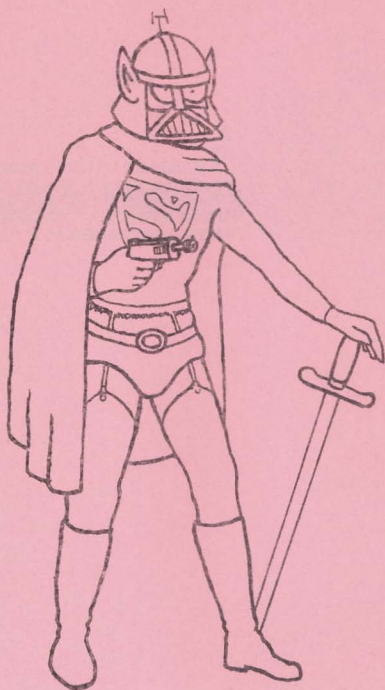


MATRIX

49



SF-THE GOOD BITS

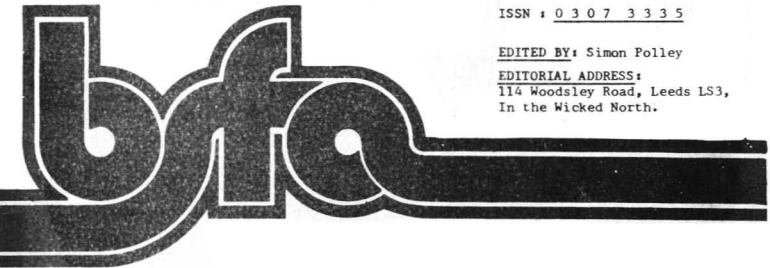
And once again, Matrix. Controversy and vitriolic opinion dash through the letter column this issue, and at the end of it all, I'm afraid I'm still here. In case you don't notice the reference in the text, please check out the brief questionnaire at the back. No names or addresses are wanted, just some details to give an idea of who you are and what you want. Ta.

September 83

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EDITED BY: Simon Polley

EDITORIAL ADDRESS:
114 Woodsley Road, Leeds LS3,
In the Wicked North.



Once again produced in glorious Harveyrama by the ministering angels Eve and John Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey.

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This issue dedicated to all the people who wrote in over the last few weeks, regardless of their creed, colour, race, sex or any other delineating factor! Nowt more need be said.

BSFA SUBSCRIPTIONS are available for the laughably small sum of £7 per annum. Send negotiable items to either:

Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire G72 9NA or

Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading, Berks., RG6 1PL

This will ensure you further information on the BSFA and its activities. Sample mailings can be obtained for £1-50, the sum being deductible from the price of a full membership when you quite naturally take one out - DON'T YOU ?!

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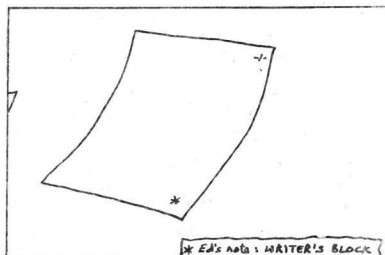
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((Cartoons by Nik Morton and Phill Probert))

This issue I'm pleased to say we've got Life on Mars back, Linda Pickersgill gives her synopsis of the UK apa scene, Lillian Edwards puts a new slant on fanzines and Christina Lake gives a Lakes-eye view of the Basildon SF convention held at the end of July. All this, and a ten page lettercol at last.....



EDITORIAL

An impossible editorial to write, and I must admit I have little idea of where to start. Not only was there a massive response to last issue's cover (no surprise) but there were , in fact, more contributions generally on a number of totally unrelated topics. The difficulties come in trying to respond to all these missives in any coherent manner, and I doubt if short comments punctuating the letters column will really clarify any of the issues properly. I feel I should start first of all with a few personal notes which are not intended to be a last minute defence from my foxhole but merely meant to answer the many throwaway lines in letters received. I do not, incidentally, mean that they are invalid by using that terminology - just that they are tucked in between other matters which will be dealt with in this lettercol....

So, I agree with a number of people who wrote in - the state of Matrix is not especially good at the moment, nor has it been as I had envisaged originally when taking on this position. The comments received on the last few issues have been grossly variable, and have ranged from " a great job - more fannish and comfortable " all the way down to " I look forward to hearing of your resignation ". No-one seems to be sure what Matrix should or should not cover, should or should not print. With this in mind, there is a brief questionnaire on the back page which I hope people will complete and send in with their next LoC or whatever. If there is some degree of consensus on what is wanted, we'll try and head in that direction. Really. I was astonished to receive comments to the effect that " of course you'll never print this because of your views ", " Matrix is only being kept alive to preserve the Leeds influence on British fandom " and " not all members of the BSFA are part of your little clique ". Somewhere along the line the wrong impression has bludgeoned its way through - a) I try to print part of everyone's contribution to Matrix, whether I agree with them or not - this is not an SJP personalzine ; b) whilst joking about the so-called Leeds ' Mafia ', this non-existent organisation has no particular influence on Matrix that I am aware of; c) there has been a deliberate attempt to keep clique-jargon etc out of the zine and an effort to look for and print contributions by new members and less fannishly prominent people. If there has been an effect of incomprehensibility it is due to the failings of a clique of one - overworked me. Which point leads me on to mentioning that I am now in the state of non-employment for the first time in my life, having voluntarily shed the responsibility of managerial life. This means that from the next issue on, Matrix will not be thirty plus pages typed, collated and thrown at the Harveys at the last second, but hopefully will be a more considered contribution to the BSFA's output. With a normally full social life outside of SF and a 9-10 hour a day job, editing Matrix has not been exactly a leisurely stroll to the deadline each two months. So, it's my fault, I took it on - perhaps now I can do what I meant to do. Another six months of exec. pressure and I hate to think what would have been in the mailing. Even my mind boggles.

On to another important point. No, the BSFA officials do not espouse the degradation of women (or men) nor do we find " the hateful atrocities of a Yorkshire ripper the funniest gag since the invention of banana peel " as someone mused. Having lived for 8 years in Leeds, the fear on the streets and the looks in girls' eyes as they passed were enough to make any sane person reject utterly the idea of espousing sexual violence in any society. M48's cover was not intended to make any sexist comment except to show in a comic-art form the absurdity of certain images still regrettably current. That it generally failed in this regard I am now willing to accept. As there are a number of letters solely on this subject, I will leave further comments until the lettercol. Please refer there for more points pertaining to this matter.

One final thing - please could we have news of the progress or sinking-under of local groups, in order that some of the new members can find out what's happening in their area and whether it's their cup of tea. A number of groups failed to send up-to-date info for the last Clubs Directory, and what we could really use is reports of activities and forthcoming attractions, or just an idiosyncratic paragraph or two on your group. Obviously we can do this for the Leeds Group, but one more accusation on our desire to annex Fandom and I shall be laughing too much to do the typing. Please respond, world!

Fandom is fickle, you know. At one time OMPA was the showcase of British fandom. By the mid-70's it was pretty much a dead horse and in 1980 the word "apa" was met with sneers and jeers. Now in 1983 there are at least two apas thriving in Britain and everywhere you go there are whispers of more apas to come. Why this swing in acceptability? And what is an apa anyway?

Basically, an apa (amateur press assosiation) is a kind of "club" or organisation. Members of the apa send so many copies of their fanzine to a selected person, known as the apa editor or administrator, who then collates all submissions into a bundle, known as a "mailing", which is then sent back to the members so that they each have a complete set of fanzines. Mailings occur at regular intervals such as every six weeks or bi-monthly. Members are encouraged to comment on each others fanzines in the following mailing and so the apa continues. That is just the basic format. Apa content varies greatly. Some apas are based on exchanging news and ideas on science fiction, fantasy or comics. Some are based on regional groups. Many are general, open to fannish exchange of any sort.

Originally apas were an amateur journalist forum used in exchanging pieces of journalistic writing. The format was picked up by American SF fans in the 30's and in July of 1937 the first mailing of FAPA (Fantasy Amateur Press Association) was put together. It was the success of FAPA together with the right time in Britain that prompted Ken Bulmer and Vince Clarke to create the first and most successful British apa in 1954: OMPA (Off-Trail Magazine Publishers Association). In 1959 Vince Clarke published "A Brief History of OMPA" to coincide with the 5th anniversary of the apa. In this article he gives us an idea of what the birth of OMPA was like:

"It's hard to say what was the catalyst which finally acted on this particular project. The atmosphere was right: British fandom was on it's feet in a burst of activity which made this, the year of the SuperManCon, a small Golden Age. Numerous fans were interested in publishing, and the s.f. professional zines were bringing in new faces throughout the year. I think it was Ken who decided that now was the moment for launching into reality the dream of years, and I think it was myself who, after various euphonious titles had been tried out for a couple of hours, suggested that echo of a trombone, OMPA.

"We jotted down names, and finally decided that we could safely set the number of members at 25, with a membership fee of 6s. per year. We circulated British fandom with a couple of leaflets, which included a proposed Constitution based on the U.S. FAPA, and were stunned by the response. The first Constitution still showed 25 members, but, by sending out the three spare copies we had of each zine, plus keeping back each member's own zine from his mailing, we were able

to accomodate 29 members on the first mailing and still had a waiting list of four.

"The Association rapidly attained most of its initial aims: it afforded a publishing ground for those unwilling or unable to bring out a subzine or who didn't want to contribute to other people's zines; it increased contact with the States; was a ready-made roll-call of the most active fans in the country; started discussions and had fun."

Looking over the membership list of OMPA's 20th mailing in August, 1959 one can't help but recognize many names that are still about: Mal Ashworth, John Brunner, Ken Bulmer, Vince Clarke, Terry Jeeves, Ethel Lindsay, Arch Mercer, Michael Moorcock, Arthur Thompson, Walt Willis, Eric Bentcliffe, Ken Slater, Brian Burgess. There were members from the U.S.A., New Zealand and Canada as well as Britain. The apa was indeed a big success and continued to function as a showcase of British fandom until the mid-60's. A series of blunders on the part of the apa Editors all but obliterated the apa. Darroll Pardoe, who had applied to join OMPA around this time, tells the story:

"I put in my application in 1966, when I started to do a fanzine of my own. Unfortunately, just at that time a new AE((apa editor)) took over and promptly gafiated ((quit fandom)). Well, one mailing got missed, then another, and people started getting their parcels of fanzines returned unopened. So, the British OMPA members organized a 'blitzkrieg' and a half a dozen of them turned up on his doorstep one day and got all the OMPA stuff off him. A hasty 'emergency' mailing was put out and the AE-ship turned over to a keen German member. That was a mistake, because he promptly gafiated. This time a 'blitzkrieg' was more difficult, the AE being in Germany, so another year went by before another mailing appeared, this time in the hands of Archie Mercer, who reconstituted the records as best he could without the help of the proper ones still in Germany.

