, draw an arbitrary line between them and us (I do) but this will hold no larger explanatory or predictive value. For any such line I can throw in a quick "Is the bible SF? 'Roots'? 'Mein Kampf'?" from the hip and lines will have to be rubbed out and drawn somewhere else. This doesn't stop it being fun to do, of course, although I suspect Hugo G had higher hopes for scientifiction than the replacement for Ludo. If you like, I will challenge you to a line-drawing duel, borderline cases at twenty paces, doctor and pedant in attendance. I want Karl Popper as my second...

GREG HILLS, 22a Polson Street, Wanganui, New Zealand

On defining sf, I can try contributing something. I reason this way: assume (a) that a definition is an artificial convention (and one that seems to enthrall fan and critics alike); (b) that a definition therefore can be said to be absolute; (c) that hence material that does not fit a definition must be excluded if the definition is to have meaning.

Once you've done this, the definition may not have much relation to generally-accepted classifications; but who cares?

I have been applying this in my apazine (for N'APA), MOUNTANSEA. I decided that a magic touchstone won't do; only a multivariate definition can apply. Hence I split my first efforts into three parts, each covering a major slice of what is normally accepted as sf. They run:

CONDITION I: Basic relationship: "Science Fiction is that part of literature which deals with the effects of science and technology upon individuals and societies. It extrapolates (sc & t) change into the future." (this 1st condition is basically a steal from a report Gill Gaier sent me on his Project; he sorted out the foregoing as a definition in discussion with one of his school classes).

CONDITION II: Basic relationships: "Space Opera is that part of literature which deals with science and technology different from that pertaining at the time of writing. Action and the Machine are the foci, and it extrapolates these into the future."

CONDITION III: Basic relationships: "Speculative Fiction is that part of literature which deals with the effects of non-technological change upon individuals and societies. It pivots on the reactions of these to the changes, and extrapolates both change and reaction into the future."

Note that each of these will eventually have a number of 'Declinations' (this is an on-going effort) added, for specific aspects. But this basic version does, I think, spread itself over the broad range of sf. On the other hand it expells fantasy, mainstream and whatever else one may think of. It splits off a variety of literature and dubs it science fiction (EG SF, SO, SpF are all parts of sf). Anything not fitting is not included in sf, no matter what. Since a definition is an artificial division, I believe this is reasonable. The wording is diffuse enough to allow a certain amount of colonisation around the borders, and some considerable overlap as regards where a book lies. But it clearly cuts out large areas of fiction. And will tread on toes, as some people are trying to call those areas sf.

PETER SINGLETON, Martins Ward, Park Lane Hospital, Maghull, Liverpool

I've just re-joined the BSFA after a long lapse of several years and I was originally a member in the early days of the association, when it was just getting off the ground. I first entered the shiny gates of fandom way back in 1950 at the age of eleven and even then fans were desperately attempting to define the general outline of SF and fantasy, with very little success because all labels are subjective and self-limiting. My own favourite is simply 'speculative fiction' which is as short and to the point as anyone can ever get it but still have a fairly reasonable definition, though this might be broad enough to encompass mainstream fiction. This satisfies me because the boundaries between SF and mundane are impossible to define and this is all to the good in my opinion.

I'm very pleased with the current BSFA mailing which I find to be of a very high quality and I'm tempted to re-join the N3F in order to become a fully-fledged Neffer again though the last time I joined I received a fervent 'welcome to fandom' letter from a ten-year-old boy scout.

***** There you are, there's nothing new under the sun.

GRAHAM ASHLEY, 86 St James Road, Mitcham, Surrey

So Steven Spielberg intends to release a new version of 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' in 1979 does he? What this is tantamount to doing is admitting that the first film was not good enough and that it should never have been released in the first place. Why was it then?

Perhaps it was a case of the film not being ready, but the time ideal. In the wake of the massively successful 'Star Wars' practically anything which had associations with sf was bound to succeed moderately and I suppose Spielberg cannot be condemned too greatly for taking such an opportunity. Yet what really annoys me is that someone of his stature in the film industry should not need to take such advantages, simply to jump aboard someone else's bandwagon.

Obviously a great deal of time and money were spent on the first version, and this showed in a film which was good (at least I felt it was better than 'Star Wars'). But no amount of time and money could overcome the feeling that the story was made up of loosely related incidents which never really held together - rather like the articles you find in Reveille: "What do the vicar, a pair of knee length black boots and a 13 year old nymphomaniac from Bolton all have in common?" - the incidents themselves were striking, but taken as a whole implausible. I am sure the so-called 'weak central section' was due to Spielberg's need to supply a catalyst

which would eventually bring these pieces together at the film's conclusion.

