

MATRIX

feb/mar 1984

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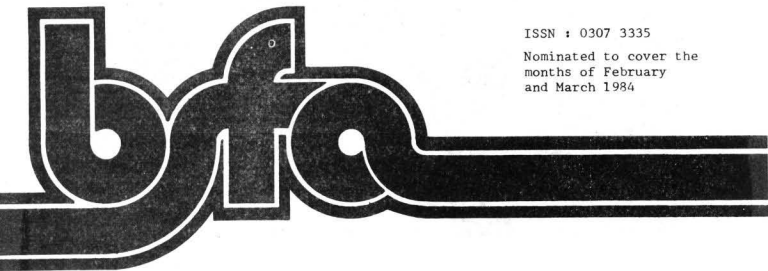


news journal of the bsfa

At last - the year before 1985! I'm sure someone wrote something about it somewhere, but I can't for the life of me remember what it was....so we'll just have to carry on as best as possible. Speaking of bests and possibles, this is the almost new, slightly improved family-sized Matrix, brought to you by the saints and demons listed on the page below. Cries of unrestrained glee will probably not be heard when it is realised that the editor is still none other than mild-mannered Simon Polley, who can still be found in the area of 114 WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS LS3 1DU (yes, I've found the rest of the postcode). This noble grey city is to remain for the rest of the year, Council moles tell me, in West Yorkshire, England - acts of Thatcher permitting - so there is a fair chance that communication to this address will hit the mark.

ISSN : 0307 3335

Nominated to cover the
months of February
and March 1984



Printed in glorious Harveycolour TM by Eve Harvey and John Harvey (patent pending)
of 43 Harrow Road, CARSHALTON, Surrey.

BSFA Subscriptions are available for £7 per annum (please send buoyant currencies)
from the following gentlemen:

Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, BLANTYRE, Lanarkshire, G72 9NA OR...

Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1PL

Sample mailings can be obtained for £1-50, which is deductible from the full
membership fee when you join.

BSFA Back Number Service is handled by:

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Alan Dorey, 22 Summerfield Drive, MIDDLETON, Greater Manchester.

Typed and designed (?) by Simon Polley and Debra Kerr.

Thanks and gratitude in enormous quantities to Eve and John for their sterling work, Alan Dorey for his support and to my future wife for rather a lot of patience. Also, many thanks to all contributors, especially our media review people - keep it coming!

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MATRIX

contents

This whizzo issue contains.....

EDITORIAL	Editor	p 4
ART COMPETITION	Editor	p 5
MATRIXPRESS:	Chairman Column	p 7
	News	Compiled by Ed. p 9
	Conventions	Compiled by Ed. p11
	Clubs	Compiled by Ed. p13
	Library Review	Andy Sawyer p15
	Fast Sellers	Editor p16
OTHER EYES:	Media Reviews	Various Contributors p17
	Video Column	T Wiltshire/J Crampton p20
HEAD APPEAL	M Sillars	p23
FANZINE REVIEWS	J Harvey	p24
STRANGE RELATIONS:	Letters Column *See below	p26

Art Credits: Cover and interior illos - Pete Lyon
Illos on p5 courtesy of Mad Dog & D.West

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS:

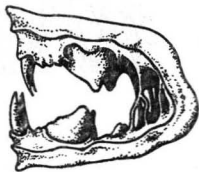
Art must be b/w, A4 and smaller
SAE for return of material
Written material typed or handwritten (clearly, please!)
Members Noticeboard free to all members
Next deadline - first week in March

*Printer's note:

I'm sorry folks, but you're missing the last 6 sides of the letters - Simon didn't allow for the vagaries of the Royal Mail and so the copy came far too late for me to be able to print it all - even though I missed all 3 evening classes to try and get it finished!

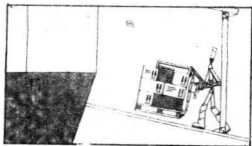
Eve Harvey

EDITORIAL



As Art is my witness, I shall not lie. We could have done better, but I don't think we were that bad. Reviewing old Matrix covers it appears to me that 1983 produced some considerably more interesting designs than previous years. We started with Pete Lyon's "Travelling Wonder", followed by D. West's "Whistler's Mother" (set in no less than a matrix!), and shocked the world with Pete's "Barbarian Espousing Traditional Role Interpretations". D produced an artfully simple "SF-The Good Bits" to appease everyone in M39, and Shep provided a traditional SF cover for the last one. A fair variety there, and yet the only cover to generate any interest was that of M48 which I find has now gone to the States to carry on its pernicious work. This issue's cover was not chosen, as might be said, to further the BSFA's lefty-pinko stance, But because I felt it was a good satirical cartoon and had some relevance to all of our everyday lives. If anyone would like to satirize other aspects of tomorrow, be they left, right or just plain SDP please apply immediately. Good interior illustrations have been harder to find, although D West, Nik Morton and Phill Probert have helped out. Hopefully 1984 will see the return of "Death Starship Revengeance", D permitting.

SF and fantasy Art ranges, as might be expected, from the banal to the astonishing, sometimes specialising in the astonishingly banal. It is hard to believe that there is any common ground between say, the facile rocketship book covers still being used and the gravelly SF cartoons produced by modern French Artists, and yet they are both considered to be within the genre as are such unlikely stable mates as E E 'Doc' Smith and John Crowley. Perhaps cartoons are the most suitable idiom for satirical expression, having been used for over a hundred years to predict and glorify or revile the future of society, yet why does so little of this inventiveness find its way onto the covers of SF novels-the most common source of future speculation. It seems to be the problem of genre fiction that its packaging must display the most hideous reminders of the genre's nature. Thus, Western novels usually display on their covers a gritty unshaven gunfighter, and Crime novels resort to a bloodstained knife, or a half-naked woman with a revolver. Illustrating most modern SF with spaceships is as inappropriate as drawing a suet pudding on the cover of a book about high-class Chinese cuisine. In the latter case, it is true that both are aspects of food, but in essence, they are far apart. If I pick up the 3 nearest SF books at the time of writing, one has a spiral galaxy on the cover, another a monumental spaceship approaching a planet. The nearest book to hand which has been sold as a 'novel' without being heavily categorised is The Clowns of God by Morris West. Effectively a work of religious and political fantasy, speculative fiction, if it had been written by an author known for his or her prowess in the SF field it could have easily been packaged for the SF market - no doubt with futuristic popes receiving garish visions and out-of-proportion bits of the US/USSR War Machine in the background. Instead it receives a dramatic embossed cover with white and gold on metallic purple and the accolades of famous critics. Why not put a spaceship on the cover, on the grounds that there isn't one inside? It works for SF books, doesn't it? Oh for the insight which resulted in Penguin's Modern Classics series - a fascinating range of modern paintings or details on a cool, neutral grey, and a range which included some classic works of speculative fiction. Why is taste so far divorced from marketing that we have to endure Foss spaceships rumbling over so many of our books? Why, Lord, why? (I know this has all been said before, but it's been getting me down recently, and I just needed one more pitiful moan. I received a complimentary SF novel from the publishers this morning, for review. Would you believe me if I said it had a bloody great spaceship and a super alien planet on the cover. Drok it, I say!)



ART COMPETITION

The aim of this art competition is fairly simple - to allow members of the BSFA to try their hand at illustrating what is their news journal. Rather than spend my time whimpering at the feet of some of our regular artists, I prefer to leaf through the thick portfolios of diverse wondrous artists. Unfortunately, I haven't received any yet. Soooo....

This 'ere is a non-pro, fun competition, although professionals are more than welcome to send material in. The prizes are, I suppose, somewhat nominal, but we will be awarding a £3 book token for the best cover design and a £2 token for the best of the interior illustrations. The illos should be A4 and smaller, in black and white, and should aim for one of the following categories:

- 1) SF Satire
- 2) Inventive use of regular SF imagery
- 3) Unusual graphic designs
- 4) Topical issues affecting our future

Please avoid too many gigantic spaceships or bulging barbarians, unless it's a pretty good skit! SAE must be included if return is required. Best entries will be used in future issues of M and possibly shown around other BSFA departments. The Judge will be Me, plus regular artists' help. Entries to Editorial Address, as usual, by first week in March please.



BRITAIN IN 87!

Britain was Fine in Seventy-Nine...

We think the time is right for another British Worldcon. Seacon 79, the last World SF Convention in this country, was tremendously successful and popular. Now we're bidding for 1987, armed with the experience of Seacon plus great gobs of fresh talent, ready to make this a more superbly wonderful convention than any previously held in Britain.

Britain's Heaven in Eighty-Seven

What has this bid got going for it? We're better-prepared than ever to handle a Worldcon, with lots of people now experienced in running the British cons which have grown hugely in size and number since 1979. We're not merely a local group of fans: we have the whole country's talent and expertise to draw on. We've been encouraged by noises of support from America, Australia, continental Europe and the professional SF world. (You don't need to look beyond, say, number 1 on our pre-supporters' list to find such names as Gene Wolfe.) And for British fans 1987 is a special year, a golden year. In 1937, eleven fans—including Arthur C. Clarke and Eric Frank Russell—gathered at the Theosophical Hall in Leeds for the world's first organized SF convention. Fifty years later, at a 1987 British Worldcon, would seem the right time and place for all of us to celebrate a sort of Golden Jubilee.