"Meanwhile, I was despairing of ever getting into OMPA properly. By the time I had official acknowledgement of my membership being accepted it was a long way into 1967 and I was in Ohio. I did an apazine & posted it off to the German AE. Then there was a long silence, until a year or more after that, I had a note from Archie Mercer telling me what was going on. My first OMPazine had been intended for the 51st mailing, and the 51st mailing never appeared because all the zines for it had been sent to Germany and lost forever.

"After I came back to England in late 1969 I became fairly active in OMPA. The messing about of 1966-69 severely affected the apa, though. Membership

fell by half, and there was always a faintly dispirited air about the organization from then on. Things got worse and worse. The big mistake was putting on OMPAcon (the 1973 Easter convention). It meant that the most active members of the apa spent a year running a convention and had no time to spare for the apa itself, which of course hastened its decline. By 1975 there were only about six or seven members left, and I lost interest.

"Most fans nowadays remember OMPA only in the time of its decline, so they have acquired a very jaundiced view of Apas and what they are like. The lingering death of OMPA and the failure of all other attempts to start a British apa in the '70's, such as ROMPA, is probably responsible for the current notion that 'Apas don't work in Britain'."

The decline of OMPA coincided with a change in attitude in fandom of the early '70's. Partly because of the administration problems of the late '60s many fans were put off joining what appeared to be a closed and confused organization. But, there was also the attitude difference. Many new fans were emphasising growth and change and experimentation in fanzines. OMPA smacked of regulations, restrictions and the "old school" of fandom. Newer fans saw apas as something that drew good fan writers and producers away from the mainstream of fandom, that once in an apa fans were lost forever to the more general world of fanzines. A fanzine was something that took too much of one's time, money and effort to have it seen by only a handful of people in an apa. By the late '70s apas were considered useless by the core of fandom and though there were occasional attempts to revive the format all met with failure.

But as I said, fandom is fickle and attitudes are changing yet again. 70s fans went sour on apas due to the confusion they saw around OMPA. 80s fans have had no apa to reject or react to in any way. After a Channelcon panel on Women and Fanzines concluded, a group of women decided to use an apa format to keep in touch and to draw other women into the scene. That was the start of The Women's Periodical, an apa that has survived and grown strong since then. When the Birmingham SF group wanted to encourage more of its members to get involved with fanzines, it started Apa-B, an apa which is collated at the Brum group's monthly meetings. The success of these two apas have shown that attitudes have changed yet again and that Britain is capable of supporting apas as well as the more general published fanzines. Contrary to prior beliefs, apa members are tending to go on and write for other fanzines or even produce fanzines of their own rather than sinking into an apa-hole never to be seen again. It seems that now that they're established, apas will once again become an integral part of British fandom and that this is something all of fandom will benefit from.

If anyone is interested in finding out more information about the current apas in Britain they can write to the following people:
The Women's Periodical - Caroline Mullan, c/o 50 Cecil Road, Wealdstone, Harrow, M17 5EX.

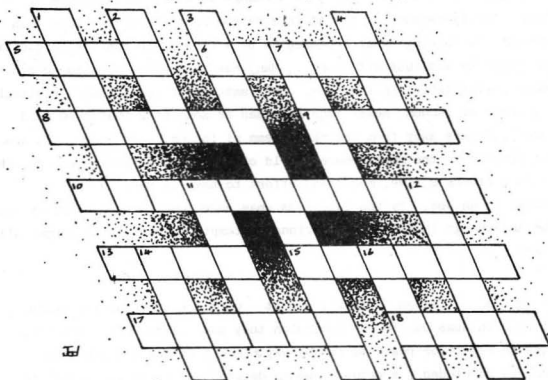
Apa-B - Cath Easthope, 113 Abbey Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 7QQ

Frank's Apa - Greg Pickersgill, 7A Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W5 4JX

Linda K. Pickersgill

((If anyone has any comments on apas they've seen, or on the concept of the apa, please put pen to paper for M50 and share your thoughts in the next lettercol!))

THE MATRIX OCCASIONAL CROSSWORD.....



ACROSS

- 5/ Undersea captain could be backward warning (4) 6/ Wonder Woman? (6)
 8/ Woman throws Tolkien's spider (6) 9/ Vogt's extremely tiny empire (4)
 10/ English writer who began in SF with a 'criminal record' (5,6)
 13/ The everything magazine (4) 15/ Author John has given the ground body odour! (6)
 17/ The gardner lost 500 to give us the Owl Service (6)
 18/ Celestial body makes major appearance (4)

DOWN

- 1/ A gentle wind, or is it a myth? (6) 2/ Spiritual element deep in the body (4)
 3/ Drab ruby ray is all mixed up over this author (3,8)
 4/ The uncle's man is alone with Han (4)
 7/ One found in hospital - there's a prize! (5)
 11/ A gruesome foreigner maybe (5)
 12/ The sailor (6) 14/ Author sometimes Shepherd's alcoholic drink (4)
 16/ Strayed in space? (4)

Conrep by Christina Lake

Growing up as I did in an area where Basildon was just another word for housing estate it came as quite a surprise to first discover a science fiction convention purporting to be held there and secondly, when attending said convention to find it nestling on a sunny lakeside complete with real grass and semi-competent wind-surfers. It was actually quite pretty. This time I abandoned my preconceptions of Basildon and came prepared. No suitcase full of Cointreau, fanzinettes (fanzines before they're launched on the World) and survival rations, just me and my swimming costume, all set to consummate our passion for sun and water.

The one thing I wasn't prepared for was the sheer reality of arriving at a convention where everybody I've ever known appeared to be present, if not actively hanging around the foyer. I almost envied the two anonymous newcomers that were my brothers (imported to prove the dominance of the Lake faction) and decided a roomful of strangers could never be as frightening as a foyerfull of acquaintances all watching your inability to find the registration desk with the lethargy of true heat-smitten convention junkies. A drink or two later and the feeling wore off - I was talking to people as if there had never been any doubts and patronising my brothers like a noble sponsor to a pair of orphans, no doubt!

Eventually clumps and bunches of the groups on the garss drifted inwards for the first ITEM, the bit where you submit yourself to bad jokes from whoever is delegated chairman or spokesman for the occasion and count the number of committee members looking redundant or simply embarrassed. There followed what I assume was deliberately billed as a ' light-heated ' (no r) look at criticism. I thought I was going to be interested, but soon I discover I'm not. It's more the fault of the format than the panellists as there's nothing to inspire any thoughts on criticism, just "Well, what do you think, Andy " type leads. Besides, it's the first night of the con, and time to plunge into the traditional round of disparate socialising, as if there's no tomorrow - if you stay up too long and drink too much this is probably true. Later I wander along to the informal Womens apa gathering at which we all reveal our secret identities to each other, embarrass men by telling them after five minutes that it's a women-only affair, and giggle over Kate Davies porno epic ' Spock in Manacles '. As usual, it's one of the most interesting parts of the convention.

Saturday was still hot and the lakeside setting really came into its own. People forsook the bar for grass and air; heroic souls began flying kites just where the hotel could best steal their wind; and Lilian Edwards and I trekked away to the proto-beach with armfuls of hotel towels to keep my rendezvous with the water. The lake betrays its Basildonian origins by being man-made, apparently based on cans, glass and other rubbish. It looks and feels like a particularly cozy brand of mud and the only strategy is to get in and swim as much as possible, given the persuasive water-weed traps. The heat is such that this action is not masochism but pure bliss. Later, just as I'm trying to fit in a second swim, a failed coast guard type appears and chivvies everyone out of the water, explaining that we're not insured against the glass, so can't use the lake. We sit on the shore, and envy the wind-surfers, who are insured.

Back inside the hotel people were actually sitting in a dark, stuffy room, like moles, watching films and pretending the fine, bright afternoon didn't exist. I couldn't believe it. In the bar I met my surnamesake, Ken Lake (the one member of the BECCON Lake clan I was not responsible for) for the first time. He managed to disappoint everyone's expectations by being not so much ogre as jovial uncle, and even told Lilian and I which stamps we should invest in (instead of wasting our time and money on the 17p variety we use for sending out fanzines).

Sadly, I never made it to the intriguingly titled ' If the new physics is right and locality fails, where are we now? ' talk, saw enough of Just a Minute to catch the panellists making snide remarks about the Womens Periodical and gawped at the mountains of rubbish everybody had to buy at the auction to get the books they wanted. Brian Stableford's ' Is Civilisation Doomed ' item turned out to be

such a well-disguised gem that I missed $\frac{1}{2}$ of it before realising that none of the people who'd gone to check it out had returned. The bits I caught were good, full of cynical, pessimistic humour. Civilisation is most certainly doomed, but meanwhile let's keep on dancing (thoughtfully, the BECCON committee considered a fireworks display would be more in keeping with the mood than a disco!).

It was at some point that evening that I opened my mouth once too often in the hearing of Simon Polley and found myself committed to writing up a conrep for Matrix. Ah, the follies of talking to the Matrix editor (or was it revenge for drinking his beer?). Meanwhile, Simon, having lined up his reporter, proceeded to produce the type of behaviour typically reported to counterpoint the longevities of the normal narrative, but since I can't now remember why he was throwing himself at Linda Pickersgill's feet it'll have to go unrecorded!

Meanwhile the other lunatics had set up the fireworks and clad in as near commando gear as they could manage. Los Alamos fandom took to the field. Their soundtrack had let them down, but the masterplan was still intact as they scurried heroically through the minefield, midst the smoke and explosions, to set off yet another rocket. Some of the fireworks were very spectacular indeed, but some just sputtered and spluttered a few token coloured sparks and then went out. Everybody seemed to love it and the baked potatoes sold in roaring trade.

The last morning arrived at least five hours too early. I missed the Bed Debate (a specially adapted balloon debate to see who would get the last bed in the con) through checking-out commitments, but was in time to be amused by the foreign fandom panel. Judith Hanna and Amy Thompson kept producing mind-boggling facts about how far fans drive / train / fly to the average convention in Australia or America, and Judith's description of the different factions in Australia was great.

It wasn't so sunny I was tempted to run the gauntlet of the coastguards to go swimming again. Everybody else seemed to be sitting around on the grass, taking photos of each other and waiting for the play to begin. The play in question was a rhyming melodrama written by Lionel Fanthorpe. It was terribly contagious and I went around talking like this for the rest of the afternoon: -

Who'll buy me a drink then?

Or maybe I'd better ask when

Get me something long and cool like lager

And I promise I won't be the one to argue!

You get the idea. It was wonderfully overacted, with Graham Head playing the lead hero as a poof and the women fainting left, right and centre till villainy was finally vanquished.

I left about five on Sunday, so can only say on hearsay that the Sunday night was the best of the whole convention and featured attempts at the Astral Pole ritual, led by a masterfully sinuous performance from D.West. I wish I'd been there. I enjoyed BECCON a lot, mainly for the lake and the sun, but also for the friendly atmosphere and the attempts at inventive programming. Now, BECCON 85 anyone?