For the sake of the audience 'CE3K' should never have been released in the form it was, but should have been held over to 1979 by which time the improvements could have been made to bring it up to standard. Of course I'm sure Columbia Pictures will be happier with the present arrangement whereby they stand a good chance of making twice the amount of money; and what with a 'Fourth Kind' coming soon they must be fairly rubbing their hands with glee.

As always it is the poor paying customer who loses.

***** Now, onto a controversial note.

DAVE LEWIS, 1 Hornbeam Rd, Stowupland, Stowmarket, Suffolk
Once again we, the membership, witness the council washing its dirty linen in public. Once again we are being deprived of our rights. That is we are being denied a publication for which we paid.

It seems that for editing each BSFA publication each individual exacts a price:

- Chris Fowler tried, unsuccessfully, to review every SF book as it was published & filled Vector with reviews & nothing else. He also spent lavishly on litho production and soft porn illos. For this he was removed in a blaze of publicity.
- Dave Wingrove, the current editor, insists on imposing his limited & snobbish literary values on us. Hopefully when he has departed we can return to the halcyon((no, it's not a typo by Eve!)) days of Mal Edwards editorship & a balanced content for Vector.
- Tom Jones foisted his horrible microelite & vanishing staples on us whilst he attempted to collate, never edit, a bigger & bigger Matrix.
- Now we are suffering because of Ian Garbutt's insistence on lavish production & inclusion of his idiotic "Ghostland stories" in each issue of Tangent. Also he has tried to start a corpus of writing about the "Tesla" milieu. Where is the "helping would-be writers" in this?

When will it end? Must all publications editors be blasted out of office by a wrathful council because they don't toe the party line? Or is it that the council's recruitment & selection techniques are inadequate? These questions must be answered by those in control, not by anyone else. They have failed in their task.

In defence of the wretched Garbutt how can he, living in remote Scotland, be expected to attend council meetings in Berkshire? Of course he cannot, the travelling cost in time & money is huge. This is one reason I am an advocate of a small closely knit unit running the BSFA & editing its publications, even if it is "undemocratic". This was one of the reasons I quit the council quickly. An organisation such as the BSFA cannot be successfully run by geographically separated individuals, even with to-days communications. This latest incident proves it, as it has done before. As an expert in setting up organisations I cannot condone it.

***** Washing its dirty linen in public! Everything printed in Matrix is for members only, therefore hardly public. Its only right, surely, to let people know what's going on and why Tangent is not appearing. "Denied a publication" - I think that the council view it, correctly or not, as trying to give members the best publications possible and therefore not wasting your money on what they feel is substandard. I'll leave it there.

Can you work out whether he thinks the BSFA council have been hard on Ian? First he says we are "suffering Tangent", then that Ian's being

blasted out of office for not toeing the party line. Make your mind up Dave.

Well, now on a lighter vein...

PAUL DEMBINA, 20 Howcroft Cres, Finchley, London

"The Captive" is another introduction I was pleased to see, let's hope it doesn't degenerate into a straight copy of some television series with a similar title (now what was it? The Prisoner?). It would be nice to have another distinctly science fiction cartoon like "Elmer T Hack". There is too little humour in SF.

"Round the Clubs" was most enjoyable, probably because you did not spend too much space on any particular club, also the articles were not all that serious. I see that the clubs mentioned are having the same problems I am having with the Science Fiction and Fantasy Society I have just become Chairman of (note the use of the passive, I had no choice in the matter, everybody else being too apathetic to argue with the decision of the retiring Chairman) at Queen Mary College, University of London.

***** Not all that serious? Surely you didn't believe a word of it?

SUGGESTION BOX

David Lewis

- Council members should be totally banned from loccing any BSFA publication. Only if they wish to communicate something to do with their function should they appear in print.
- Membership details on the lines of the old "numbers of new members, numbers of members departing, balance carried forward" be published each mailing. So we all know the state of the parties and response percentages.
- The membership secretary should analyse from where members hear of the BSFA to monitor the success of recruitment campaigns.
- The membership secretary should monitor the "reasons for leaving" so these can be overcome.
- The membership secretary should analyse the length of stay within the organisation for future planning purposes.
- The council as a whole should take steps to see the managing of the organisation considers the old ethic of management: "To plan, Man & Control the organisation" including various databases from which future strategies can be evaluated accurately.