Where and When?

Provisionally we've rejected the Theosophical Hall in Leeds as our venue. As yet, spies are still checking out the best possible sites in the country. The choice may seem restricted, but we still hope to surprise and delight you all. Watch this space! The date will be on and around the Bank Holiday weekend near the end of August 1987. This normally falls the week before America's Labour Day—so intrepid con-goers would again be able to hurtle straight from the British Worldcon to North America's substitute event the NASFIC.

We Name the Guilty Ones

The present bidding-committee nucleus, small but frighteningly efficient, is poised to expand fungus-like and engulf vast sectors of British fandom. The spores, as it were, are Chris Atkinson, Malcolm Edwards in the chair, Colin fine, Dave Langford, Hugh Mascetti and Martin Tudor. Between us we can boast experience on countless past and present con committees (including Seacon 79 itself, various national cons and the imminent Eastercon/Eurocon, Seacon 84), plus assorted Hugo nominations, professional SF writing, editing and publishing achievements, fanzine publications, fan-poll and TAFF victories, and general fannish know-how. Also we are modest, incredibly modest.

A Word from our Treasurer: 'Money'

The day of judgement comes in 1985 at Aussiecon II, Melbourne, whose members will select the 1987 site—join Aussiecon now! To win our Worldcon against stiff opposition from two North American bids, we need to advertise all over the place, to convince waverers of Britain's true worth and open-handed generosity, to hold con parties promoting the bid, and much more. This costs money. Donations from fans, organizations and cons are always highly welcome; further ingenious schemes to separate you from your money will be unveiled throughout 1984. Our leading bargain offer is Pre-Supporting Membership: for a mere £1.00 or \$2.00 (US or Aussie) we will put your name on a list and publish it ruthlessly. The cost is ultimately deductible from the cost of full con membership, assuming we win, which of course we shall. Send money quickly, before we come to our senses and raise the amount—to your nearest Britain in 87 agent if his/her address is somewhere on this sheet. Otherwise, direct to our permanent address:

BRITAIN IN 87, 28 DUCKETT ROAD, LONDON, N4 1BN, GREAT BRITAIN.

bimonthly

MATRIXPRESS

the voice of the bsfa



((We start off the New Year with a much larger news section and the return of the Chairman's Column after a considerable lapse.....))

Thoughts of the Chairman Now

Many people have written to me and asked the question, "What are you planning to do to celebrate 1984?". The simple answer, as far as the BSFA is concerned is Nothing.

Too much has already been written about Orwell this year; our TV screens are full of references to 1984, to Eric Blair, to the Isle of Jura and old school chums giving their personal memories of what a dull child he really was - even our radio stations seem determined not to let us forget that this is 1984. I feel that the novel is a supreme piece of writing, but cannot help but think that if it had gone out under its original title and it hadn't been Orwell's last work before his untimely death, then there wouldn't nearly be as much fuss made about it.

We're in an overkill position, and it's all contrary to what Orwell had in mind anyway. Orwell's dearest wish just before he died was that no biography would ever be written about him. No fuss, no false honour - let his books do the talking. Indeed, the Estate of George Orwell have tried everything they can to avoid there being a Grand Celebration of 1984. They have halted 99% of the more dubious "merchandising" ideas, balked at the idea of a new movie version and have consistently tried to ensure that the year slips by uneventfully.

Regrettably, this hasn't proved to be the case and I certainly do not wish the BSFA to jump on the proverbial bandwagon and milk the

novel for all it's worth. Orwell wrote many other books, some to my mind far more important than 1984 and he also wrote numerous essays, so why should we create such a brouhaha over one creative item? The Guardian newspaper summed it up rather well just recently by comparing 1984 to other contemporary novels, concluding that Aldous Huxley did the job equally as well in "Ape and Essence". And yet, how many of us actually remember this work now? It's not even in print. Roll on 1985 - with the hope that Anthony Burgess's somewhat less successful work "1985" doesn't command the same attention!

THE BSFA IN 1984

In many ways for us, this is a watershed year. The BSFA has been ticking over quite nicely in the past few months, but I have become acutely aware that some of the standards are slipping. Matrix has been the subject of a larger than usual number of comments and complaints, and obviously this is high on the list of priorities for improvement. Simon Polley has had a difficult task to do and judging by what I have seen of this latest issue as I type these words, I am sure that it will be well received.

Focus has been delayed recently; our litho machine broke down at a most inconvenient time, so even though the gallant editors had submitted copy on time to John Harvey, it's been sitting untouched for the past two months. However, I am pleased to say that the machine is now repaired and that matters are back under control. As you may know, Allan Sutherland, Chris Bailey and Dave Swinden have reluctantly decided to stand down as Focus editors. I'd like to thank them for all the time and effort

they've had to put into producing Focus over the past three years and wish them success with any future projects they may have.

I see Focus as being a very important and integral part of the BSFA's service to members and at a recent Committee meeting it was reiterated that Focus must be kept going. We need new editors. It only appears twice a year, but I believe that far more planning and organising needs to go into it than, say, Vector (Forgive me Geoff!) because of its specialist nature. As a consequence, any would-be applicants must consider very carefully the time they have available, the energy they can input and importantly, the contacts they have for acquisition of material.

I already have two willing volunteers, and have contacted them separately about the editorship and at the above mentioned Committee Meeting, it was decided to offer the post to those people subject to our satisfaction of their ability to handle the job. I am pleased to say that I have received a formal letter of application and will announce their names in the next mailing in early April. However, if anybody has any thoughts, ideas or suggestions regarding Focus and what it should be doing, why not write to me and let me know?

NEWS

BSFA AWARD BALLOT - Please don't forget to vote in this very important event. With the size of this year's Eastercon, Season '84, this will be an ideal opportunity to increase the number of people who cast their votes and thus make the Award categories far more representative. This year, Joseph Nicholas (Administrator) will be purchasing the Awards before Season '84, ready to present at the Awards Ceremony on the Sunday evening. Your vote counts - so USE IT!

BSFA AGM - Formal Notice of this will be announced shortly, including a note on the accounts and the Agenda. However, now is your chance to air your views, so if this is anything that you wish to be included on the Agenda, please let me know before February 29th.

BSFA MAILING SESSIONS - The numbers of people turning up on these occasions is, unfortunately, dropping slightly and it's the same old names who we end up relying upon. Come along and show what steved stuff you're made of! They're held at the University of Reading over a weekend, but the best thing to do if you're at all interested is to ring Keith Freeman who'll fill you in on the details. He can be found on Reading (0734) 666142, and will be delighted (I'm sure!) to tell you times, dates and how to get there.

BSFA BIBLIOGRAPHIES - As mentioned above, we have had printing problems recently, hence the recent delay of the Keith Roberts Bibliography which some of you have paid for already. Do not fear! We are not absconding with the funds to the Bahamas - they will be ready very shortly and will be despatched with all due speed.

BSFA FOSTERS - I have still a reasonable number of Jim Barker's Poster available. It comes in two styles - one with full BSFA blurb on how to join and so on, and the other with a blank space for your own local group to advertise its meetings etc. If you would like a small supply (strictly for sticking up in libraries, Bookshop windows, Noticeboards - not bedroom windows!) please let me know and send a large stamped S.A.E.

Finally - we have a number of things planned for the rest of 1984 that I will be able to tell you about in the next mailing. However, in the meanwhile, why not make a note in your diary to come along

and see some of the BSFA COMMITTEE at Seacon '84 in Brighton this Easter - we'll have a desk set up with all manner of tempting items for sale, and then later, at the end of May (co-inciding with the Bank Holiday weekend) there'll be a special BSFA presentation at Mexico, definitely a convention worth supporting (See listings elsewhere in Matrix for full details).

Starting in the next Matrix we'll also be having a series of articles written by the various BSFA committee persons and officers to tell you a little bit more about what their jobs are - the pitfalls and the joys of slaving away for the BoSFA.

I'll see you then.

ALAN DOREY - CHAIRMAN

THE NEWS IN-BRIEF: GENERAL SF TOPICS

We now have available three sets of results for 1983 awards - the World Fantasy Awards, the British Fantasy Awards and the Eurocon Awards. Details as follows.....