((Many new fans, and many people who nothing about fandom at all, ask why anyone goes to conventions - to spend a lot of money, get drunk, have five minutes talking to each person and then not see them for six months? Should they try going to one? If they've been to one and it wasn't very hot, should they stop there and forget about it? I'd be interested to hear from some members who've been to one or more conventions and have strong opinions either way. Was it a disaster which made letterwriting seem a much better way of communicating in fandom, or did it open up the field for you, producing contacts, fanzines, best friends and mortal enemies (if you can tell the difference) ?))

NEWS and views

BSFA NEWS

In response to popular demand, we now have in stock a new-style BSFA badge, designed by Jim Barker. These are Black-on-White, 55mm diameter, and are on sale at 25p each. Send two 12½p stamps per badge, plus a stamped, self-addressed envelope, to -

Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire G72 9NA

Cheques and postal orders are equally acceptable, but stamps will save you money, and us the work of logging cheques etc.

For local groups, bulk orders are welcome, but remember to enclose a large, sturdy envelope, stamped at the appropriate rate (6-10 badges 17p ; 11-15 badges 21p). If any overseas members require a badge, the cost is 50p each (no SAE required) or three International Reply coupons.

ROUND AND ABOUT

Last minute reminders now of the 'Venture into Science Fiction' book promotion, due to run from 10-22 October. This promotion should hopefully ensure that SF titles generally, and not just the specific titles chosen for promotion, are pushed to the front of the shop in most decent booksellers. There should be lots of media cover, and booksellers are going to be keen to make an effort with their own displays, as the BMC is apparently offering a Chris Foss original ((Aaaargh!)) to the bookseller with the best window display. I quote...' This is a rare opportunity to acquire not only a collector's item which will continue to appreciate (its current value is estimated at over £1000) but also a work of art by the best artist in his field.' Okay for some, I suppose, but I can't quite see it next to the flying fried eggs on our wall.

Not much book news this issue. Brian Aldiss, with Helliconia Spring, has won the John W. Campbell Award for Best SF Novel of 1982. Isaac Asimov has a large 2-book contract out with Granada, the result of which should be The Robots of Death, starring the detective hero of what I thought were slightly better than As-I-Move's usual books - The Naked Sun and Caves of Steel - and also the fifth (('this wasn't my idea!)) book in the Foundation series. I despair. Expected in November from Anthony Burgess - End of the World News (Penguin, £2-95), and before I forget myself and slip away from Asimov, it would seem that the contract, which is also with Doubleday in the USA, is probably the reason for his forthcoming non-appearance at the 1984 Eurocon. A news note from the Brum Group says that Asimov and his wife, Janet Jeppson, are planning a series of juvenile robot novels, starting with Norby, the Mixed-Up Robot this autumn. What is happening to the 'doyen' of SF, or whatever he used to be called?

Dr. Christopher Evans' Landscapes of the Night, about why we dream, will be out soon from Gollancz (£7-95). Flamingo (Fontana's B format range) produce Fritjof Capra's The Turning Point (£2-95) - a ' critique of western society's over-reliance on science '. Capra is a fascinating writer usually, at home with particle physics and the multiple facets of Siva, so this could be worth a check. Hamlyn offer Brian Stableford's Balance of Power (£1-50) and The Hamlyn Book of Horror & Sci-Fi Lists , a film reference book by Roy Pickard. Robert Heinlein has just finished his latest novel - Job: A Comedy of Justice which I'm told is an alternate-world fantasy satire on religion, part of which is set in heaven. A theologically-minded friend was asking the other day if there are any anthologies devoted to religious SF, and I'd be interested to hear if anyone knows of one. I can think of a lot of short stories, but can't remember a whole anthology offhand.

Also coming from Penguin, Stargate (£1-95) by Pauline Gedge, who is better known for historical novels, and from Arena Easy Travel to Other Worlds (£2-75) by Ted Mooney. From Del Rey, Moreta, Dragonlady of Pern ('guess the author's time) and coming next year, there is going to be The Dragonsongbook containing the songs from McCaffrey's Pern books, set to music by Joanne Forman.

On the media side, news comes that the BBC are to show a five part adaptation of Angus Wilson's SF novel The Old Men at the Zoo, with Robert Horley, Marius Goring and Maurice Denham. Sad news for some film followers - Byron Kennedy, the producer of the Mad Max films, has died in a helicopter crash in Australia.

The University of York is putting on an Open Course on SF this autumn, organised by Edward James. There will be six lectures (followed by discussion) open to anyone who goes along - and free - to be held in the University at 5.15 on Tuesday evenings. On Thursday evenings there will be a series of lectures on ' Fantasy in the Cinema ' which will tie in with a special SF season at the York Film Theatre (more details on that as soon as possible). The lectures are:

- 18th October: SF and History - Dr. Edward James (ex-actifan of many years standing)
- 25th October: SF and Theology - Ian Watson (famous person)
- 1st November: SF and Language - Professor Tom Shippey (Dept. of Old and Middle English at Leeds; critic and author)
- 8th November: The Biology and Sociology of Alien Beings - Dr. Brian Stableford (Sociologist and author)
- 15th November: SF and the Hard Sciences - Dr. Tony Sudbery (Mathematician, ex-editor of Vector and writer)
- 22nd November: SF and Pseudoscience - Dr. James again.

As you can see, a wide range of topics and a pretty stimulating gaggle of speakers. Dr. James reckons that the series will be not only interesting but quite a bit of fun as well. Worth the effort if you can get there.

Back to Penguin again, but in a slightly different guise. They are launching a series of book / software tie-ins with fully illustrated titles which can be read as straight novels, supported by Spectrum 16K/48K cassettes which play out the most exciting moments. Written by P.K.McBride, The Korth Trilogy consists of three packages at £4-95 each - Besieged, Escape from Arkaron and Into the Empire. Also available - The Warlock of Firetop Mountain Software Pack. The infamous MoFM is still number one children's bestseller and now you can buy the 'interactive animated graphic extravaganza' to accompany it. Gosh.

COMPETITION NEWS

In Matrix 48, members were invited to compose brief descriptions of notable SF/ Fantasy properties as they might be written up by estate agents. Possibly because 98.4% of BSFA members either hurled M48 into the fire unread or sent it to Mary Whitehouse, entries were few and this competition is being held over. And so, you have another chance to rush your witty description of Trantor, Diaspar, the Citadel of the Autarch or wherever, to:

Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU
Two footnotes - 1) Any more Tardises and I shall scream; 2) You'd better mention, if only as a PS, the SF/Fantasy book from which your property is taken - I'm feeling very stupid at my inability to place at least one entry so far.

I won't officially open the next competition as yet, but those of you who think ahead can mull over this suggestion from Jim Barker: Think of a cartoon idea for the as yet hypothetical book 2001 Uses for a Dead Monolith. Best ideas will be drawn up by Jim Barker PLC for a future competition page (he says).

Dave Langford

((Following interest in the Cassandra details in the last issue, Alex Prentice writes in with details of an art group for those who wish to circulate their work and receive criticism or requests for more. See over for details....))

TRIANGLE

Triangle is a postal chain art group for B.S.F.A. members. Membership is free to ALL artists and would-be artists. We circulate A4 (or less) drawings for helpful criticism and advice and, whether our aim is pleasure or profit, have fun doing our own 'thing'.

The cost to members is small. We use photocopies or printings of our drawings (the originals of our masterpieces can't get lost this way). Once a month photocopying runs at between 10p. and 20p. One posting (say) 30p. Total = 50p., or less.

ARTISTS

Write asking for fuller detail. While we (naturally) prefer SF/fantasy art we are not stuck in any rut about it. Do your own thing and we won't complain. Draw with the media in mind if you like, but....

ESTABLISHED ARTISTS

I realise that established artists may be a trifle reticent in joining such a group as this, especially if there is a current market around. Surely, however, most art-work has a limited COMMERCIAL life span. We lesser mortals can't have seen everything previously used by fanmags and A.P.A.'s of the past. Join us on this basis; give your old work a second viewing.

A.P.A.'s/EDITORS/etc.

Stummied for the right art, or artist. Join TRIANGLE as a passive (or active) member. Triangle is not an agency, but most artist members would welcome outlets for their work, and in one posting you would receive samplers from several. Interested? Would you like a trial run?

CONTACT

All enquiries, please, to
Alex. Prentice. 9 Polton Gardens, Lasswade, Midlothian, EH18 1BL.

Tel; 031 - 663 - 6157 (even.)



((If anyone else is organising, or thinking of starting a group such as Cassandra or Triangle, please send full details to us and we will do our best to promote such ventures. Progress reports would also be of interest from existing groups.))

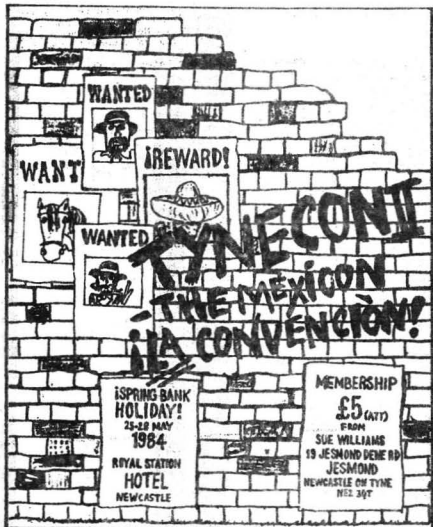
CONVENTION NEWS

Coming in a few weeks - NOVACON 13, as if you didn't know. 4th-6th November, at the well-loved Royal Angus Hotel in Birmingham. GoH Lisa Tuttle, as mentioned last issue. When the Royal Angus is full, there will be overflow accomodation at the Crest Hotel on New Street - at the same rates. Details from Chris Donaldson, 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds 11. £7-00 attending membership.

CYMRUCON 3 - Contact Helen McNab, The Bower, High Street, Llantwit Major, South Glamorgan. A previously successful convention held in Cardiff, with this year John Brunner, Dougal Dixon and Dave Langford guesting. £9-00 attending membership, 26th to 27th November. Places may be very few now.

Little point in giving more SEACON 84 details, except to say that it looks as if there may be more changes in the guest list again. Full details from Pauline Morgan, 321 Sarehole Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AL. Both an Eastercon and a Eurocon, this will be held at the Metropole Hotel, Brighton, 20th-23rd April 1984 - the membership is £7-00 until 30th November.

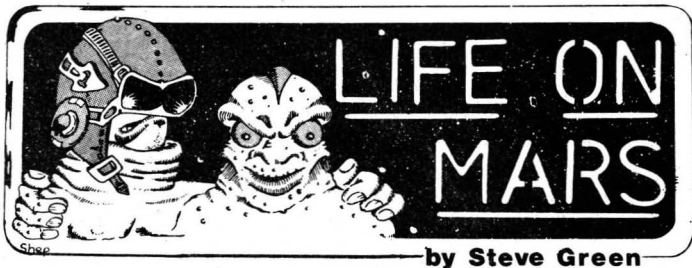
New convention news this time - TYNECON 2 - THE MEXICON. A convention focussing on SF as a literary form, in books, magazines and fanzines. An original choice of films and a single continuous programme of fannish and SF items. Small, compact and friendly, TYNECON 2 will be held at the Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle-upon-Tyne from 25th to 28th May 1984. This hotel hosted the successful TYNECON 74, is spacious and central for travellers. Room rates are £13-25 a double/twin (per person) and the same for a single room, £16-50 single with bath. Attending membership is only a remarkable £5-00, which really makes the whole thing great value for money. The registrations are being handled by Sue Williams, 19 Jesmond Dene Road, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 3QT.