Greg Hills

Why not try tying a few BSFA activities in loose alliance with similar NFFF activities? I would like to see these two clubs closer together - a tighter association would mutually aid them to keep in touch with events outside their respective countries. Maybe if ways were discussed between the Council/Committee and the N3F Pres/Directorate. Outcomes could include Round Robins internationally (discussing anything from the significance of the audiocentric autochtons (? I'm sure I've just misspelled that) in Fradbagger's latest, EAR-BENDERS OF NASAL-HAIR, to what Harlan could get away with in a plastic tent if it were not transparent), board for visiting foreigners, etc, etc.

Bill Little

I'm in a bit of a quandry because although I'm wildly enthusiastic about the whole new clarity that's come to M since you took over, I am disappointed in the lettercol which is so truncated. Can't you use the micro-elite for the lettercol thereby enabling more to be put into it? Or what about an entirely separate letters supplement including letters to both Vector and Matrix

and done on the micro-elite?

WAHFs

Sandy Brown, Philip Muldowney, Andy Richards, Jacqueline Comben, Iain Byers, Jim Barker, Ed Buckley, John Connor, Andy Sawyer.

Thanks, once again, to all who took the trouble to write. Getting locs is one of the chief pleasures of producing Matrix, so do keep them coming in.

MISCELLANY CORNER

BSFA POLL

This is part two of the SF poll, hopefully the first part will have been printed by now*. The main purpose of this part is to compare this poll with previous ones, namely the 1956 & 1966 in Astounding/Analog and the SFM questionnaire of 1975. Plus, for your entertainment, my own opinions on the failings and successes of the poll. Also a quick review of the wittier replies and more worthwhile comments.

The differences in the positions can be best shown by a diagram comparing the polls and years. In my opinion, the most significant difference is the rise to prominence of URSULA K LeGUIN, with two novels in the top 10, and placed 4th in the best writer category. We desperately need a new novel from here (I'm not including the rather wet "Very Far Away From Anywhere Else"), she is by far the best SF writer in the world today (sorry Isaac but it is true). The other major rise has been that of PHILIP K DICK (perhaps the K has got something to do with it), with 3rd place in the writer section but with highest book only placed at number 26. In the opposite direction has been the decline in popularity of A E VAN VOGT and RAY BRADBURY. Well done to HERBERT for the victory in the novel section, a position that can only be strengthened by the superb "Children of Dune", but things were very close at the top between the best three, a few more votes and the result could have been different. But the greatest honour must go to ARTHUR C CLARKE, who not only came 1st in the writer section but also had four (yes 4) novels in the best book section and had four shorts as well, three being in the top 10. Working on a points system for the first four categories, 50 pts for being first, 49 for second etc, the most popular/important (call them what you want) SF writers can be found, these are:-

1. ARTHUR C CLARKE
2. ISAAC ASIMOV
3. HARLAN ELLISON (due to his popularity in the short story section)
4. LARRY NIVEN (includes his work with POURNELLE)
5. URSULA K LE GUIN

* Copies are still available from the Matrix editorial address.

BEST SF BOOKS

The 1978 position followed by that of 1966, then 1956.

1 / 21 / -	DUNE
2	THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS
3	THE LORD OF THE RINGS
4 / 10 /	A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ
5	THE DISPOSSESSED
6 / 1 / 19	THE FOUNDATION TRILOGY
7	EARTH ABIDES
8	THE LORD OF LIGHT
9 / 16 /	TIGER! TIGER! (STARS MY DESTINATION)
10 / 7 / 16	THE CITY AND THE STARS
	RINGWORLD
15 / 6 /	CHILDHOOD'S END
16 / 17 /	STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND
17 / 13 / 20	STARMAKER (previously as part of the collection TO THE END OF TIME)
25 / 12 /	I, ROBOT
28 / 23 /	THE CHRYSALIDS (RE-BIRTH)
34 / 19 / 12	MORE THAN HUMAN
35 / 27 /	WAY STATION
39 / 5 / 5	THE DEMOLISHED MAN
48 / 11 /	STARSHIP TROOPERS

Titles in the 1966 and 1956 Astounding/Analog Polls but not in the above list. 1966 position followed by that of 1956

2 / 10	SEVEN FAMOUS NOVELS OF H G WELLS
3 / 6	SLAN
8 / 11	THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES (THE SILVER LOCUSTS)
9 / 2	CITY
14 / .4	THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON
15 / 26	MISSION OF GRAVITY
18 / 8	WORLD OF NULL-A
20 / 1	ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE by HEALY & McCOMAS
22 / 23	THE SPACE MERCHANTS

The sixties and the seventies has produced a large selection of classic works, that have pushed out older works that have aged with time. Taste and fashion changes over the years, and hopefully VAN VOGT and BRADBURY will come in for major re-assessment in the near future.