THE 1983 WORLD FANTASY AWARDS

LIFE ACHIEVEMENT: Roald Dahl
BEST NOVEL: Niffit the Lean by Michael Shea
BEST NOVELLA: (tied) "Beyond All Measure" by Karl Edward Wagner
"Confess the Seasons" by Charles L. Grant
BEST SHORT FICTION: "The Gorgon" by Tanith Lee
BEST ANTHOLOGY/COLLECTION: Nightmare Seasons ed. Charles L. Grant
BEST ARTIST: Michael Whelan
SPECIAL AWARD (PROFESS.): Donald M. Grant (publisher)
SPECIAL AWARD (NON-PROF.): Stuart D. Schiff (Whispers Press)

THE 1983 BRITISH FANTASY AWARDS

BEST NOVEL: The Sword of the Lictor by Gene Wolfe
BEST SHORT STORY: "The Breathing Method" by Stephen King
SMALL PRESS AWARD: Fantasy Tales ed. by Stephen Jones & David Sutton
BEST FILM: Blade Runner
BEST ARTIST: Dave Carson
SPECIAL AWARD: Karl Edward Wagner

THE 1983 EUROCON AWARDS:

BEST WRITER: Chris Priest (UK) & Istvan Nemere (Hungary)
BEST PROZINE: Fantastyka (Poland) & Solaris (West Germany)
BEST FANZINE: Kvazar (Poland) & Shards of Babel (Netherlands)
BEST WORKS: Ljude, Zvezde, Svetori, Vesolja (People, Stars, Worlds, Space)
by Drago Bajt (Slovenian)

Film news ranges from the sublime to the virtually unmentionable. The major fantasy film doing the rounds at the moment is Krull - if you haven't seen it yet, perhaps it might be worth seeing the comments in the reviews section before going any further! Pia Zadora, late of Butterfly (incest not insects) and Penthouse fuzzy-focus shots, is to star in a low budget SF film The Attack of the Rock n' Roll Aliens which starts filming soon. Stephen King's novel Christine has been made into a film by Columbia and should be released in March - the good news is that the director is John Carpenter. Apparently Forrest J. Ackerman, the eternal dabbler in US science fiction scenes, is supposed to have a 'spotlighted cameo role' in a short fantasy film called Thriller directed by John Landis. As Landis directed Michael Jackson's video Thriller which was shown on TV a little while ago, was Mr. Ackerman one of the dancing ghouls? We should be told. A new borderline SF film is being produced in Sweden as a joint venture with UK film-makers - it is based on a novel called The Fighter by Swedish Harry Kullman. The Dune saga rolls on, and NEL are rumoured to be re-issuing the book with Sting on the cover to promote the release of the film later this year. As I remember that NEL

re-issued Dune a few years ago announcing that it was "soon to be a major film" I will believe it when I see it. The BBC are apparently planning to make a 39 part SF series based on John Christopher's children's books, to be called the Tripods. Initial reports say this is based on the Prince in Waiting trilogy, but I would venture to suggest that its more likely based on the trilogy The White Mountains, The City of Gold & Lead and The Pools of Fire.

On the book front, Paul Kanter of Jefferson Starship has written an SF novel featuring a rock group who develop telepathic powers. There is also a soundtrack album which coincides with the novel, and it doesn't take much to guess who have done the music - no, not Bucks Fizz! Doubleday books have bought a collection of Philip K. Dick's short stories entitled I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon - included are one unpublished story, a speech on the art of writing SF and a number of uncollected stories. I sometimes wonder what happened to the rest of the early novels written by Dick which never got full public release - there were rumours after his death that these might be revived, and I'd be interested if anyone has further news of them. NEL have bought the UK rights to Battlefield Earth by L. Ron Hubbard (remember reports on the subject last year in Matrix) and the man responsible for the purchase, Trevor d'Cruze, has set up a new imprint called Quadrant Publishing. Both hardback and paperback are to be printed this year. Around Easter, Dave Langford's The Leaky Establishment should be out from Frederick Muller. This is, so they tell me, a humorous treatment of the atomic weapons research field, not at all based on Mr. Langford's own experiences in an Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, honest! It purportedly contains such everyday items as flying saucers, nuclear arms stockpiled in a spare bedroom, randy security men fondling the hero's thighs, siege catapults etc, as you might expect. Gollancz are bringing out Micromania by Charles Platt in March - this covers the seamy side of the microcomputer craze, and has been revised for the UK edition by a world-famous novelist not unrelated to the author of the previously mentioned book, to name no names. Well-known Sri Lankan scuba diver Arthur C. Clarke has a book coming out from Granada called 1984: Spring - apparently this is a collection of A.C.C.'s previously unpublished pieces. Finally from the literary world, William Golding, author of Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors, has won the 1983 Nobel Prize for Literature.

One sad note is that Mary Renault, famous for her historical/fantasy works, has died at the age of 78, and will be sorely missed.

Fantasy readers might be interested to note that Maurice Sendak's children's book Where the Wild Things Are has been turned into a fantasy opera by Oliver Knussen. This is a modern opera which, although based on a book usually sold for kids, is quite accessible to adults and actually has the libretto written by Sendak himself. The current production is by the Glyndebourne Company.

On a rather serious note, news comes that the North East London Polytechnic's Science Fiction Foundation is hosting a conference called 1984: Now or Never which is linked to the University of California's conference 1984: Manifested Destinies. The Transatlantic package, called '1984: The View From Two Shores', is to be presented in the UK from July 2nd to 5th and in the USA from April 14th to 15th. The conferences examine, from two distinct cultural settings and viewpoints, the issues raised by the coming and going of the mythic year 1984 - first the nature and limitations of future speculation in fiction, and second the tensions in that fiction between the fundamentally open-ended vision of science and the necessity of an ending that marks utopian/dystopian speculation. The conferences further consider the role and myth of the city of the future. The UK conference will be introduced by Arthur C. Clarke and those wishing to attend the conference without presenting a paper will be welcome and will be able to participate fully in discussion sessions. The conference fee is £75 plus VAT, and there will be the chance of arranging hotel accommodation at a reasonable cost. Details of the USA conference should be obtainable from Colin Greenland, SF Foundation, NELP, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS. UK administration is handled by Colin Nabby at the same address.

CONVENTION NEWS

And now, a glance at all the wondrous events which most of us won't be able to afford to attend during the next year or so, both here and in far away places (for the adventurous among you)....

ITALCON X/ ORWELLCON is to be held in Abano Terme (Padova) near Venice from 29th to 30th March 1984, and although I doubt many Granbretanians will attend, the contact address is Mauro Gaffo, Via XX Settembre 5, I-35031 Abano Terme, Italy. Well, it's nice to feel a bit international, non?

SEACON will be held from 20th to 23rd April 1984 at the Metropole Hotel, Brighton, and is, as all should know, the combined British Eastercon and Eurocon for this year. A large event with multiprogramming, lots of chatter has been flying around about the mobile Guest of Honour list. Various changes have been made over the last year due to multifarious unforeseen problems. One of the biggest arguments appears to have been over the inclusion of Pierre Barbet (a French writer whose real name is apparently Claude Avice) as a Guest of Honour. Famous Maxim Jakubowski has questioned the selection rather openly, whilst just-as-famous John Brunner befended the choice on the grounds, as I understand it, that Barbet is fluent in English and very active in the fan world of Europe. He should be an interesting speaker, though I would also ask why he is really a proGoh rather than a fan Goh? It seems that the best French writers are fairly linguistically insular when it comes to speaking the silly mothertongue we employ. I don't blame them, personally. And I like their apples. Oh, anyway, SEACON should have something for everyone, if you can find it, and is a chance to meet fans and addicts from many other countries, which should be fun (remember to pack a Babel-fish!). Contact address is Pauline Morgan, 321 Sarehole Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AL.

TYNECON II/ MEXICON is coming! A convention which aims to be friendly and open, it will cover many aspects of speculative fiction, including fanzines and magazines, novels and films, with the film programme promising to be pretty interesting. There will be a single continuous fannish & SF programme, and the con will be held at the Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle upon Tyne from 25th to 28th May 1984. Room rates are £13-25 a double/twin (per person) and the same for a single, £16-50 with bath. Attending membership is, I believe, still at the rather remarkable price of £5. Contact Sue Williams, 19 Jesmond Dene Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 3QT. Viva la Convencion! as they say.

ALBACON 84 will be Glasgow's 9th SF convention, and is to be held at the Glasgow Central Hotel from 20th to 23rd July 1984. The guest of honour is man of action Harlan Ellison ("I have lots of mouth and I will scream"). This promises to be "four days of films, talks, quizzes and general silliness as well as a bookroom with dealers from all over the country and an Artshow, a Computer room, a Wargaming (Dungeons & Dragons) room and everything that goes to make a Science Fiction Convention four days of fun". Let's face it, they all say that, but I did enjoy my brief trip to the Glasgow con last year, so it could be worth a look. Attending membership is £9 and supporting membership is £4, to be sent to Ms.F.J. Nelson, 62 Campsie Road, Wishaw, ML2 7QG. Unfortunately, the first Progress Report informs me that there will be no budgies on tricycles this year, so I might have to think twice about it myself.

OXCON trundles along for the August Bank Holiday this year, with Brian Aldiss as guest of honour. Membership is £8 from M.S.Porter, 28 Asquith Road, Rose Hill, Oxford. The con will be held at St. Catherine's College, Oxford.

WORLDCON 1984 is the Californian LA CON II from 30th August to 3rd September,
Contact address for the nouveau and idle rich is PO Box 8442, Van Nuys,
CA 91409, USA.

NOVACON 14 will be held at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham from 9th to 11th November,
with the membership being £6. Guest of honour is well-known UK author and
collaborator Rob Holdstock, and the contact address is Ann Thomas, 11 Fox
Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27.