TYNECON COMMITTEE

Kev Williams: Chairman
Sue Williams: Memb. Sec.
Sue Hepple: Treasurer
Harry Bell: Hotel Liaison
John Jarrold: Films
Chris Evans: SF Programme
Abi Frost: Fan Programme
Linda Pickersgill: Fan Group
Greg Pickersgill: Fanzine Km.
Rob Hansen: Publications

¡VIVA LA CONVENCIÓN!



Like they say on the idiot box, we apologise for the breakdown in transmission; taking my vacation just before the last Matrix deadline was hardly the wisest move I've made during my two-year tenure on 'Life on Mars', but it was pleasant to discover that even through the cloud of controversy surrounding Pete Lyon's cover my absence was noticed. Thank you.

In any event, this is the final clubs column to carry my byline. After a couple of years in the office (the longest stay since Bill Little's day) , along with assorted lawsuit threats and one serious attempt to rearrange my limbs, I've decided to quit and let someone else try their hand at chronicling the births, deaths and marriages of the SF club scene, maybe giving one of Matrix's few regular features a new slant, a fresher approach.

To open this journalistic swansong, then, a couple of corrections to the latest clubs directory. The first I'll plead guilty to, since the move was announced in the pages of Ansible a while back (I forgot to consult this priceless organ when updating my files); the second is typical of the problems my successor will inherit: a group moves, doesn't bother to announce the fact, makes no mention of it when the wrong venue is given in Matrix, but settles for a quick " Steve Geen's got it wrong again" in Ansible. I'm almost minded to ignore them completely, but that'd be childish.

GLOMERULE (READING SF GROUP) : " The venue of Glomerule has changed. This was because of a disco which began in the erstwhile pub the Osbourne Arms; our enlightened and philosophical gatherings moved a few paces down the road (Greyfriars Street, Reading, running up the side of the Alder Valley bus station and mere seconds walk from Reading General (BR), from which one turns right) to the Railway Tavern, larger and with better beer. Same date and time; third Thursday of the month from 8-8.30 onwards. The Sunday meetings continue at the Peasant, or Pheasant, at the top of Southampton Street (consult a map, ask a native, take a taxi or try a 15 or 23 bus from the station and demand to get off in Whitley Street, which splits at its northern end into Southampton Street and Mount Pleasant with the Peasant in the, as it were, crotch; irregular, arcane, 9pm onwards, ring Langford (665804), Hoare (588570) or Hughes/Huxley (751483) to check that there is someone going." (Dave Langford)

GANNETS : Now meet at the County Hotel, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (public bar), Tuesdays from 9pm.

And for those who heard rumours of a Scots sex change resulting from my oddest error, the 'Helen Balen' listed among my contributors was, of course, a typo for the almost famous Henry Balen. It's the way he wears his kilt, honest.

Fandom in the Midlands continues to grow apace. The Birmingham SF Group recently launched its own apa, with more than a dozen members and a monthly mailing, and is all set to move back into first gear with its long-awaited return to the city

centre in November, setting up shop at the New Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, third Friday of the month (informal meetings are also held at the nearby Old Royal on the first Tuesday and the General Wolfe on the final Thursday). Meanwhile, the Solihull SF Group held its first garden party on August 20th, and most of Birmingham based fandom attended ; meetings are still held on the second Sunday of each month at the Red House, Hermitage Road.

Meanwhile, in Northampton, the Cassandra SF Workshop gathers momentum, with the first issue of its fiction anthology now out. Bernard Smith takes up the story so far:

" The Cassandra SF Circle was started in May last year, and the two main aims were the promotion of good, literate science fiction and the encouragement of anyone who wished to produce their own, original science fiction in whatever form they chose. By these methods, we hoped to stimulate interest in the subject among a wider audience and not simply 'preach to the converted'.

Initially we were a general interest group where nothing was deliberately excluded. However, interest was very slow in coming and many potential members seemed solely interested in the passive entertainment aspect of SF. To counter this, the group was changed from a 'circle' to a 'workshop' and it was made explicit in our advertising that Cassandra was a working group for those who were interested in producing their own SF. The result of this change was that, rather than reducing the membership, it actually increased along with the enthusiasm and interest. Amongst members of Cassandra, we now have artists, playwrights, musicians and one published author as well as other writers. The result has been an interesting interplay of ideas and pooling of various talents for a common purpose.

Since we began, members of the workshop have mounted two exhibitions in Northampton - one on the life and work of H.G.Wells and the other on SF in general - been instrumental in organising an SF film day at the College of Further Education and lectured on SF literature to the local writers circle. Last month, we published the first issue of the Cassandra anthology, an A5 magazine of original fiction by members. Although the distribution has been slow, the reaction has been very encouraging, and we have received favourable comments from both Ian Watson and John Brunner. Many people have been pleasantly surprised to find out that we have produced a serious magazine and not a standard 'fanzine' ! It is hoped to produce issues at least quarterly, and the second issue is being planned for September.

Establishing a group like Cassandra is always a slow business, especially when it revolves around all the members producing work - often to a deadline. Amateur writers tend to be hermits, and this is especially so in a subject which, for various reasons, has acquired an unjustifiably bad press among many people. However, Cassandra exists, and from the signs is heading for a very interesting future. "

Which just about brings this last instalment of 'Life on Mars', a title I never understood and was too lazy to change to one I did, to a close. My thanks to all who've contributed over the years and my hope that you'll do the same for whomever steps into my post ; in the meantime, all correspondence should be addressed to the Matrix editor.

Steve Green, September 1983.

((Naturally, I'd like to join with many in thanking Steve for his long stint on ' Life on Mars ', and hope that he continues to write in the fan sphere in other capacities. The club scene is not an easy one to monitor and it is often virtually impossible to find out what's going on at the various corners of the club world without attempting the impossible and actually going to all the meetings you are commenting on. The only particular disagreement I have with Steve is over his comment in On Random Hold 7, where he says that the reason for reader's silence is "the crushing tedium of the contents of this thinly-disguised Leeds Group fanzine..." What is this Leeds Group stuff? How can a few covers and an intermittent cartoon justify this claim? We should be told.....))

New Forms of Addiction ; Lilian Edwards

It's fashionable to state one's philosophy before reviewing fanzines these days ; it has been fashionable in the past to tear zines to shreds for the moral benefit of the editors, or at least pour encourager les autres (the infamous kill-the-fuckers approach), and though that phase has certainly gone now, no-one seems to know quite with what to replace it. So I'll simply say that I damn well enjoy fanzines or I wouldn't have taken this job ; to paraphrase someone or other, all fanzines are good but some are more good than others. If I really put down a zine, you can bet it really is pretty dire ; the converse is similarly true ; moderation is the best of all possible worlds ; and why do the SDP do so badly anyhow ? So on that curious note, let's get on with the show, or at least the zine....

Abdamp 2 . Paul Vincent, 25, Dove Dale Ave., Pelsall, Walsall, W. Midlands, WS3 4H6.
Available for the usual or large S&P.

Paul inveighs with sincerity if suspect logic against the proliferation of cons, but then rather ruins the effect by including as next item a glowing Albacon report. The rest of the ish is mostly devoted to a tripartite examination of violence, of which the standout is definitely Martin Tudor's cinema verité description of being beaten up -- a real sit-up-in-your-seat, this-can't-be-happening checker. Promising stuff from the Birmingham Renaissance.

Ansible 34. Dave Langford, 94, London Rd., Reading, Berkshire ; £2/ 7 issues.

By virtue of alphabetical serendipity, Ansible nearly always leads off review columns, and nearly always gets the same review ; namely, "indispensable newszine". If news/gossip is your desire, Langford's increasingly telegraphic style will certainly supply more items (facts ? dubious) per sentence than almost anyone else's, but not all these are as scintillating as they might be ; of late, the Big A has tended to concentrate a little too much on obscure publishing executives and offensive Americans, and not enough on common or garden dirt ; and this is, after all, what they want.

Drunkard's Talk 9, 10. Malcolm Edwards, 28, Duckett Rd, London N4 1BN. Randomly available (I got mine at the Tun.)

More ephemeral fannish gossip from Malcolm this time ; 10, however, is a sniggeringly funny fannish adaptation of the Complete Naff Guide (with yours truly pegged as a naff fanartist - sacre bleu.). Recommended, but not for non-fanzine fans.

Empties 2. Martin Tudor, 345, Alma Rock Rd., Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

A mass-market version of Martin's Birmingham Apa-zine (I think), most of it seems to have been written by the ubiquitous Paul Vincent (quid pro quo for Abdamp, perhaps.) Contents are pleasant, if undistinguished.

Fantasy Advertiser 80 . Martin Lock, 3, Marlow Ct., Britannia Square, Worcester, WR1 3DP. For 40p or £2/5 issues.

The comics equivalent of Ansible, plus much more besides. Marvellous value too (remember that comiczines are usually only available for filthy lucre), comprising 43 minutely packed pages of reduced type on everything from comics to films to role-playing games and even (gosh) sf. FA is consistently interesting, and a good buy if you're at all into comics ; and after a while, you too can play the fascinating game of spotting how many of the contributors are in fact Martin Lock pseudonyms...

Grazing Saints 3'. Cath Easthope, 113, Abbey Rd., Erdington, Birmingham, B23 7QQ
Available for letter, trade, or being an "interesting person".

Another of the deluge of escapee B-APA contributions. Cath's zines so far have benefited from their apa origins in being admirably frequent, but have also as a result been pretty insubstantial. Still, she writes engagingly about BSFG barbecues and the like, and quite often it sounds a bit like a fannish Crossroads (not meant to be an insult !) GS succeeds as a personalzine because it communicates the personality of its author; the self-penned cartoons are nice too.

IDOMO 15. Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Rd., Wissett, near Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0NF. For the usual or stamps.

How Chuck manages to produce this monster between sailing off to defend Queen and country is beyond me. IDOMO is an absolutely spiffing multi-media, multi-fandom farrago of poetry, articles, unusual ads and fanzine reviews whose eclecticism drives forcefully home what a tiny tip of the iceberg the thing we think of as the core of fandom, sf fandom, is. Salutory and great fun.

Mainstream 8. Jerry Kaufman and Suzle, 4236, Winslow Place M., Seattle, WA 98103, USA. For one dollar, trade, letter, contribution or strenuous show of interest.

This dates from Albacon, but it doesn't seem to have been reviewed in Matrix yet, and I thought it deserved to see the light of day. It's a thick and entertaining read from the apparently fanzine-infested waters of Seattle fandom, containing enough strange American references to supply a pleasant air of exotica, but not so many as to alienate. Contents include some classy meanderings by Greg Benford on fandom, an ingenious examination of the chicken/egg problem and a heartfelt plaint as to what to do with four quarts of frozen vichyssoise (!). Nice Stu Shiffman cover too.