BEST SF WRITERS

1978 position followed by that of the 1975 SFM questionnaire, followed by that of the 1966 Analog Poll.

1 / 2 / 3	ARTHUR C CLARKE
2 / 3 / 2	ROBERT A HEINLEIN
3 / 18	PHILIP K DICK
4 / 21	URSULA K LEGUIN (two stars of the seventies)
5 / 1 / 1	ISAAC ASIMOV (the master topples)
6 / 7	BRIAN ALDISS
7 / 12	LARRY NIVEN
8 / 13	ROGER ZELAZNY
9 / 31	ROBERT SILVERBERG
10 / 14 / 7	CLIFFORD D SIMAK
17 / 4 / 4	A E VAN VOGT (a great decline in popularity)
22 / 19 / 6	H G WELLS (another big decline)

24 / 16 / 5 POUL ANDERSON (another big decline)
 26 / 20 / 12 ERIC FRANK RUSSELL
 27 / 15 / 17 JAMES BLISH
 28 / 34 / 15 ALFRED BESTER
 31 / 8 / 9 RAY BRADBURY (an old master that seems to be in urgent need
 of re-assessment)
 32 / 26 / 8 THEODORE STURGEON (still living off the glories of 25 years
 ago)
 44 / 11 / 10 E E (DOC) SMITH (the man we still love to hate)
 49 / 53 / 14 L SPRAGUE de CAMP

There seems to have been a major re-shuffling of the positions of the best writers, with only 4 in the top 10 keeping anything resembling consistency, namely CLARKE, HEINLEIN, ASIMOV and possibly SINAK. A large number of old masters have drastically dropped to be replaced by new major talents. Perhaps the above 4 who have survived will become the only lasting SF writers, in popularity if not critical acclaim, or they too will be replaced by new writers. A poll in five or so year' time may give us, PRIEST, WATSON, HALDEMAN, MARTIN etc in the top 10, only time will show the changes in fashion. The value of this type of comparison is I believe enough to justify the need for these questionnaires, and in time a body of work may emerge as the basic classics of SF, any book in the top ten is, in my own opinion, worthy of this title (with the possible exception of Ringworld, a dreadful book). At the present time the only way this could be done would be by a very large international poll, requiring several thousands of replies, with people giving their top 25 or even 50 (or more) books based on objective reasoning. It would be a monumental task, and would have to be constantly updated, but a very worthwhile project for someone with lots of time and masses of patience, and that's not me, this poll has caused me enough bother.

The greatest problem I had with the poll was that it was too restrictive in the first four sections, yes I agree that ten books in order is an almost impossible task, 20 or 30 in no particular sequence, the same would be true of the short story section. The other major problem was the very bad reply to some of the other sections, particularly the fandom questions, for example the best fanzine, GET FOKT, received only 4 votes. This is also true of the comic questions and the SF music questions. Looking back on the poll I would change it quite radically from its original format, putting much more emphasis on the first ten sections, getting rid of most of the other ones. It was in the end far too large and unwieldy and did take quite a bit longer than a few minutes, its size and scope must have put a lot of people off from filling it in. Yet I do believe that it was a worthwhile effort, it has come up with some interesting and unexpected results.

Finally, many thanks to those who did fill it in, and as a parting gesture, some of your wittier and interesting replies:-

"Yes, I seriously believe ALDISS has written four of the 10 best books."
 "Such comments as 'chin up ace' still make me cringe."
 "Can't stand 'new wave' SF - give me 'pulp' anytime!"

For worst author, the respondent gave a long list and ends with
 "And most Robert Hale published SF." Well said sir. Same person for question 11, Best SF mag

(a) ALL TIME..... SF MONTHLY (no kidding)
 (b) TODAY..... VECTOR (likewise)

"It would be easier to list 10 worst than 10 best. Best has connotations

of objectivity, I have taken it to mean 'my favourite'. I don't like comparing the worth of books in competitive terms and think it valueless to do so, therefore I have given no order anywhere, by the same reasoning I feel that polls of this type serve no useful purpose (sorry) and only provide a little light amusement."