YORCON III is the main bid so far for the UK Eastercon in 1985. Bidding will be
at SEACON (see earlier in this section) - it is planned for Easter '85
and will be held at the Dragonara Hotel. As I've not yet been informed
of another major bid, I'll go ahead and list some of the details while
there's time to think it over before the votes are cast. From the flyers:
"The Dragonara, some of you will remember, was the site of the first two
YORCONs in 1979 and 1981, two near perfect conventions, as any member of
our committee will assure you. At any rate, they do seem to have gone
down in history as two for the most successful Eastercons of recent years.
This has been in large part due to the relaxed atmosphere of the Dragonara
and the sympathetic attitude of its staff, who show every outer sign of
being real human beings.....After all, following a period in which
Eastercons have bounced back and forth from one end of Britain to the other,
we do think it makes sense to hold it in the centre for a change. And
Leeds is very close to that." Presupporting membership is £1 to Mike Ford,
45 Harold Mount, Leeds LS6 1PW.

WORLDCON '87 has a British bid this time - if successful this will be the first
WORLDCON in Western Europe since 1979. See page 6 for full details of how
to support and exactly what you're supporting!

Glasgow's Ninth Science Fiction Convention
Glasgow Central Hotel 20-23rd July 1984

ALBACON 84

WORLD CON 84

ALBACON 84 GUEST OF HONOUR

**HARLAN
ELLISON**



NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

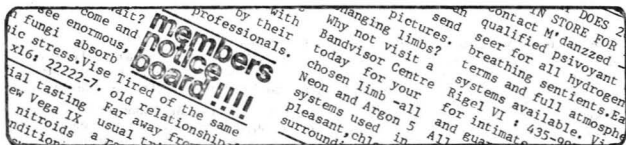
All news of activities and adventures (or misadventures) plus changes of address and meeting place should be sent to The Editor, at the usual editorial address, natch. For the moment it seems fairly suitable to compile the details here and print them direct, unless some wild, foolish person offers to serve...

CHESTER AND DISTRICT SF GROUP: Going by the glorious name of CAD (Chester and District - along the lines of BAD and.....oh, you'd guessed) we meet, er, fairly regularly, although not always in the same place, if you understand me. Any fan in the general area of Chester and it's beautiful environs is welcome to turn up. The place is usually a pub, but we move round a fair bit to be fair on people who have to drive etc, so get in touch with me, Jeremy Crampton, 10 Vicarage Road, Hoole Chester, CH2 3HZ, or our erstwhile chairman (unanimously elected whilst getting his round of drinks in) Pete Crump, 9 Llys Wylfa, Mynydd Isa, Mold, Clwyd, CH7 6XA. In fact wherever you live, if you're prepared to turn up and do your duty towards easing the balance of payment deficit by buying the odd drink or two, or three.....then you are doubly, or trbly welcome. Pete is also a triff artist and it is at this very moment slaving over a cover of our new fanzine that will soon emerge and knock you all to bits I don't think..... But we can't all be bad if Great Pete Presford is one of our members can we? ("If Pete Presford thinks it's a worthwhile group to join then perhaps you will too " to coina phrase). Anyway that's all for now: keep watching for that fanzine!

LANCASTER SF GROUP: The Lancaster SF group meets (or fails to do so) on the first Wednesday evening of the month at 7.30 pm at 45 Blades St, Lancaster and proceeds onto a pub (if it has met) at 8 pm. I'm its secretary and run a more-or-less haphazard mail-order (new and 2ndhand, US and UK) service for it. We talk, drink, some ,sleep, fornicate, work, sign on,die, gafiate, get reborn (as fans, Christians, orange people, babies, etc) and occasionally read. It anyone'd be interested in talking to us, we might listen might pay travel costs - write to us at the above address.

NORWICH SF GROUP: The Norwich Science Fiction Group is trying to reform. At present it consists of myself, Robert Stubbs and David Bethel meeting down the Ten Bells in Norwich and occasionally saying things like, "Let's reform the SF group," "Yea, good idea," and "Uh....." I leave you to guess which one we say the most often. Norwich used to have a thriving SF club and if there are any BoSFarians in Norfolk you can get in touch with me at the address below. When we reform we will probably meet in the WHALEBONE pub, Magdalen Road, Norwich on a Tuesday at 8.30 pm. Which means we avoid the dreadful folk music in the Ten Bells "Hooray". Meetings will be pretty informal which is just as well if there is still only three of us after a few weeks, if there is anybody out there who's interested, suggestions will be gratefully received. Because the club is so small anyone interested should be prepared to put some effort into the group and not be put off if we lapse into silence or slide hic-cupping under the table during the evening. As an added incentive to join I have a few books I can lend out including The Black Line, The works of Robert P Faulcon, The International Science Fiction Yearbook (1979), Who's Who in Science Fiction and many other classics of the genre. If you're really lucky I may read out the more obscure bits of Anisble at the meetings and if we get more than 10 members (ha!) then OnceZine, "the most incredible clubzine ever"(Ibid), will be resurrected; "Stop groaning David.....".

Next deadline for clubs and groups - 1st of March. Merci, Messieurs & Mesdames!



((Members' Noticeboard is a free advertising service for all members who wish to exchange items, find contacts or publicise ventures etc. Use it as you will (well, nearly!)))

DOROTHY DAVIES, 3 CADELS ROW, FARINGDON, OXON.

Would you buy a used car off that man? Would you buy a used Orbiter place off me? Of course not, and I wouldn't expect you to, either. On the other hand, I have brand new, never touched, unsullied, unspoiled Orbiter places just waiting for the sparkling new writers out there in BSFA land. An SAE to the above address will bring you details of this enchanting offer!

JOANNE OTHICK, 34 WOODFIELDS, CHIPSTEAD, SEVENOAKS, KENT, TN13 2RB

Wanted: Contacts or SF group meeting in the area of the above address for information on local SF literature sources, discussion and SF-type socialising. Newcomer to SF groups would appreciate further introduction.

KEITH PUGH, 27 TREETOPS DRIVE, BRACKENDALE ESTATE, WILLENHALJ, WEST MIDLANDS WV12 4BQ

Wanted: Fantasy & SF April '76, May '76, July '77, April '78. I. Asimov's SF Magazine No. 5. Amazing Stories Jan '76, Apr/May '76, March '82, June '82, August '82. Good prices paid - please contact above address.

NIGEL RICHARDSON, 9 WINDSOR GREEN, GARFORTH, LEEDS LS25 2LG

For sale: 70 issues of Fantasy & SF from 1973 to 1983. Please send SAE for list.
Wanted: New Worlds 187: non-silly price paid.



((This issue we include the first in an occasional series on the role and progress of SF and related literature in libraries. Andy Sawyer reports on a promotion in his Liverpool library.....))

It seemed like a good idea at the time - to link up with the 'Venture into SF' idea and present a wider display about SF and fandom in my library. It would also gather information about stock use - I could see if a massive display had any measurable effect on the number of SF books going out, and thus back up my pleas for more display material. I could indulge myself, and pretend to be an expert at the same time. Yes, it seemed like a good idea.

I thought up a snappy title - Side by Side with Science Fiction - and started to plan. A fortnight later I was surrounded by photocopies of significant pieces from old magazines and had a rough draft of an illustrated history of the SF magazine (with only a few of the best bits left out) and a host of BSFA posters, magazines and assorted fanzines. But how to present it to a Wallasey public which seemed to have hardly heard of SF? Back to the drawing board.....

Now, although what I've just said is more or less true (if you want confirmation was something like 1.8% of the total fiction issue which proportionately, i.e in terms of the relationship between available SF and non-SF books on the shelves, was on the low side). However, I knew that there were at least 2 SF writers living in Wallasey. Douglas R. Mason is author of a great many space-opera type of novels, under his own name and as John Rankine. Julia Riding has had 3 novels published by Hale, 2 of which I had read and enjoyed. I phoned and turned on that charm known only to librarians when they want to scrounge something. Douglas Mason came down with a box full of manuscripts, proofs, translations and Space 1999 scripts. While Julia Riding allowed herself to be interviewed and told me of her plans for a series of children's SF novels. I sent out an urgent SOS throughout the Wirral library service for more books by these writers.

The final result was a display featuring the aforementioned look at SF magazines, and drawing attention to the local links of Douglas Mason, Julia Riding, and Wirral-born Olaf Stapledon, ending up with a board given over to the BSFA and fandom. Most of the material on show was photocopied from either my own collection - such as it is - or material loaned by Douglas Mason. Colin Gould of Ogre Books, 120 Picton Road, Liverpool (that's the plug !) helped me out with fanzines and the very presence of his extensive second-hand book section. The display was backed up with books by the authors concerned, multiple copies of the 'Venture' list and a selection of new SF purchases, all prominently placed on stands around the display boards.

The final result was, as they say, mixed. I'd hoped to get a lot of publicity, and to that end contacted the 2 local radio stations and the newspapers. Surprisingly, only one contact took me up, despite my effort to emphasize that I was featuring local writers. Among the people who came into the library many people commented favourably; Douglas Mason especially being a well-known local figure and former headmaster and an ex-councillor.

In terms of book exposure the experiment was pleasing. Only one book was not borrowed out of the 'Venture' list - and that was a 'standard' novel which had for a long time been part of the library stock. During the time the display was up the issue of SF nearly doubled, and even now the exhibition is over and the books are back on the shelves less prominently shown, the fallback is only slight. In general the SF stock is a lot brighter and is being used a lot more than before the exhibition; it's still a minority interest, but someone is obviously reading it. Incidentally, the number of people who take out nothing but SF is far less, proportionately, than those whose staple diet is, say, romances or crime.