Microwave 6. Terry Hill, 41, Western Rd., Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8NE. For the usual.

Terry seems to apologise each time for the late appearance of Microwave while it seems to me the thing turns up about every other Tuesday. This is probably because each ish looks so much like the previous (there's something intensely déjà vu about those ATOM cartoons) but it isn't conducive to massive excitement. Which is not to say Microwave is a bad fanzine, in fact it's probably a labour of love, it just seems aimed at a segment of fandom, or maybe the population in general, altogether different from the one with which I personally identify. But objectively speaking, the presentation is varied and sometimes clever (turning the answers to an obscure music quiz into an entertaining article itself takes real skill) and the cover this time is wonderful (how many other zines have their own resident sex symbol ?). Terry gets the Bad Taste of the Month Award however for conjoining tasteless sexist remarks to a serious letter from Pam Boal (herself disabled) about euthanasia - quite amazingly inappropriate, Terry.

Mince 3. Ian Sorensen, 142, Busby Rd., Clarkston, Glasgow, G76 8BG.

The only piece of this zine devoted to bad jokes that raised an (ironic) laugh from me was Ian's piece on How to Produce a Personalzine; ten rules on how to regurgitate a zine with absolutely no input of time, energy, thought or care. So that's how he managed to do it! In the words of the Eurythmics, crudzines are made of this.

Multum Est. Ahrvid Engholm, Maskinistgatan 9 Ö.b., s-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden. For the usual and FAPA members.

A densely-packed six pages; most interesting point is Ahrvid's comment that if we (the ignorant Anglo-Saxon majority) spoke English, he would be the best fanwriter since Walt Willis. Discrimination obviously isn't limited to women, or even colour, on which see....

Pelvic Wiggle Stamp. Kevin Rattan, 23, Waingate Close, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, , Lancs, BB4 7SQ. For stamps, or the usual.

Fairly standard personalzine stuff from Kevin but invigorated by two more controversial pieces. Chuck Connor writes fiercely about the proposed Tynecon (now Mexican) which he seems to take as a personal insult to media fans ; while back in the real world, Kevin

describes somewhat more seriously his shock and anger at being insulted as a "paki". The fact that this article will almost certainly garner a large response doesn't make it any the less sincere. Worth getting.

Q 36 no.4 ; Marc Ortlieb, PO Box 46, Marden SA 5070, Australia. For trade or whim.

The strange numbering cloaks this, Marc's quarterly reviewzine in perplexity, but doesn't detract from his friendly, constructive fanzine reviews. Much better than this column, honestly.

Raffles 7.5. Larry Carmody and Stu Shiffman, c/o 19, Broadway Terrace # 10, New York, NY 10040, USA.

I've loved every Raffles I've ever seen ; it's always so upbeat(what they used to call happy). This issue we have lotsa wonderful Shiffman cartoons to enjoy, and Taral on how easy it is for fans to fool mundanes. But the really amazing bit for Brit readers is our very own Rob Hansen on stag nights et al. Can this really be the same person who dis-courses so learnedly on fanhistory and TAFF awards, writing this piece of distinct -ah - levity ? Why don't you let your hair down at home, Rob ? Was it something we said ?

Rastus 1. John D. Owen, 4, Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks. MK 16 9AZ.

Ostensibly another of the new breed of ensmallled fanzines (to plug the gap between issues of John's magnum opus, Crystal Ship.), Rastus in fact contains enough type and sumptuous artwork to put many a "normal" fanzine to shame. The tone is lighter than CS but the standard, and production values, are still as high.

Shallow End 2,3. From the Harvey/Maule/ Hanna/ Wells/ Macinski collective. Available from Janice Maule, 5, Beaconsfield Rd., New Malden, Surrey, ET3 3HY, for loc, contribution, or 30p in stamps.

I must admit to being uneasy about Shallow End, both its intentions and the execution thereof. SE is avowedly a fanzine intended to promote new writing, provide examples for potential new contributors to fandom, give tips to aspiring editors. Very laudable. But is it really necessary ? Fandom may well be a way of life, but it is not, or surely should not be, a lifework ; people write for fanzines for fun, godammit, not in an attempt to become the new Melvyn Bragg. By pandering to the free-floating belief that one has to somehow qualify to write for fanzines, SE is doing its best to turn this belief which I hope is erroneous, into a reality, and effectively doing the opposite of its state intent, ie, encouraging new writers. Furthermore, even if you accept the need for a training ground for new talent, do two or three lines from Eve Harvey really constitute much help ? The major entertainment value of these determinedly cheerful footnotes, which are SE's trademark, stems from the same sort of guilty pleasure with which one listens to an intimate conversation over a crossed line. As actual criticism, they tend to be either superficial or redundant.

So the basic concept of SE is flawed at best; is the execution any better ? Another of the collective's avowed intentions is that the zine should not only serve as a fanzine primer, but also serve up 'real' articles. What we find therefore is a hodge-podge of ordinary personal-type articles, rather twee stuff from the 'new blood' and the odd tip on duplicating. Basically, I don't find this works at all. No sooner is one absorbed into the flow of SE as a gezine than the spell is broken by the strange, school-room atmosphere of the editorial kibitzing. Hints on zine production are a great idea, yes, but wouldn't they be better published once and for all as a reference work, like a fanthology ?

It's a shameto be so critical, as there is some good material in SE this time; notably Eve's piece on working amongst aliens in a Japanese company, and Sue Thomason's cheery account of how she became a BSFA reviewer. But these didn't need a specially constituted "writer's forum" in which to appear, Wallbanger would have done just as well; and Sue (who is presumably here as 'new blood' since she's not providing hints on oiling Gestetner

or whatever) did not need SE either - she's been in Vector, Paperback Inferno, the Womens' Apa - the opportunities are there. Personally, I just wish SE would decide whether it wants to be a fanzine or a textbook, because that decision needs to be made.

Sorgenkind. Christina Lake, 20a Chatsworth Parade, Queensway, Petts Wood, Kent, BR5 1DF; for the usual.

Well, this is kinda difficult for me to review, as Christina is my sometime co-editor, and I'm obviously prejudiced. But it would do objective truth an injustice if I didn't say that Sorgenkind is even better than its relatively acclaimed predecessor, Music from a fire; it's innovative, stylish, imaginatively laid out and humorously written. Watch out especially for the latest of Chris's wondrously silly historical fables, Chivalry Made Simple.

Spaghetti Junction 2. Jackie Gresham and Mike Dickinson, c/o 146, North Parade, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG 34 8AP.

Extremely literate zine, mixing hysterically funny reminiscences of studio audiences with rather depressing if fascinating insights into the seedier side of life in Italy (most of it, it seems). They need cheering up, I think.

Thyme 26. Roger Weddall, 79, Bell St., Fitzroy 3065, Australia. For news, or 10/15.

Aussie newszine. Essential if you really want to know about Australia, I suppose.

Trying to be Avian . From? For?

Mysterious surreal thing, full of undergraduate humour obviously based on Greenaway's "The Falls", but also containing the (very) odd gem, like an exposition on the ancient art of Wino. ("Wino is like a man hanging from the edge of a precipice. It teaches him to let go and land on his own two feet. Then he can fall over with confidence.") You might just get one from 38, Church Rd., Worcester Park, Surrey ...

Ugly Rumours 3. Owen Whiteoak, Top Flat (left), 112, Polworth Gdns., Edinburgh, EH11 1LH.

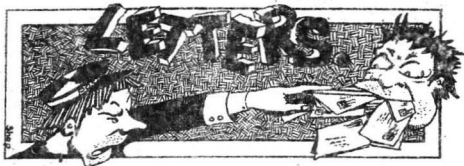
Not up to Owen's best. Mainly about the current Forth membership, and why so many of the new influx are total cretins. It all sounds slightly petulant and dull. Still basically very well written however.

...and finally

Weber Womens' Wrevenge 12. Jean Weber, c/o CSIRO, GPO Box 1800, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia. For the usual or English equiv. of \$A 0.60 (or stamps).

Lively Australian genzine, often well seasoned with Jean's fairly provocative brand of feminism. Result is an often inspired letter column, currently revolving round such unlikely topics as castration, rape and limb loss, and featuring lots of English names. One of the better Australian zines.

((Many thanks to Lilian for a new slant on fanzines, done with not a great deal of notice. Once again the next reviewer is semi-unknown, although I'm tempted to ask Lilian to do a second chunk to follow on in M50. If in doubt, fanzines as usual to the editorial address please - I've a small batch ready to hand over to whoever takes the job on, and will do my best to forward all relevant publications or mention them in addenda to the fanzine column, so please don't panic if you're not included here!))



((Although, as I mentioned earlier, we had many responses this time which were nothing to do with the cover of issue 48, I will start with the latter topic. You'll have to forgive me if I don't quote in full from all letters, because many make the same points in different guises. I have already been warned that any anything I say will be taken as after-the-event justification for an unjustifiable act, but I can't help that. All I can do is to make what I think are pertinent points. The first area of concern is the rationality of putting such an illo on the cover itself, and I can now see that it might have been possible to run the same illustration with an article inside the issue. After a long discussion with friends the other night (not people connected with fandom in any way) they all pointed to various examples of easily-available SF and Fantasy novels with covers depicting the macho male barbarian and the naked slave-girl with enormous breasts hugging his thighs. Everything, of course, only implied, even if not in a particularly subtle manner. We dug out some covers which, had time allowed, I would've produced herein. This imagery for sales alone is both laughable and disturbing, and had M48's cover not been so obviously over-the-top I would have chucked it away. The inclusion of little'key' jokes and the cartoon style would, I hoped, give some of the game away. Still, plans go astray, and in a hurry, I made what appears to be a bad decision. I am worried that in their response to this cover some people had to resort to cheap and abusive terms as the only way to get at me. Calling the editor a 'dildo' is not a valid criticism of anything really, but that and worse winged their way to me over the weeks!

Let's start with some rational criticisms - with the points expressed here I do admit to having some agreement.....

BOB SHAW,
90 ALBERT ROAD,
GRAPPENHALL,
WARRINGTON,
CHESHIRE WA4 2PG

I know how annoying it is when readers only seem to leap to their typewriters when they want to complain about something you've done - but I simply have to protest about the cover of M48. I am not shocked or distressed by it, but it has to be remembered that a BSFA publication

is not a small-circulation fanzine in which anybody can be as crass as he wants and all the others know it is just part of the fun. As I see it (correct me if I'm wrong) part of the main function of the BSFA is to act as an interface with the general public and to spread what we know to be a good gospel. The cover on M48 is bound to work against us.

((I think in a way you're right. However, I would like to ask more about the function the BSFA from the members themselves, hence the rough questionnaire at the end of this issue. I'm not trying to avoid any issues, but all this reminds me of the incredibly varied responses I get on the purpose of it all. Older, fannish members say it doesn't matter what you do, no-one pays any attention anyway, and younger members write and ask for a guide to straight SF and who to read. Most members never respond at all to anything. Is this a sign of satisfaction or of hopeless dissatisfaction? Please write in for M50 and say, so that we can run a major enquiry into the state of the whole kit and caboodle. Bob is correct that there are greater responsibilities to the BSFA publications, and given the input I would like to start addressing myself to those much more conscientiously. On that line exactly....))