"Worst SF writer.... ME probably!"

Same person... "Best SF personalities... Are there any? Sorry the question is absurd."

"TOO LONG!"

"A C CLARKE's short stories are AWFUL!"

"It certainly has taken me more than a few minutes to fill this out. Please excuse the typing errors and the spelling mistakes but it is extremely late at night and I feel about as energetic as a dead cabbage."

Richard J Smith

MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

BOOKS FOR SALE

Andy Richards is selling his SF collection: 350 paperbacks and 150 hardbacks mostly in fine/mint condition. Write to 175 Northumberland Cres, Bedfont, Feltham, Middx.

John Connor is 'selling' the following books for the price of the postage/rail fare OR swap for Space For Hire, William F Nolan OR Solar Lottery and Time Out of Joint, both by Philip K Dick. Small Arms in Profile, 1973 edition (hardback with damaged D/jacket). Only volume 1 but over 260pp of 'Killers'. Textbook of Automatic Pistols, 1975 edition (Hardback, D/jacket in fair condition), 366 pages on what to use to destroy people. Two copies of 'O' Level Physics by A F Abbott (Hardback, spines damaged but binding complete). Write to John c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Nr Halesworth, Suffolk.

Anal Mattingly is appealing for anyone in the Southampton/Eastleigh area to contact him with the aim of forming an SF Society. His address is 7 Burns Road, Eastleigh, Hants SO5 5DW.

Inally, our own plug. Want to have illustrations in your fanzine? Then use our electrostencil cutting machine - 50p for paper, 80p for vinyl including postage. Send your artwork (please not on card) to the Matrix editorial address.

BOOKSHOP DIRECTORY

As promised last issue, here's a very incomplete list of book dealers who carry a substantial amount of sf. I'd like to run it on an occasional basis, so let's know about your local shop, what they stock (American imports, second-hand books etc). Firstly some old standbys, I've tried to say whether they deal by mail order or not. Where they do, you can usually get a catalogue with an SAE.

ANDROMEDA, 57 Summer Row, Birmingham

Mainly new but some secondhand, regular list produced. Shop & mail order.

DARK THEY WERE AND GOLDEN EYED, 9-12 St Anne's Court, London W1

New and imported books plus comics and fringe items. SAE for list. Shop.

FANTASY CENTRE, 43 Station Road, Harlesden, London NW10.
New and secondhand books. Shop and mailorder service.

FANTASY (MEDWAY) LTD, 39 West St, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 2LX.
New and secondhand books by mailorder, regular list produced.

S WALSH, 7A Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W7
Secondhand books by mailorder. New catalogue just out.

FORWARD TO THE STARS LTD, 57 Lynwood Ave, Clayton-Le-Moors, Nr Accrington,
Lancs. New books by Mailorder.

John Connor has sent us the following list:

BONUS BOOKS, 136 Cornwall St, Plymouth. Secondhand and a good selection
of new.

UNIVERSAL BOOK STORES, 24 Frankfort Gate, Plymouth. Secondhand selection.

THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOKSHOP, 24 West Cross Causeway, Edinburgh.

John doesn't say, but I assume that the above three are open to callers.
That's all for now, I hope you will find a regular directory useful.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Thanks to Dave Pringle for providing most of the info this time. Unfortunately
we didn't have time to consult with Rog Gilbert.

Paul Dembina Is Dune still being filmed (I read somewhere they went over
budget before shooting started)? Can you recommend a really good book on
SF films?

***** As you can see from the news section, Dune looks like it might hit
the big screen someday soon. On books about SF films, my personal
favourite is Philip Strick's Science Fiction Movies, Oct pus 1976
and I can strongly recomment it. Another to look out for is John
Baxter's Science Fiction in the Cinema but it's probably rather
dated by now.

Ed Buckley Is William R Burkett (Sleeping Planet) a pseudonym or not?
Has he written anything else?

***** No. William Burkett appears to be the author's real name. According
to Donald Tuck's Encyclopedia, he was born in 1943 and is a newspaper
man. Sleeping Planet was serialized in Analog in 1964 (when the
author was only 21) and was published in book form by Doubleday and
Gollancz in 1965. To the best of our knowledge, Burkett has publis-
hed no SF books since. Does anybody else have any knowledge of this
mystery man?