What next? Well, I'd leave SF alone for a while - but someone has just donated 100 Western paperbacks to us.....

((Is there anyone else out there involved in the libraries? If so, how about comments on your experiences or experiments?

Whilst directly on the subject of books, I'd like to turn our attention now to a feature in the Guardian recently on fastsellers, ie titles which have moved quickly over the last year and made an immediate sales impact. I've extracted the SF related information and presented it as below. It makes curious reading!))

FASTSELLERS 1983

Taken from the top 100 fastsellers, selected for SF links.

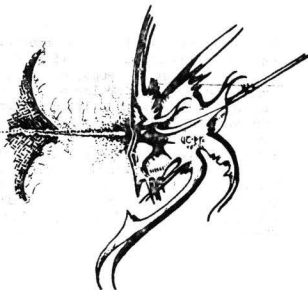
Overall Position	Title	Author	Gross Sales
8	<u>Return of the Jedi</u>	James Kahn	548,536
16	<u>White Gold Wielder</u>	Stephen Donaldson	372,189
20	<u>2010 Odyssey 2</u>	Arthur C. Clarke	342,091
37	<u>Forest of Doom</u>	Ian Livingstone	218,300
38	<u>Fall of Russian Empire</u>	Donald James	212,507
39	<u>Jedi Storybook</u>	Joan D. Vinge	204,081
43	<u>Citadel of Chaos</u>	Steve Jackson	195,800
48	<u>Stonor Eagles</u>	William Horwood	173,537
50	<u>Non-born King</u>	Julian May	169,710
69	<u>Superman 3</u>	William Kotzwick	141,077
70	<u>Starship Traveller</u>	Steve Jackson	139,320
73	<u>City of Thieves</u>	Ian Livingstone	129,360
76	<u>When the Wind Flows</u>	Raymond Briggs	125,116
83	<u>Crystal Singer</u>	Anne McCaffrey	120,149
86	<u>Junior Jedi</u>	James Kahn	117,474

The sales of these titles obviously depends on the time of their release during the year, but as this and other factors apply fairly equally to any attempt to isolate areas or genres, I've not bothered to calculate for it here. The main point is that we have 15 titles, some of which I reckon are barely SF or fantasy, out of the top 100 fastsellers in the UK. Out of that 15, I would only class 4 as true SF novels - those by Donaldson, Clarke, May and McCaffrey. Only Crystal Singer is a novel in its own right, not a sequel, and even that is a collection of short stories if one wanted to be uncharitable. The other three are novels, but are tied into a sequential rig which alters their significance, story and sales-wise. The titles at positions 37, 43, 70 and 73 are role-playing books, following on from The Warlock of Firetop Mountain and are also at the top of the childrens' bestseller list! At least four of the listed titles could be classed as film spin-offs, so where does this leave the good old SF or fantasy novel? It leaves such animals in short supply with little market presence if you look at it like that. Happily, fastsellers are usually transient, and good speculative fiction should sell steadily through the years (we hope!). Still, the books here are media and games books, a comic (?) book, a few fringe novels and virtually no major SF novel, however you look at it. Why is there this sort of range, and not a serious, witty, deep, refreshing or whatever list of real speculative fiction to fill this page? Answers in a 300 page thesis please.

NEWS COLUMN CREDITS ARE VERY DIVERSE, BUT ARE DUE ESPECIALLY TO BRUM SF GROUP, LOCUS, THE GRAUNAD, SHARDS OF ABEL & BSFA PERSONNEL. THANKS TO ALL.

OTHER EYES

media reviews...



((This issue we have quite a number of reviews available, ranging from an SF theatre venture, through large screen and television films to deal finally with videos as promised last issue. However, this feature can only expand with the continued submission of media reviews from YOU! Music, theatre, television, radio and film reviews are all within the province of this section, and I hope that some of you will be suitably moved to tears of passion, rage and dumbfoundedness during the next few months, rushing to put pen to paper and express the above sundry emotions for all to marvel. Typed or handwritten, as long as your review is legible we can consider it for Other Eyes and hopefully run it in the following issue. The only things we do try to avoid are obvious libel and unjustified criticism. If it stinks, say why it stinks!))

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET

Reviewed by Andy Sawyer

Written and directed by Bob Carlton

Performed at the Everyman Theatre, Liverpool 27 October-26 November

The 3 great contributions of Western Civilisation: William Shakespeare, Science Fiction and Rock'n'Roll. So when I passed by the Everyman and noticed that the programmed production of Shane had been replaced by something billed as "Shakespeare's forgotten rock-and-roll masterpiece" I was somewhat more than mildly intrigued. There's been some good theatrical SF in Liverpool over the last few years - Illuminatus!, The Warp, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward; War with the News - so when I arrived for the show, clutching my tickets and observing the hairstyles, I was expecting something good. I wasn't let down.

The plot, of course, was familiar: do I really need to recount it? If you're not familiar with The Tempest, Forbidden Planet, or both, then just which solar system do you hail from? What kicked the production off right from the word go, was that although the plot was taken from Forbidden Planet rather than Shakespeare's original (including the characters of Cookie and the robot) most of the dialogue was Shakespearian, or nearly so. We had quotations from The Tempest and other classic plays - Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, etc - as well as pseudo-Shakespearian blank verse mixed with genuine gosh-wow 50s SF jargon. Best of all was the incorporation of classic 50s and 60s songs into the performance, played and sung by a very versatile cast with a background ranging from Channel 4's Brookside to Tom Robinson's old band, Cafe Society, who swapped instruments around at a dazzling pace.

As usual at the Every man, effects were good and included Magnus Pyke on video as a kind of Shakespearian chorus, a heavily-tentacled "monster from the id", and Ariel, a robot (played by Carl Chase with the help of a dustbin, a cheese-grater, and various other accessories).

It was all ham and hokum, of course, and the place was packed with people nodding appreciatively at their ability to pick up on the Shakespearian quotations, the Forbidden Planet send-ups, or the songs which seemed to appear at every opportune moment, or any combination of the three. Maybe some would like to think that the Swan of Avon is now revolving indignantly in his grave - me, I'd like to think that were he around, he'd have got quite a buzz out of seeing his work through the refracting lens of the 50s; and would probably have himself played that godawful macho, hard-rock guitar solo during Cookie's lament at not having got off with Miranda, (alias, The Zombies' "She's not there"). But then, I'm prejudiced because I can't think of anything more fun than spending an evening with Shakespeare, SF, and rock'n'roll ALL TOGETHER. Well, actually, I can; that's writing the thing in the first place.....unfortunately Bob Carlton got there first.

KRULL

Reviewed by Philip Collins

Directed by Peter Yates

Mid-way through Krull I began to wonder if my lack of warmth towards the film was due to something lacking in me. Krull after all is very much a fairy story with just little bits of SF thrown in for good measure. Am I now too old for this sort of thing I wondered? But then I remembered that Return Of The Jedi was also very much a fairy story, and I loved that, teddy-bears and all! So perhaps it is the film that is at fault after all and not me.

The story line of Krull is basically that of the Arthurian legends, The Lord of the Rings, Robin Hood, Star Wars and damn near every other fantasy ever written. Evil beings, (you can tell they're evil because the sound track gets very loud and goes BOOM BOOM BOOM every time they appear), set out to conquer the planet Krull. They, of course, kidnap a beautiful princess (Lysette Anthony) and so naturally the handsome prince (Ken Marshall) and his band of merry outlaws set out to rescue her and save their world in the process. Do they succeed? Well, yes.

Krull is a mediieval world totally without technology and so the trek is on foot and occasionally horse-back. This makes the journey very long and slow and it is here that the film hits a lull, only occasionally enlivened by flurries of action. The film is admittedly always entrancing to look at, but with a budget of over \$ 30 million dollars that is the least one should expect. The sets designed by Stephen Grimes, particularly those in the baddies HQ, the Black Fortress are very impressive; but too often their potential is not explored and they simply provide a backdrop for the heroes to walk through.

The acting is adequate; no more no less. Special mention must however go to Freddie Jones as Ynyr, a sort of Gandalf figure. When he goes to visit Francesca Annis, The Widow of the Web, to ask the way to the Black Fortress, he produces the one scene that touches the heart as well as the eyes. Let us hope that Jones gets more chance to flex his thespian muscles in his role in the forthcoming film of Frank Herbert's Dune.

Director Peter Yates is best known for his action thrillers such as Bullitt and Robbery. Indeed the fight scenes, particularly the opening one, are very well staged, but too often Yates takes a back seat hoping the visuals will be enough to hold the audiences' attention. Unfortunately they're not.

Teleplay: Edward Hume

Directed by Nicholas Meyer

1st Soldier: "hey, any you guys heard about an alert?"

2nd Soldier: "Nope"

Such was the stirring opening of The Day After, billed as the nuclear shocker to horrify a generation.....oh dear,oh dear,.....

Dim, uncomfortable memories drift into focus - a soldier reassures his wife; "Gee Marie - it's only an alert."

But "Hiroshima was peanuts !" an Old Wise Doctor declaims graphically, as he preaches on the reality of the coming conflict.

An American student is told: "They just hit one of our ships in the Persian Gulf," "Who did?" asks the student, and thereby crosses that razor-thin line between innocence and mental deficiency.