FLAT E, 8 CARDIGAN ROAD,
RICHMOND,
SURREY TW10 6BJ

I asked myself, does the editor really understand his responsibility to the BSFA? Has it registered in his braincell that Matrix is an important part of what

people pay for? And , like it or not, disclaim it as much as he will, Matrix gives them their image of the BSFA and what it's about? On the evidence of the M48 cover, I don't think so. Matrix is doubtlessly going to get a huge mailbag about it. Don't be fooled into thinking this is a sign of life. As Andy Hobbs pointed out in Matrix46, something like 1,000 people have left the BSFA since 1979. Most of them probably never wrote a single letter to Matrix and quietly left by letting their membership lapse. Those are the people you should be trying to reach, not the hardened fan whose tolerance level for bad taste and fannish drivel is high.

((If I take it, again, that some of your points are right, then can you give any clues as to why so many people leave? The regular membership is quite good in numbers, but you're correct in saying that this is held so high by new members replacing leaving ones. It may be that they join with an incorrect view of what the BSFA can do, try though it does to cover as wide a number of avenues as possible. I didn't actually need to join the BSFA last year - I'd been in and out of fandom, quietly or noisily, since about 1976, and had been collecting SF since the late sixties. However, since I joined I've found no disadvantages and a number of positive advantages - thus I've tried to persuade other friends to risk what is a very reasonable sum of money for just the six mailings alone. You'd think that there was enough, between all the zines, to keep most members interest up. Or would you disagree? On the topic of image, Phill Probert comments:))

PHILL PROBERT,
32 DIGBY HOUSE,
COLLETS GROVE,
KINGSHURST,
BIRMINGHAM B37

The job of Matrix editor should be to collate and report the current information in SF. Not to alienate and disgust those who would have liked to contribute. An editor should have his/her feelings put to one side and not on the cover.

Also remember that you are the forefront of the BSFA, and in that you are responsible for the image of the BSFA. If that image is of men urinating over women (or whatever it was), what then is a new fan supposed to make of all this?

((That pulls me back to realising that the cover should have had an explanatory article with it, but too late, too late. Sue Thomason commented that ' images often take on power beyond the intentions of their creators ' and she is indeed right. On covers.....))

HILARY WILSON,
56a LAWRENCE ROAD,
SOUTH EALING,
LONDON, W5

You may not be able to tell a book by its cover but such a revolting and irrelevant cover does not entice one to go any further whatsoever. If that's all you can come up with then God help

SF because you aren't. I know this may be strong but I'm fed up with being told that SF is for children, 'Star Wars' fanatics, horror and comic strip readers and worse. Please please please, if you're stuck why not haul out and revamp or not the covers from old pulp mags by 'Emsh', Fawcette, Bok etc. Don't let down all the effort that's gone into the bit between the covers - there's such a range of interesting and stimulating articles etc.

((I'd like to thank Hilary for her letter, especially because I also saw a copy of her letter to Paul Kincaid on this topic and many others. Yes, for some reason SF is still more a male province as you comment elsewhere, and I personally see no reason why. Most of the covers in Matrix's history have been irrelevant, as are the covers to most SF books. They are usually sexist, incorrect and totally designed for a quick sell, regardless of any interior merit. The search for relevance is a long business, and in the meantime we deliberately exploited an offensive irrelevance to take it to absurdity. Does that cover harm SF more than millions of copies of Slavemaster of Gor or whatever is the current title? A mistake, OK, but at least a mistake which brings the issue up rather than leaves it on W.H.Smag's shelves every day, every week. Let's hope this can be discussed properly now and perhaps something good can yet come out of it. Please keep reading. Margaret Hall has more to say on first impressions...))

MARGARET HALL,
THE YOUTH HOSTEL,
KINGS,
DOLGELLAU,
GWYNEDD LL40 1TB

What were you thinking about when you chose that cover?
I can take a joke, but that was just plain disgusting.
In that same issue of Matrix were two letters about
the high turnover of new members of the BSFA. The
mentality that chose that cover is just the mentality
to put off new members (remember, some people are

going to receive that as their first example of a BSFA mailing). What on earth are they going to think of an organisation that perpetrates such obscenities. They are not going to know that it is not typical. I know that if I had been presented with that illo in my first mailing I would have been put off completely, and even though I've been in the BSFA for a couple of years now and I do know it's not typical, it's made me anxious. Could it be a sign of things to come? I sincerely hope not.

((I think you're correct, in that the influence of that illo upon new members is something we didn't take fully into account. I admit that it's easy to forget that other people are not inured to the things you are - a fact that's been brought home in some of the fantastical allegations as to my state of mind and attitude to women. I began to look backwards at the problem and think if I could conceivably see such an illo as a venting of a sexist spleen? As I haven't talked to Pete Lyon recently, I'll have to check up, though I'd never found him with a sexist imbalance of any noticeable kind before. Anyway, it's certainly not a sign of things to come, if that's any help!

The second area of concern over the cover (hope you're still all with us) was the argument of sexism and female degradation. I made a brief mention of this in the editorial, but I'd like to pursue a few points further. Not because I feel a guilty need to defend my attitude towards women, but because of a comment made above by Phill Probert. He says ' an editor should have his/her feelings put to one side and not on the cover.' I do not want members to end up with the impression that the BSFA is full of barbarians emitting whatever over gauzily-dressed women in a state of idiotic gratified ecstasy. I know my own feelings perfectly well. I admire the womens' apa, and thought the Tiger Tea compilation an excellent & enjoyable zine, one of the reasons why I asked Linda Pickersgill, a while ago, to write a brief intro to apa for many people who kept asking ' What are these things all about?' I had even shown the cover to feminists who are friends in Leeds (no, not in the Leeds Mafia!) and they thought it was a spoof, pisstake, or however you want to define it. As I said, you forget that with people who know you, things are seen differently. Mea culpa. Let's look now at what some people wrote in that vein....))

ANDREW ROSE,
19 CATHCART PLACE,
EDINBURGH

I like good artwork in fanzines, magazines, books - in fact anywhere that art is used. I am also a great admirer of Pete Lyon's artwork, but the point of either yourself or Pete producing that cover escapes me.

Would you like the womens' apa to produce stuff like that about you? The apa writers are producing better work than you produce and yet you derogate them in this fashion. As a member of the BSFA who understands who it insults I am disgusted. Heaven knows what members thought who don't read fanzines and have no idea at all what the picture refers to. To them it will be pure gutter filth. I feel an apology should be made in print to the members of the womens' apa, even if it's not from yourself but from other members of the BSFA who disagree with your sentiments about them.

((That's what I mean. The wrong things inferred, the inference lost. No, I don't think that the womens' apa should be used for silly fantasy pursuits, nor do I think that other BSFA officials should apologise for what we do in Matrix. If any members of the apa did think this was a malicious insult against them then as far as I'm concerned I am sorry and I apologise. It wasn't. But it's my responsibility to do so, if needed. And more....))

DAVID PIPER,
414 PARK ROAD,
LIVERPOOL L8 9RF.

I would like to complain in the strongest possible terms about the cover of Matrix 48. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against sex, in fact, I thoroughly enjoy it quite frequently. Nor do I

have anything against pictures of an explicitly sexual nature. Are you listening,

you sexist little idiots responsible for that picture? This is a man writing to you, not a woman, and I say that the cover of Matrix 48 depicts a violent, sickening and false sexuality. It depicts the 'rape mentality' and it depicts it approvingly. Every year many thousands of women are subject to rape and violence precisely because of a society that encourages the casual and infantile attitude towards sex to be found in such pornographic publications as the 'Sun', 'Men Only' etc. The incredible thing is the number of idiots who turn round and call it 'good clean fun' with the amount of violence against women actually on the increase. These people are usually quite incapable of treating women with respect, they are usually insecure and have emotional problems themselves. Are you one of them?

((Yes, I am insecure and have emotional problems, but then most people have, and the possession of such usual human traits is no reason for espousing rape or sexual violence. Of course Matrix 48's cover depicts a 'false sexuality' - it was supposed to do so, not to glorify it but to ridicule it. I am sorry that you should see it as supporting such a gross, unacceptable activity as rape, a particularly abhorrent act. The danger of explicit sexual art or photography is that it can be taken two ways. For some it is an escape from intolerable inadequacy which allows an alternative to actual physical harm. For some it teaches that man, or woman, is a thing which can be taken or possessed with no thought for any emotional consequences. I happen to believe that carefully handled, some 'pornography' can actually release sexual tensions and save portions of society from worse actions. Yet, one use of sexuality I am violently against is the use in advertising, from cars to chocolates. Every photography magazine has a semi-naked woman on the cover. A recent women's magazine (commercial, I hasten to add) had John Travolta half-naked with women clinging to him. Why? Why do the GOR, Conan, Kull books and so on have to rely on nymphets clinging to mountainous warriors, the latter dripping with blood? If we had produced an over-the-top cover with a man standing on a pile of aliens with a hot laser, would we have had this reaction? I doubt it. The healthiest aspect of this issue's mailbag is that many of the letters were from men who wished to object to any possible degradation of women. I would at least call that a healthy sign of balance in BSFA members. But, I'm saying too much again. Back to your letters....))

SUE THOMASON,
9 FRIARS LANE,
BARROW-IN-FURNESS,
CUMBRIA LA13 9NF

In theory, I think censorship is a Bad Thing, I uphold the right of all people to intellectual and artistic freedom, and I would not presume to dictate either to Pete what he should draw or to you

what you should print. In practice I do not want to receive unsolicited pornography. I would be grateful if in future any art which features violence, sadism or the degradation of women could be removed from my copy of Matrix before it is mailed. Pornography is of necessity a very personal taste. One person's mild titillation is another's disgusted outrage. The way that a permissive but responsible society usually gets round that problem is to stick to standards of common decency in material intended for general consumption, and to give clear warning that potentially offensive material is such. Matrix 48 did neither.

In truth, you may wonder where I've been living all this time, but until now I have found the SF community in general refreshingly free from silly stereotyping or gratuitous cruelty, so I am doubly hurt by this cover: I trusted you to be nice people, and you aren't. I realise that the most likely criticism that may be levelled at me is that I'm taking something meant to be 'in fun' or 'as a joke' too seriously. My reply is that images often take on power beyond the intentions of their creators and that someone who finds the picture of a macho barbarian urinating/ejaculating over a Heinekenesque plastic woman funny is likely to think the idea of contributory negligence in rape a bundle of laughs.

((Sorry, Sue. I'd never claim to be a nice person, but I hope from the comments in this issue you might not think quite so badly of us? Anyway, I can't keep quoting and commenting from all the letters, so I'll do a brief 'We also Heard From' here on this specific topic, and move on to other things....