Alan Mattingley (1) What was the name of the Michael Moorcock book whose
plot involved the homosexual relationship between a white man and a black
man, in the process of which they changed colour (i.e. the white man turned
black and vice versa)? Could you also give me the date of the first publi-
shed edition. (2) A Ray Bradbury short story (The Sound of Thunder, I
think) concerns a man who takes a tourist trip back to the age of dinosaurs
where he treads on an ant or a butterfly. When he returns to his present
it has been changed slightly. Would you verify the title and give me the
copyright date please. (3) What colour socks did Doc Smith wear?

***** (1) The novel you're referring to is almost certainly Breakfast
in the ruins: a Novel of Inhumanity (New English Library, 1972).

(2) "A Sound of Thunder" was first published in Collier's, June 28th 1952. It was collected in The Golden Apples of the Sun (1953) and R is for Rocket (1962), and has been anthologized numerous times.

(3) Grey, I suppose!

David James Has Theodore Sturgeon published any novels under pseudonyms?

***** Yes. The best-known is the historical romance I, Libertine, published by Ballantine Books in 1956 under the name "Frederick R Ewing". Less well-known is the fact that Sturgeon also wrote an Ellery Queen mystery novel, The Player on the Other Side, 1963, published in Britain by Gollancz and Penguin Books. The latter has often been assumed to be the work of Frederic Dannay and Manfred B Lee (the original "Ellery Queen" authors) but it is undoubtedly by Sturgeon.

John Simmons Which was J G Ballard's first short story? (I've seen it given as "Prima Belladonna" and also as "Escapement".

***** Ballard's very first published story was "The Violent Noon", which appeared in the Cambridge student newspaper Varsity in May 1951. However, this piece was not SF but a tale of terrorism in Malaya. According to his notes in The Best of JGB, the first SF story which Ballard wrote was "Passport to Eternity" - he produced this tale in 1955, but did not succeed in getting it published until 1962. The first SF story which Ballard sold was "Escapement", which Ted Carnell bought in the summer of 1956 and published in the December 1956 issue of New Worlds. Ballard swiftly followed up this sale with another, "Prima Belladonna", which Carnell published in the December 1956 issue of New World's sister-magazine Science Fantasy.

Thus, "Escapement" and "Prima Belladonna" appeared more or less simultaneously, although "Prima Belladonna" is usually cited as the "first" because it has a nicely appropriate title.

COMPETITION -

The answers to the M22 competition first:

- (1) Ground Zero Man, Bob Shaw;
- (2) More Than Human, Theodore Sturgeon;
- (3) Creatures of Light and Darkness, Roger Zelazny.

A poor response again, Sandy Brown was the only correct entry so he wins. Which reminds me, I still owe the last winners their books - don't worry, they'll be on their way soon.

Now, what's the competition this time? Let's try another three opening lines:

- (1) "Hey, Mouse! Play us something," one of the mechanics called from the bar.
- (2) Bill never realized that sex was the cause of it all.
- (3) I had reached the age of six hundred and fifty miles.

The Captive

AFTER RESIGNING FROM THE BSFA, THE CAPTIVE FINDS HIMSELF IN THE CONVENTION WITH NO ESCAPE FROM HIS CAPTORS, WHO WANT TO KNOW WHY HE RESIGNED...

"WHERE AM I?"
"IN THE CONVENTION"
"WHO ARE YOU?"
"I AM THE NEW
NUMBER TWO..."
"WHO IS NUMBER ONE?"
"YOU ARE NUMBER 1465"
"I AM NOT A NUMBER...
I AM A FREE FAN!!"
"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"
"INFORMATION..."
"YOU WON'T GET IT..."
"BY HOOK OR BYCROOK,
WE WILL, 1465..."

IF YOU DON'T TELL US
WHY YOU RESIGNED,
WE'LL MAKE YOU READ VECTOR

SOD OFF!!

IF YOU DON'T TALK
WE'LL MAKE YOU READ
MATRIX...

LEAVE IT OUT!!

WE'LL MAKE YOU READ...

NO! NOT THAT!!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

PHEW! THANK GOODNESS
IT WAS ONLY A DREAM!!

I THINK THAT'S ALL WE'LL
GET TONIGHT, No. 2! BUT SOME-
THING REALLY SEEMS TO HAVE
FRIGHTENED HIM...

WELL, LET ME KNOW IF YOU
FIND OUT WHAT IT WAS... IT
MUST BE SOMETHING REALLY

AWFUL