As the bombs start falling, an All-American Blue-eyed Farmer drags the Diminutive Hysterical Spouse out of the bedroom to safety in the cellar.....

Okay, The Day After had its good moments, but oh so few. The last scene was most effective, with its depiction of a devastated Kansas City. "Get out of my house !" cries a bald, scarred Jason Robards at a couple of emaciated survivors, who continue to sit blank-eyed, amid the rubble. Yes, that was a good scene. But it wasn't worth waiting 2 hours for, and that was the length of this vapid epic.

The film showed us nothing we hadn't seen before. The crowd-panic scenes looked as if they'd been lifted from The A-Team, while the successful special effects (eg American missiles flying over the wheatfields of Kansas) were totally undermined by some real low-budget stuff-using the inverted image of ink-drops diffusing in water to simulate mushroom clouds, for example, and an appallingly edited mix of stock footage and close-up "character reaction" shots, supposed to represent a missile firing near a ranch.

The destruction portrayed in the film is nothing we're unused to. Too many war films, spaghetti westerns, and disaster movies, have rendered "desolate city" mattes, wide-angled pans of "injured masses", fake-dead animals, and burn-and-scar make-up ineffective in stirring our emotions. We have seen it all before.

The film was as scientifically unreliable, and dramatically unconvincing - a sort of children's version of the grim reality - except that children were not supposed to see it.

Here was no real horror. The Two Raunchy Teenagers go bald, but they can still see and recognise each other, and talk sufficiently to engage in an embarrassing, sentimental reunion at the end of the movie. Outside, the sun shines warmly down upon the earth. In reality it would be pitch-black and 20 degrees below for at least a year after the holocaust. There is no ash, no cold; no desperation, no hysteria. There is nothing but the strutting and fretting of thinly portrayed Decent Americans, as they do lame battle with appalling script, tacky editing, and inconsistent effects.....

So, was The Day After the horrific eye-opener we had been promised? Well, I for one had uneasy dreams that night - was there really a Cute Little Kid who asked "surely there ain't really gonna be a war, Daddy?". Or a TV Commentator, who

declared: "Who knows, when the chips are down and the red light's blinking ?" NO..
.....surely not.....it just couldn't.....

Whimpering I hid my face in the pillow.

What more need be said?

THE VIDEO SCENE

Reviewed by Tom Wiltshire

An introductory View

Unlike the world of the home computer which has exploded onto the UK market, video machines, for viewing and recording, have appeared more slowly in the home. Rental has proved the most popular form of use, both of the machines and of the tapes, the rental charge for a night's hire ranging between £1-£2; still cheaper than an evening out at the cinema.

The video market has long been plagued with the problem of the pirate producers. At times they gained such control that they were marketing the pirate tape prior to the opening of the film at the cinema. The best known example of this was ET, which was on pirate tape more than a month before its final official screening in Britain. The situation is now more firmly controlled, with the action coming chiefly from the video companies themselves, who have taken a tighter grip over their own outlets. The film companies have also responded by recognising the pulling power of the video market. By bringing out the video of the big screen films soon after their initial release, they remove one great attraction of the pirate versions; that of early viewing.

The number of films available for viewing is increasing very rapidly with the introduction of videos of newly made films, as well as many of the old pre-video classics; and a growing number of films produced exclusively for video. However, the problem still remains of what to watch! If you don't wish to rent a film you have already seen, or something you missed at the cinema, you are greeted with a large array of unknown films. The magazines that cover releases of video tapes for rental, inevitably tend to cover only a small number of tapes and normally only those which have been popular in the cinema. From my experience, and much as you would expect, the blurb on the tape case is only a very sketchy guide as to the plot, and even less of an indication as to the quality of the film, in the end it can come down to the luck of the draw.

I have seen a fairly large number of videos since a friend rented a video recorder, with varying degrees of enjoyment. One type of video that I have come across a number of times (much to my regret) are a series of films, apparently produced in a parking lot somewhere in Italy. I'm sure I haven't seen all of these yet, but 3 to avoid are Ironmaster, The New Barbarians, and Starcrash. All share the general style. First there was Clint Eastwood and the Spaghetti Western. Now there is the Spaghetti Fantasy. Make no mistake Clint fans, whereas his films made him famous, and have obtained nearly cult following, this new breed is only destined for the bin. The problem is how to dodge such films? Avoiding Italian producers and directors, or tapes with a particular style of graphics, maybe one method, but sometimes this may mean rejecting a potentially good film. Experience can often be the only way!

Another type of film which can be disappointing when seen on a TV screen, are the big films of the late 70s and early 80s; Alien, the Star Wars saga and the Superman trio. Personally I found them very enjoyable, as a second or third viewing, but might have wandered quite what all the fuss was about if I was seeing them for the first time. These films rely heavily on a magnificent array of special effects designed for the big screen, and it is these effects that suffer on TV.

By far the most popular and prolific genre of videos available are "horror" films. It is among these that a majority of the much discussed "video nasties" appear. The essential problem with such videos is that of availability. With the growth of the video market, controls on rental by youngsters are inevitably relaxed. I believe it would be a great mistake if there was too great a degree of censorship and control over what videos were available. I know too little of the true situation as regards "video nasties", but a greater degree of control than we have now is apparently needed.

However, if you're still keen on videos, there are a few I would recommend as well worth renting for an enjoyable night. From the realm of Sword and Sorcery I would highlight 2 films. Conan The Barbarian is the first of these. The makers of Conan obviously realised at an early stage that Arnold Schwartzegger (Conan) couldn't act, but had the right body for the part, so they sensibly keep his lines to the minimum, and let others do the talking. The result has been a film which closely captures the flavour of the books, as well as a great fantasy film.

The second video I suggest is worth a look is The Archer and the Sorceress. This film though light on good acting, has a very well presented evil alien race in the snake men, as well the nice touch of not attempting to save the world in 90 minutes.

For those who fancy Thriller/horror films The Sentinel provides a film with a very tense plot, with some well timed surprises and with a superb climax. Lastly a video tape I rented mostly as a laugh, but which turned out to be a surprisingly good film, Alligator. Much along the lines of Jaws, Orca, Piranha; this time however, a giant alligator is roaming the sewers and eventually streets of New York. During the video the 'gator chews its through a fair number of people, (it looks surprisingly life-like in the close-up). The poor thing probably bears a grudge against people, but wouldn't you if you had been flushed down the bog when your parents thought you were too big?

((In the next few issues we will be exploring the film and video scene in more detail. This issue our first full length video review is actually of a big screen film which is now available for home rental.....))

Cat People

Reviewed by Jeremy Crampton

Director Paul Schrader

Cat People is a remarkable film. It is one which grabs you on the immediate, sit-back-and-enjoy level, but which back in the calm light of day is seen to be lacking in some departments, most notably it's story-line. In other words, once it's immediate impact, admittedly captivating, has worn off, the bare bones of a poor script are all too clear.

This is a pity because it is nonetheless a good film, and it could've been that much better. Full of intense and only semi-repressed sexuality, mostly incestuous, and yet this film is not really about sex. Rather, it is about leopards in much the same way An American Werewolf in London was about wolves - and we have some of those fast moving, ground-hugging camera angles of a beast running on four legs. Perhaps not pure SF, but then neither was AAWL (reviewed M39). But the plot is unfortunately no better than the thin story line of AAWL: "Long ago our ancestors sacrificed their children to the leopards. The souls of the children grew inside the leopards until the leopards became human" says Paul Gallier, heir apparent to the leopard race (Malcolm McDowell from Time After Time). "We are an incestuous race, we can only make love with our own, otherwise we transform, and before we can become human again we must kill". Well, somewhat far-fetched perhaps, especially in this day and age, but to be fair, once you have swallowed this trumpery moonshine (it helps if you can

wash it down with a large dose of 'willing suspension of disbelief') we can get down to the business of the film, the rest of which is rather good.

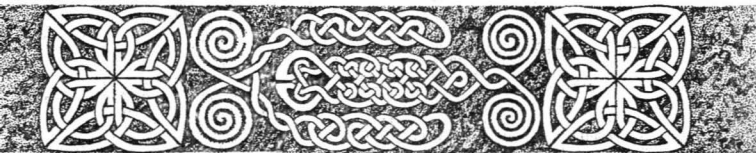
The part of Irene, Paul's long lost sister, is excellently played by the lovely Nastassia Kinski, who brings a dangerously intense sexuality into the film as she undergoes the realisation that her fate is intertwined inextricably with her brother. So much so, that between them they raise the film from its rather pulp style script to a heavily moody and convincing portrayal of that fantasy world that co-exists with us, but is seldom seen, and if seen not believed. "Let men continue to believe the world is how they think it is" advises one character 'in the know'.

Irena herself does not want to believe. At first she simply rejects Paul's advances to her in her room one night by running away from him (with a strangely agile jump into the road below, a pointer to the future). But when she is unable to make love to the curator of the zoo, one Oliver Yates, who is protecting her from Paul, she begins to realise that he may be right, that she can only make love to Paul, and that anything else may result in her transforming into a leopard, as Paul does himself, murdering brutally to change back. Paul, now a fugitive for several counts of murder and suspected of owning a leopard, rather than of being one, pleads with her at Oliver's house for the last time: "we're safe together because we're the same" he tells the stricken Irena. But Paul is doomed, shot by Oliver after turning into a leopard and goes dramatically crashing to his death.