((So, BERNARD SMITH, 8 WANDSWORTH WALK, THORPLANDS BROOK, NORTHAMPTON, wrote advice to Pete: " If Pete really finds it necessary to indulge in his form of exhibitionism, would he please do all the adults in the BSFA a favour and restrict it to the walls of his local public lavatory." PHILL PROBERT also said: " I am told that Pete Lyon did the drawing as a joke. If so, I hope he thinks the joke is funny as it has insulted most of the people I know thru Novacon. It is also very interesting to note that Pete said he was very much 'in' with the feminists of Leeds. I wonder what they would think of him now? " MARTYN TAYLOR, FLAT2, 17 HUTCHINSON SQUARE, DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN, said: " Actually it was a very silly, very immature, very offensive piece of 'art' (so-called) which doesn't prove anything about the BSFA except maybe that it doesn't know how to choose the editors of its magazines.....Did you ever think that you were giving gratuitous offence to every female member of the BSFA (and a good few male ones too!), or was that the intention? Did you ever think at all? " I think I've sort of given answers to some of that, but if anyone isn't satisfied they're welcome to write in again and I'll try and cover the matter further. If time permits now I'm on the dole, I might even begin to answer letters personally, a thing I've wanted to do for months. ROY GRAY (see later for address) did mention quite validly that it's difficult having that sort of cover around with young kids, which is fair enough - I should have thought of that one. A number of other people wrote odd notes in their letters which I hope are all covered here. JOHNNY BLACK, 8 BRACEWELL ROAD, LONDON W10 6AE, wrote a long letter which I can't fit in, but it runs much the same as above, just expressed in slightly different terms. He says, of using such a cover: "Unfortunately, it is the act of doing so which brands not only you and Pete as cretinous nuds, but all of us with any involvement in the BSFA, or any of us who love science fiction for its breadth of ideas, its forward vision, its humanity, its power to change the way we perceive ourselves." All I can say is that it is by confronting dark corners, sick imagery and still keeping a coherent sense of balance and humour, tempered with some understanding, that we learn to perceive ourselves. We don't learn it from just reading SF books. That way lies space rockets and 'carve up the aliens' psychology if we're not very careful. Johnny questioned the roughness of the draughtmanship, and yes, that's why it looks like that - it was supposed to be a cartoony style, not a serious anatomical study. Please, check it out again and think about it. Anyway, thanks for all the letters - I'll cover any more next issue. If you want to express your views, I'm only too happy to get them into the lettercol. That's the idea of it! For the moment, on to other subjects....))

NIK MORTON,
235 WEST STREET,
FAREHAM,
HANTS. PO16 0HZ

"In any case, I don't see how it can possibly be in the public interest to prepare for a war, which you needn't have unless you want to, by maintaining innumerable disturbers of the peace - when peace is so infinitely more important."

Thomas More, Utopia

"Wars will be with us for a long time, perhaps forever. Nevertheless, the elimination of war remains our noblest aim and the ultimate consequence of the Western, Christian ethic. A scientist searching for a way to combat a disease will not drop his work because a new epidemic has broken out. Much less will 'peace on earth' and friendship between men ever cease to be our highest ideal. Human culture comes into being through the conversion of animal drives into more spiritual impulses, through the sense of shame, through imagination and knowledge. Though to this day no panegyrist of life has succeeded in escaping death, the conviction that life is worth living is the ultimate content and consolation of all art. Precisely this wretched World War must make us more keenly aware that love is higher than hate, understanding than anger, peace than war. Or what would be the good of it?" (September 1914) Hesse, If the War Goes On

An unorthodox way to start a letter; of course, the quotations are aimed at the 'discussion' regarding Ken Lake's somewhat intemperate comments on one particular

meeting. Labels such as Left Wing, Trotskyist etc reveal much more about the person using the label...as Joseph Nicholas implies, characterisation goes hand in hand with this modern shorthand; more likely, caricature rather than characterisation! No sensible person wants a war, but equally, historical perspective must have its place - it cannot be thrown out altogether. To paraphrase, the only lesson we've learnt from history is that we never learn from history....

Clearly, Ken felt aggrieved enough to write; his actual method of expressing his feelings was doubtless over the top, even lacking 'balance'. Balance is important in any debate. As Jeff Suter says " (Daily Mail's treatment of) the Greenham Common protest would hardly be done with a notion of fairness or balance. The Mail is slightly right of Attila the Hun, so what was actually meant was that nobody, with any sense, reads the Mail with any seriousness." Odd, that: the comment about Attila does not strike me as balanced either. Probably with the exception of the Economist, all newspapers exhibit bias of various degreee and the reader usually buys those papers with that expectation anyway. Even the Daily Mail can be balanced and critical on American Trade Unions, the SDP's new leadership and the stupidity of some Tory decisions: beware the sweeping statement Jeff - it is invariably suspect.

Perhaps this "hurling of labels" is one of the many reasons for the new member turn-over? Could the occasional cynical (or worse) aside against Thatcherism etc be responsible - could the Left be inveigling into the BSFA? I don't think so, but is that the impression given by the written material?

((Don't ask me, Nik - I'm far too biased to give a straight answer. However, there's no need why Matrix shouldn't be able to take a stroll through the entire political spectrum once in a while, so have a gander at the following letter from Michael King....))

MICHAEL J.KING,
6A NEWLANDS ROAD,
BENTLEY HEATH,
SOLIHULL

I was interested in the letters in Matrix re politics and the BSFA. Perhaps I should confess I always read the Daily Mail (not being clever or rich enough to read the Guardian) and do take it seriously. I found Joseph Nicholas' letter very amusing. It was written as a joke, wasn't it? In case Joseph really is as hard left as his letter indicates, I thought rather than dismiss him as a joker I'd write and explain a few things he'd already know if he read a decent newspaper!

- 1) The USSR is not "surrounded by enemies". Even a casual glance at the map would reveal that it borders on Poland, E.Germany, Rumania, Finland, Mongolia and Afghanistan - all of whom are (in various degrees) Moscow puppets - and Iran, Turkey and China. Iran is not a serious threat to the USSR and China is years behind their military strength. Thus the only dangerous country "surrounding" the USSR is Turkey! Perhaps Joseph could explain why the Soviets spend 13% of GDP on weapons compared with the 4% of GNP spent by the UK, and why SS20s have been deployed against W.European targets before cruise missiles have even arrived?
- 2) The reason the Soviets have not initiated a nuclear strike (yet) is because the West could reply (at present). It has nothing to do with concern for human lives - either in the West or within its own borders. Human consequences of nuclear war concern the USSR only in terms of whether it could wage such a war and still have enough civilians alive to allow the Kremlin leaders to continue to indulge themselves like so many Paul Gettys.
- 3) The current slaughter of peasants in Afghanistan may be a "myth" to Joseph but it is deadly serious to those involved.
- 4) The "explicit refusal" of the Soviets to help Nicaragua overthrow the governments of Central America (at least two of whom - Mexico & Costa Rica - are in contrast to Nicaragua, democracies) may or may not mean the USSR is not aiding the Sandinistas. The Soviets "explicitly" agreed to the Helsinki Declaration of Human Rights, yet as Charter 77 found out in Czechoslovakia, such "agreements" were worthless. The real point in Central America is that Cuba is involved. Fidel

Castro cannot use the toilet without express permission from Moscow, so it is hardly likely he is financing the export of communism without their orders (or indeed Soviet cash, because Cuba is bankrupt). Or does Joseph really think Cuba's invasion in the early 70s of Angola and Mozambique wasn't ordered by Moscow?

5) The situation in the West today - when blind fools call for one-sided disarmament in the face of a massive increase in military spending by the enemy - is the same as in the 1930s. The only difference today is that in Britain, West Germany and the USA we have governments who have not surrendered to the lunatic ravings of the Greenham Common savages or of religious dupes like Kent et al.

My advice to Ken Lake would be to stick with the BSFA - at least while it continues to publish the political views of Mary Gentle, Joseph Nicholas, Angela Carter, Christopher Hodder-Williams etc. On current form the BSFA is not only cheaper than the Guardian - it's more fun, and one doesn't have the worry of being seen purchasing that paper and the subsequent embarrassment of assuring people that one is not a social worker or former criminal, or relative of an aristocratic liberal!

((Er, no - we only have governments who surrender to the rantings of clowns like Ronald Raygun and our Blessed Lady Margaret. Sorry, editorial bias creeping in again. As I type this, I hear a Radio 4 commentator saying the latest speech of Raygun proves that war in space is no longer the province of Science Fiction. I'm worried. Andy Sawyer continues this debate..))

ANDY SAWYERS,
45 GREENBANK ROAD,
BIRKENHEAD,
MERSEYSIDE L42 7JT

I actually think that Joe and Jeff etc are wrong to dismiss the points about Hitler and WW2 as "irrelevant". Obviously, I wasn't at the discussion, and so don't know exactly what was said, but the subject of a appeasement does have a bearing on the current arms debate, if only because it's the argument everyone brings up and should be met with rational argument - otherwise the debate will never get beyond that. True, I don't think there's a direct comparison between Hitler in the 1930s and the Kremlin today (although if the USSR was planning a programme of subversion and military takeover it wouldn't necessarily let me know) but there is clearly an indirect one because people making these decisions have had their thought processes moulded by the events of the 30s and 40s - who can blame them if they don't want to go through that again? The tragedy is that this is probably true on both sides of the Iron Curtain - in fact, I'm sure it is - although that doesn't mean that " they're all nice guys really, just misguided "because that attitude is quite compatible with total ruthlessness and being able and willing to do anything short of mass war if it will be seen to be a way of avoiding mass war its if - a fact some liberals seem to overlook.

((Also a brief comment from Ian McKeer -))

IAN MCKEER,
53 RADFORD PARK ROAD,
PLYMSTOCK, PLYMOUTH,
DEVON PL9 9DN

It's struck me for some years that there seems to be a certain division in fandom - on the one hand the technophobes, who appear to be left wing and people orientated; on the other hand the technophiles, who seem to be right wing and organisation/statistics orientated. Such a dichotomy looks too facile to me to be true, yet that is almost what's produced on a casual reading of opinions in Matrix. Personally I agree with Joe Nicholas' sentiments that SF is part of the real world and therefore to keep politics out of SF is pointless.

((Thinking of my feelings years ago, when I was entranced by the possibility of space travel and exploration, I am saddened by the intrusion of politics into something which seemed the province of SF but which became reality. Do we now have no escape even in space from the vile militaristic policies of the current international community? It seems not, so whatever our opinions, we have to face up to what is happening in the world - we cannot afford the luxury of hiding in safe little genre corners. However, many people have

written concerning other issues previously raised - membership conditions again, the nature of SF and so on - and I'd like to get on to some of these, without permanently submerging the political problems in this and any other field. Simon Ings writes on new members....))

SIMON INGS,
10 GEDDES WAY,
SHEET,
PETERSFIELD,
HANTS. GU31 4DJ

I don't suppose there is any way of knowing whether Roy Gray's fears of falling numbers of 'loyal' members are justified until it's too late. Supposing for the moment that things are as bad as he makes out - what is the BSFA to do in both trying to preserve its original desired aim of promoting especially recent

British SF, and in maintaining its size and importance? I feel that unless the BSFA plays it very carefully, the two aims might become mutually exclusive. The potential 'market' is made up of people who are going straight from their local bookshelves, stacked -and don't we know it!- with mostly American 50s and 60s' classics' and their pale imitations, to BSFA material, which deals with predominantly new British authors - that may be enough to throw many a prospective member.

If the BSFA wishes to provide a fair guide to the British authors, this would be better than further emphasising the divide between the commercially proven and the innovative fields of SF by including 'faintly adulatory' pieces about the SF 'greats'. This way, by introducing new members to the traditional fields of BSFA interest we avoid the dangers of turning the BSFA into merely another organ to celebrate the commercially available proven material. If the BSFA actually recognises the need to perform such introductions, membership 'loyalty' should improve. The 'British SF Writers' series is a step in the right direction, and so is, of course, (wait for it) Interzone. What better way is there to introduce neos to the authors and issues the BSFA is most concerned with. At the moment, thanks to the demise of Extro and the relative newness of Interzone, the jump from being a casual reader to 'fan' is an extremely difficult one. The BSFA can only do so much, but a lot depends on the future of a certain British SF magazine.

((Ian McKeer (address given earlier) had some hints from the Canadian SF group in which he is involved..))

The Edmonton SF group solved (well, attempted with reasonable success) this problem by producing the Neo's Guide to Fandom, which each new member was presented with. It contained a glossary of fanish terms, so they could discover why they were abusively referred to as neos for example, together with potted histories of Canadian SF, SF in general and Canadian fandom, plus information on the Edmonton group. A similar sort of publication might be what the BSFA needs.

((I'm pleased now to be able to print a letter from someone who's only been in the BSFA for a year, and has finally decided to write to Matrix on a number of impressions she's received over the year -))

ANN MORRIS,
17 WELL CLOSE,
NORTHWAY,
TEWKESBURY,
GLOS. GL20 8RS

As a member of the BSFA for a whole year I've now got the confidence to write a letter to Matrix. Some of the jargon still escapes me but I think I've got the general gist. Here are some comments: a little stilted, but intelligible I hope.

1) The problem of 'high member turnover'. BSFA publications are presumably intended to provide SF readers with a wider range of information and criticism of the subject than they'd get from reading 'On your bike' or 'Trends in Royal Underwear', but the format of BSFA publications seems designed to so confuse new members that they disappear discreetly, puzzled and ashamed that they haven't been able to understand what it was all about.

2) BSFA incest. The same names appear time after time, in every publication. This is partly due to the fact that a dedicated few are working furiously to keep everything working smoothly. But, if you look back over a few issues, the same names are on the letters as on the articles. " I'd just like to reply to Chris' response to Andy's letter about David's attack on Joseph's article about Dave's book" etc etc . This is terrifying. The Elect are running the BSFA. What chance has a newcomer got against these Giants?

3) Content. This ranges from 'Boys' Own' ("Tee hee " " Yaroo" " All complaints to Wandsworth Public Lavatory") through uneasy joke macho ("...obscenities.. sickening scenes of stabbings, decapitations..general gore" - Sounds like my sort of film -Ed.) to serious, thoughtful analyses. In addition, the content includes in-jokes, in-fighting and lengthy diatribes about smoking and CND. Anyone reading this stuff would get the impression that smoking is more harmful to one's health than a thermo-nuclear bomb.

((Ann went on to complain about Pete Lyon's cover on M48, and to point out quite rightly that spaceships and the space jocks still dominate all the BSFA illustrations. I can only say in minor defence that the cover of Matrix 47 had neither on, and the last cover was, as I've said, deliberate, even if misguided. On the other points in the letter, well, people have written before that there seems to be too much clan and clique in the publications generally. Because only a limited number of the fairly large membership actually want to write for the BSFA, and because there are a number of unpaid, overworked 'activists' in the BSFA, I suppose this must sometimes come across as Ann describes. However, we've put into print over the last year a number of new members, both in letters and reviews, and a number of new names crop up in this issue of Matrix alone. There are no regulations which stop me from printing letters or articles from totally 'unknown' people - the more the merrier as far as I'm concerned. What I will do is to go through the next Matrix and see if I have included obscure or clique references - if possible I'll explain terminology and give a reason for why someone should be referred to. Must admit, I've not had time to scour this issue, so you'll probably be able to pick me up on loads of points this time! There were so many letters about smoking I felt duty bound to include some of them at least - they haven't quite stopped yet. Does Matrix try to reflect what the members want to express, or should it censor and throw away letters? We try, feebly, to do the former. Speaking as neither a Giant nor an Elect, I hope that you'll write in again, Ann.

And now , a reply to a response to....oh dear. This is fairly straightforward if if you read M48's letter from Simon Ings, concerning nature of SF, quality of SF and so on...))

NEIL ALJAN,
ASSISTANT MANAGER'S HOUSE,
TOMNAVOLIN,
BALLINDALLOCH,
BANFFSHIRE.

So, according to Simon Ings, I hold chauvanistic views that are 'misleading and distasteful'. Well, I'm sorry that I've obviously offended the guy, but as in life, you can't please all the people....

OK, I'll admit that to say we should ignore the people who read 'bad' SF is somewhat elitist, but ask yourself

this: what good to SF are these people doing, eh? The more lumbering 'A rival to Tolkien' trilogies are bought, the more will be produced, because the publishers see them as financial gains. I will continue to call these readers 'mindless sheep' because that is how I view them. They are being led to expect this standard of fiction, and they go out and buy the damn stuff! People who are just entering the sphere of SF will be given the impression that all SF really is, is a collection of massive volumes, most of which are Nth rate reworkings of the basic Tolkien-Quest idea.

I don't feel 'threatened or insular' nor 'superior or snobbish' (that's a joke - me superior). Instead I feel angry, and frustrated. Angry at the publishers who allow this drivel to appear before us, angry at those writers who obviously know how to make a good fast buck or two whilst bringing the 'genre' down with the standard of their books - do they care, they're getting paid, aren't they? Frustrated-well, how else is one to feel standing in one's local bookshop trying to find a book worth buying (or even a book that makes one feel like picking it off the shelf just to have a look at it) and being confronted by pap,pap,pap,pap! True,SF, as with anything, is the good with the bad, but the bad is getting more show than the good for heaven's sake. Simon Ings says that at the lowest level you will get the 'Space Western' or the 'Space Romance'. I'd just like to say that these can/could be good if written well with a good plot and believable characters etc. However, these ideas are not given good treatment because the people behind the typewriters who produce them haven't got the talent.

((I dunno. That's true and false at the same time. I can think of authors who have to produce 'hack' work and scripts because otherwise they wouldn't live long enough to write their better works. What do you do then - write good books and starve? I'm afraid that everybody's conscience disappears with the mortgage payments due and the last baked bean can opened, sad though it might be.

It's a sort of 'Also heard From' time again, I'm afraid. I've still got one or two timeless comments from members which I will try and run next time, but thanks to all the following:

ROY GRAY, 17 ULLSWATER, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE SK11 7YN who wrote a long letter on authors, surveys and especially criticism of Analog in Paperback Inferno, which criticism he believes is used in the wrong way. He says that Stanley Schmidt of Analog appears to be willing to reply to material sent to him or points about Analog submitted, if anyone should want to engage pens.

MARCUS ROWLAND, 22 WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS, LONDON W2 5EA would like to point out that he asked the infamous smoking question at the fabled BSFA meeting, and that the question was actually: "Does the team think that people who smoke in public should be boiled in oil, or hung, drawn and quartered?" This is offered in the interests of totally accuracy (he adds that he prefers the boiling oil).

ROSEMARY PARDOE, 11B COTE LEA SQUARE, SOUTHGATE, RUNCORN, CHESHIRE brings to my attention a rather unusual fact concerning the review of Wark in Martyn Taylor's last fanzine column. Apparently Wark disappeared into the mists a long time ago, and Rosemary moved from that address in 1976! Thanks to Rosemary for noticing - she also offers that anyone interested in fantasy in general and ghost stories in particular should contact her at the above address for details of small press booklets and magazines which she currently publishes or agents for.

PHILIP NICHOLS, 19 KENDAL AVENUE, COPNOR, PORTSMOUTH, HANTS. would like to see more US book news than details of British ones - anyone else agree?

JOY HIBBERT, 11 RUTLAND STREET, HANLEY, STOKE-ON-TRENT, STAFFORDSHIRE ST1 5JG sent me a virtually entirely condemnatory letter which ranged from complaints about the quality of the printing and the non-appearance of one issue - neither of which were my fault, Joy - to the Wark problem - which wasn't my fault either - and finally to the general state of Matrix and incomprehensibility, for which I must reluctantly take some responsibility. I wish people were more willing to talk about things than explode spleens all over the place, however. Still, I should worry, my life. Keep writing.))

MEMBERS NOTICEBOARD

ANSIBLE, c/o 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE RG1 5AU

The British SF newsletter of which it has been said (but never proved) wishes to announce that the subscription rates are £2-00 for seven issues as from issue 33 in June. The long gap between issue 34 and the next is because Langford has been wasting his time writing a novel instead of doing his duty of fanzine production: apologies to all.

DOROTHY DAVIES, 3 CADEL'S ROW, FARINGDON, OXFORD

For sale - going cheap, space in Orbiter Folios. The opportunities offered by this space are priceless, and not to be missed at any cost! Rush eager membership enquiries to above with sae for an immediate if not sooner reply.

IAN R. DICKMAN, 8 BLENHEIM PLACE, LEUCHARS, ST. ANDREWS, FIFE.

Amongst diverse literary classifications I have a considerable number of Science Fiction and Fantasy paperbacks for sale - all of them in excellent condition, the majority as mint. Sale due to arrival of brand new daughter and shortage of shelf space! If anyone is interested, send sae to above address and a list will be supplied, poste haste.

ROY HILL, 14 ALEXANDRA ROAD, MARGATE, KENT, CT9 5SP

Copy of Eric Frank Russell's Great world Mysteries wanted. Will swap spare copy of Fantasy edition of Sinister Barrier, or purchase.

ANDY SAWYER, 45 GREENBANK ROAD, BIRKENHEAD, MERSEYSIDE L42 7JT

To tie in with the Book Marketing Council's SF promotion in October I want to put on a small selection of SF displays at my library. I particularly want to publicise the BSFA - so I'll be asking Alan Dorey for posters etc - and put up something about fandom. Can I ask for samples of fanzines to be displayed - if any editor can send me copies of their zines they'd be gratefully received, especially from anyone in the Mersyside area.

SUSAN SWEET, 42 CHADDIFORD LANE, BARNSTAPLE, DEVON EX1 1RE

Ex-comics fan wishes to sell off large collection of American Marvel comics, plus some early Omnis. Please send sae for list.

((That's it for this time. Next issue, lots of reviews, film and radio, which I couldn't fit in here, plus results of the poll on the next page if anyone sends it in. Keep reading, keep writing, keep breathing etc.....

Simon.))