Irena, robbed of her brother and in love with Oliver is herself transformed into a leopard in a scene again reminiscent of AAWL (good special effects), and can no longer escape her situation. The resolution of her plight at the end of the film is at once moving and painful. With music compellingly performed by David Bowie this film is a strange and heady mixture of poor scripting being transformed by marvellous acting and evocative scenes. The overwhelming impression is one of electrical atmosphere, the hallmark of a film that has captured a slice of reality. Nastassia Kinski's naked emotion and flaked body makes the particular sordid overtones of incestuousness in her relationships somewhat less gratuitous than it may appear from reading this. There is also a dreadfulness; the dreadfulness of death in your blood, tragically claiming everything. Because this is, in the end, the flawed portrayal of not to be denied fate consuming you finally, no matter how much you try to deflect it.

Highly recommended.

((The Video Column returns next issue with further reviews lined up. If you have seen an amazing or excruciating video recently, or if you disagree with any of the above, why not get in touch and share your opinions?))



THE HEAD APPEAL

((Matt Sillars sends news of an appeal which might be of interest to many of our members. It certainly seems worth further investigation....))

I need £500, and I want it from you. Why? Read on please.....

Are you aware that 80% of those people who are registered as blind have gone blind? They were not born this way. That means that out there in the rest of the country are a large body of people who have been deprived of the ability to read. Are you also aware that 80% of blind people cannot use braille? Therefore they are effectively barred from most standard forms of communication.

However, there are people who are trying to do something about this state of affairs. The Royal National Institute for the Blind spends £1.25 million each year on their Talking Books Service. This operates from studios in Wembley using actors. They record books onto special 14 hour cassettes and distribute them throughout the country. The tape players that take these tapes cost £150 each and are also distributed throughout the country free of charge. However, only 50% of the registered blind have access to a tape player.

As the BSFA sponsors the promotion of SF, I feel that making SF more available in this way to people who have been deprived of it is not only valuable to fandom but stands as a worthy cause in its own right.

A particular book can be sponsored by anyone with the funds available, and it is interesting to note that the tape may be copied so many times that the price per tape may be no more than that of a hardback book.

I do believe that the animal we know as fandom could develop itself in other ways, and contribute effectively towards the problems of isolation that the blind often feel in this society. By its very nature, fandom and fanzines are amateur affairs, and are distinct in this way from professional organisations, and novels, literary magazines etc. In fact, the nature of fanzines almost demands that they be recorded by the persons producing them and offered for distribution in a way similar to the written version, i.e. for LoC or blank cassette. Let's face it, with the statistics mentioned earlier, there must be fans out there who are deprived of the very heart of fandom, not SF books but fanzines!

With all this in mind, consider the following points:

- 1) I am setting up a fan fund geared towards promoting and sponsoring SF novels for the blind. To do this I need £500, and I am therefore appealing to fans, conventions, apas and everyone involved to contribute money to the fund;
- 2) I feel there is a need for fandom to become organised to cover this need, and for it to organise, in its own personal way, the recording of fanzines and develop fandom in this radical style.

Comments on this scheme are welcome, and references for the appeal may be obtained from Dennis Wilson, RNIB, Coates Crescent, Edinburgh (031-225-6242).

Matt Sillars & Brian Hennigan,
c/o 8 Beaverbank Place,
Edinburgh.

RNIB, Room 17 au/2,
224 Great Portland St.,
London W1N 6AA

I see a fanzine column as a vital part of Matrix, encapsulating its whole 'raison d'être' because it not only serves to inform all readers of the latest fan publications, but also helps those new to fandom to find their way through the enigmatic pages of fanzines.

With this in mind, how best should the column be approached? After much thought I have come down in favour of a regular columnist (no, I'm not offering) because a regularity of style and opinion helps to form a reference point, regardless of whether or not you agree with the opinions voiced. Also, for completeness, as many fanzines as possible should be included, even though this rather limits the depth of comment on any one fanzine; with a little care and skill, though, much can be said in a few words.

Since space is at a premium, onto a selection of recent offerings - by no means complete, but the comments are short! (A couple of clues: The Usual means that the fanzine is available for trade, loc, show of interest etc, but probably not for money; Loc - letter of comment.)

A Foreign Fanzine 7 Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, The Netherlands. A4 litho dated Oct. 83. Availability: editorial whim (try grovelling) but "money will certainly not help you." Behind the rather uninspired title can be found a well put together fanzine with plenty of SF-related material. Mainly European contributors (well what do you expect with that address), this issue has 3 pieces of fiction (although Roelof says "I am not an open market for fiction") by Tais Teng, Annemarie van Ewyck and Yves Vandezande; an analysis of J G Ballard; SF and Rock; an interview with Frank Robinson; Eric Bentcliffe's alternative to fandom (reprinted from a 1959 zine); the regulation letter column and what I found most interesting, an argument between Walter Bühler and Wolfgang Jeschke on the 'indexing' of Spinrad's The Iron Dream. Indexing is a West German form of censorship whereby a book is prohibited from open sale and is only available 'under the counter'. A fanzine for hard core fans of SF, this one. (And all written in impeccable English, too!)

Big Xyster 3 Dave Wood, 1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon. A5 photocopied dated January '84. Availability: the usual.

Dave opens with 4½ sides of readable, anecdotal material covering his deaf saxophone-playing Uncle Bill (I'm afraid I guessed the punchline), working for the Post Office and vasectomy. Cymrucon provides nearly half of the material in this issue - together with John Brunner's Guest of Honour speech is a report of the convention by Mike Sherwood in which he manages to capture some of the events which made this such a bad weekend for certain fans. A page of 'Litrtry fun from Pam Boal' and the letter column complete an enjoyable fanzine.

Fossilised Thoughts 1 Stephen Davies, Applegarth, Gallowstree Common, Reading, Berks RG4 9BB.

A5 photocopied dated January 1983. Availability: the usual.

First fanzines are always interesting. The reader has probably never heard of the editor who's cautiously putting out feelers into a new world - a voyage of discovery on both sides. I'm pleased to say I found this issue both readable and enjoyable; not brilliant, but certainly not a disaster. All of the material is written by Stephen who sticks closely to common territory - SF. Having opened with some personal details, he gives a sound slamming to 'The Crystal Singer' (funny how that sold so well); Loonies of Atlantis tells of a religious nut cult; book reviews; the secret of the Brownies exposed and finishes with a common topic - unemployment.

ONOMIA 1 G A Bryant, Rue de l'Arbre Sain-Roch, Oupeya, Liege, Belgium. A5 photocopied. Availability: the usual.

Another first issue but this time the editor has managed to obtain a couple of outside contribution. G A Bryant is an "ex pat Brit" living in Belgium so despite the address this is a British fanzine. The contents are mainly anecdotal and the lack of anything directly SF-related (i.e. book reviews, etc) shows that he has been doing a little research into the fanzine world. This is further borne out by the

fanzine-review column. The contents include a report of Orwellcon (Antwerp, Nov. 1993) and the problems of getting an ID card in Belgium without any form of ID! The zine was typed up using a TRS80 home computer (a sign of the times) and Tandy printer's lack of 'true descenders' gives the print a curious quality. Another worthwhile first issue, let's hope that the editors are encouraged to continue their efforts.

For Paranoids Only 1.5 Nigel E Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG. A4(ish) computer printed! Dated January 1984. Availability: ????

I wasn't too sure whether to include this or not as I've doubts about its availability, which is a shame as it's another well written, enjoyable zine. Nigel has used his home computer (a Spectrum this time!) to type up the fanzine. Then, rather than photocopying it or whatever, has used a printer connected to the Spectrum to produce each copy. As he says, this is so slow it took 5 hours to do 20 copies! However, if you cajole him he might do you a copy and I'm sure you won't regret it.

Epsilon 15 Rob Hansen, 9A Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, London E6 1DX. Quarto duplicated dated December '83. Availability: the usual.

The great strength of Epsilon is its regularity and consequent full letter column - 12 out of 22 pages. But the high spot of E15 is a report of Novacon by Leroy Kettle - classic fanwriting. PCB's contribution is a rather contrived exposure of the "secret of the power of Welsh fandom".

In Defiance of Medical Opinion 16 Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Nr Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 6NF. A4 duplicated dated January 1984. Availability: the usual. Chuck tries hard to produce an iconoclastic fanzine which sometimes works, but at other times just looks contrived. In the past he has made a few enemies by speaking his mind and trying to be a rumour monger. This issue has a handy ballpen cello-taped to the cover - to encourage locs. Amongst the letters featured are quite a few with complaints about the BSFA (not a bad thing) and the M48 cover saga still lives! The majority of the content, however, is devoted to fanzine reviews which make IDOMO 16 worth getting just to track down some new titles.

Nutz 2 Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London N11. A4 duplicated dated November 1983. Availability: the usual however I suspect Pam is running low on copies by now.

The first Nutz used travel and foreign places as its central theme; there's no such linking idea to this issue, but once again it features a variety of contributors. Steve Green's A to Z Guide of Silicon; Dave Collins on the dangers of being a cartoonist; Philip Collins goes to some Midnight Movies; Vegetarianism by Darroll Pardoe and a curious piece by Christina Lake (which I still haven't worked out!). Not forgetting Pam herself, and of course a letter column. Another enjoyable fanzine.

Crystal Ship 8 John D Cam, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks MK16 9AZ. A5 litho dated January 1984. Availability: the usual.

This only arrived yesterday so I'm afraid I've not had time to read it. However, it's worth mentioning as one of the few SF fanzines being produced in the UK today. Flipping through the issue there're items on H Beam Piper, reviewing books and page after page of letters.

Well, that's about all there's space for. Looking back over my comments I seem to be praising all the zines. No excuses, I just enjoy fanzines and it's a rare one that hasn't got something worthwhile in it. Few are totally perfect, but I don't think it serves any point for an editor's hard work to be torn to pieces in these pages. I hope you enjoy the fanzines you get to read.

the letters... **STRANGE**

RELATIONS

((A wide range of letters pushed brusquely through the editorial door this time, dwelling on the diverse subjects of nuclear warfare, Soviet-American relationships, smoking, authors' royalties, computers and even SF! We kick off with a letter which is very pertinent to the BSFA itself, written as an open letter to Matrix, Vector and Focus. The views expressed below are obviously very personal, and I would be interested to hear how many members, especially those who are writers, agree with Chas Pembleton's comments....))

CHAS PEMBLETON
28 GODOLPHIN CLOSE
FRESHBROOK
SWINDON
WILTS
SN5 8RL

Simon Polley, in Matrix 49 asked us all a lot of questions. One of those questions was about the high rate of lapsed memberships. He also asked what new members thought of the BSFA.

I have been a member for about 17 months. I am still waiting for my second year's membership card.

Why did I join? I joined because I write SF novels, and I thought that the BSFA could help. I am still waiting for that help.

Geoff Rippington was good enough to publish an article of mine in Vector 116. This open letter has been written because the BSFA's Focus squad thinks that my plea is not worth listening to.

A close inspection of Focus will show that even in a magazine devoted to writers, there has not been much help.

Focus 1 appeared in the Autumn of 1979. Focus 7 appeared in the Spring of 1983. Seven issues in 4 years! And in those 4 years, only 10 short stories have been published!

This is supposed to be an outlet for short story writers? And what about novelists?

Focus 1 includes an article by Chris Priest urging us to write an SF novel. When we have written it, the BSFA presumably loses interest.

Focus 2 has a very good article on Fiction Editing.

Focus 3 contains an article by John Brunner, who tells us that we should give our characters Chinese names. Is that really the way to get a publisher to accept our work?

Focus 4 was not bad. The magazine was even back to 2 fiction pieces. One of these stories was by David Swinden. It was called Waiting. I know how you feel, Dave.

All in all, Focus is a failure. There are too many articles by failed writers (Consolation for Disappointed Writers in Focus 7 is typical). I already know how to fail! I could cover a wall with rejection slips! What I want is help, not consolation.

So, what is the challenge to the BSFA?

The challenge is this: to do something to help and encourage British SF writers, while we still have some. Are we going to delay acting until there are only American SF novels on the market? Or can we admit that we have not done enough, and then change the BSFA publications to give our writers a chance?

British publishers seem content to publish 'safe' American novels, to the detriment of unknown British writers. When there are plenty of American writers with proven track records, why should they take a chance on these unknown writers?

So, it is up to us. We help ourselves, or we end up talking about the latest American novel.

((One comment which immediately springs to mind is " Are there really enough British authors of quality to supply the needs of the UK SF market?" I have often heard editors involved with fiction magazines complaining about the generally low standard of works submitted to them. Does this mean that there are authors out there who have the skill but are not getting through to the right markets, or is the really the indication of the lack of available talent? I would prefer to think that the former is true, but I don't know enough to be sure. This is basically a subject for further discussion in the pages of Focus, but if anyone wants to write in to open up this subject further I'd be interested to hear their views. Now onto a different topic - a response to my comment on fantasy (in the last editorial)))

SUE THOMASON
9 FRIARS LANE
BARROW-IN-FURNESS
CUMBRIA LA13 9NP

I feel moved to reply to your editorial in Matrix 50 on fantasy and its purpose in (your) life; perhaps partially because I had a go at tackling The Meaning of Fantasy myself in Paperback Inferno recently.

If by 'heroic epics' you mean what I think Paul Kincaid means by 'romantic fantasy' in Vector, then the whole point is that epic fantasy is not totally removed from everyday life. Sure, you know that goodies are going to win, and sure fantasy of that kind tends to preach an absolute moral code which it's difficult to apply in real life (but perhaps more of us ought to try it), but romantic fantasy is also in the game of charging ordinary objects with power and meaning. Take Tolkien (as he is usually taken to be the representative of this kind of fantasy). He does a magnificent PR job for trees in Lord of the Rings, not only by inventing Ents and Mallorn trees, but by caring about them. I went round looking at trees in a new way after the last time I read LOTR. You are not going to tell me that trees don't exist in your ordinary, everyday life?

The writers you mention who make you see ordinary things like television and bricks and drainpipes in a new way..... I think they are all excellent writers. But honestly, you seem to be saying that something like television, which is a transient cultural phenomenon, around for less than a century, is somehow more real, more a part of everyday life, than trees, which have been around for far longer than mankind. It takes time for objects to acquire the resonance of archetypal power. I actually thought Garner's use of the telly in Eldor a far less effective device than the concealment of the Four Treasures under the forms of bits of rubble from a building site, or plastic toys from Christmas crackers. The forms change, but the essence is the same. I might say the same about the literature. If you don't see the same power at work behind Tolkien's Black Land and Gordon's log, or the same promise of hope in the unreachable Silver Fields as in the Elvenhome, or the same token of light in the Glass of Galadriel as in an aspirin bottle filled with flood-water, then I don't understand how you see the world at all. Everything is full of hidden power and significance all the time. That's Garner's whole point. Fortunately, most of the time most people aren't aware of it.

I think you're right about a lot of good work being written for adolescents. Unfortunately, what most people don't realise is that adolescence is nothing to

do with the chronological age, any more than (say) the ego-states of Parent, Adult, Child that transactional analysis uses to describe the human personality. Adolescence means intensity, and tension. Adolescence means the awakening of the 'sense of wonder' and its accompanying sense of horror and desolation. You can't have one without the other, and people forget that. Would you really want to be one of Garner's protagonists? Or face up to the things John Gordon sees in the dark? And notice that the person who can deal with the crises in Patricia Wrightson's work are the aboriginal adolescents, those who are still in touch with a system of mythic naming (names give power)

Did you ever find out what your stone talisman is? If not, and if you really want to, clean out your mind. But don't expect the results to be bloodless and pretty.

Interestingly, for me the gloomiest, most desperate times are those in which I don't turn to fantasy for stimulation.....

((I agree that trees are part of ordinary, everyday life, but I would also venture to say that television is, for many people, a major part of their reality and not seen as " a transient cultural phenomenon ". Thus the use of newer and more commonplace symbology has an important place in making fantasy relevant to many youngsters growing up today. How many people in Leeds or Birmingham are at all familiar with forests and deep, dark, evocative woods? Certainly not many of the youngsters round here. Still, your point is valid, though I still claim that television is fast becoming a cultural archetype of an unusual sort. Which brings the most threat or mystery to everyday life - Mordor or a strange, rotting log? I like the comments about the adolescent state, and I hope that's the reason why I can still relate to these works - a prolonged adolescence. I'd like to run a feature sometime on children's fiction, and I'd be interested to find out how many other 'adults' still head for the Puffin shelves when they enter a bookshop. As to the talisman, well, I'm a careful man. I've only rarely peered beyond the power-veil, and even now I'm not sure what the results really meant. Any object can be a focus of the will, be it a cathode ray tube or a mystic gem!

We now return to a letter written last year which I meant to print ages ago, on the subject of the economics behind publishers' contracts....))

BENEDICT S CULLUM	Apart from a snippet of 'Firestarter' in <u>Omni</u> , I have not read
35 TOTTERIDGE LANE	any of Stephen King's fiction. Perhaps I should, but it is not
WHETSTONE	Mr King's writing, per se, that is causing me to mount the soap-
LONDON N20	box.....

In a recent interview, King noted that he had accepted only half of the 2 million dollars advance he had been offered for his latest novel, considering such would starve his publishers of funds that newer writers find the cupboard bare. Quite a noble sentiment, most would agree, but it did set me thinking.....

Even one million dollars is a sizeable investment, and, despite the man's popularity one which I do not think could be justified under normal conditions. King could possibly expect royalties to cover the advance after a year or 2 but it seems likely that the book will be hyped by the publishers and that its price will be more than the norm - even economies of sale won't balance that initial million dollars without a little price hike.

A case nearer home can be found by glancing at the back of Vector 114. Michael Coney's novel is priced £7.95, whereas Isaac Asimov's collection of 19th century skiffy, as then it wasn't, is £2 more.

I can understand that the Grand Old Men of Science Fiction still retain their drawing power and I would not deny the excellence of much of their past writings. What I would like to see though, is a little less mutual admiration and perhaps the humility to grant a larger slice of the pie to the new boys, as it were.