

MATRIX



no. 52

april / may 84

((Once again, Spring and Matrix thrust weary heads from under the snow. Many thanks to all those readers who found something nice to say about the last issue - to the few who complained about the unfortunate letter fiasco, I can only say that those letters omitted last ish are on view in the expanded lettercol herein, plus all the comment on other subjects. I hope this makes amends to some extent, masters and mistresses.....))

MARCH 1984

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See below for new editorial address.....



PRINTED by those intrepid egyptologists at 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey - known to the Interpol files as Eve and Indiana Harvey.

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 ?!

BSFA BACK NUMBER SERVICE is handled by:

Roy Macinski, 2 Frogmill Cottages, Hurley, Nr. Maidenhead, Berks., SL6 5NH

CHAIRMAN of the BSFA is:

Alan Dorey, 22 Summerfield Drive, Middleton, Greater Manchester

EDITORIAL ADDRESS Please note that the address for all correspondence is:

95A Victoria Road, LEEDS, West Yorkshire LS6 1DR

MATRIX

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Cover by Gavin Porter; Interior Art by Pete Lyon and Editor.

No editorial this time (hurrah..yawn, etc,) but next issue's will cover the Art Competition, which is still open, so keep sending the stuff in please. Both this issue's cover and the cartoon strip are examples of what we've received so far, but we could do with much, much more!

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Art must be b/w, A4 and smaller
SAE for return of material
Written material typed or clearly handwritten
Members noticeboard free to all members
Next deadline 11th May at latest, please (note new address)

bimonthly

MATRIXPRESS

the voice of the bsfa



CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Thoughts of the Chairman Now

By the time you read this you should have received a special BSFA mailing containing the 1984 BSFA Award Ballot, the 1984 AGM agenda and a special notice from Seacon '84, the 1984 Eastercon. The reason you have had this extra small mailing is that the timing of our regular mailings has been such that the mailing before the Eastercon wouldn't have given you sufficient notice of the AGM, and the one before that was already scheduled to be pretty massive - hence the compromise.

Do please take the time to read through the items in the Special Mailing. The BSFA Award in itself is becoming more important and representative as each year goes by, and this year with the Easterconvention being at least twice its usual size, it'll be even more representative than ever. Please vote - every vote will count - so stop reading this item, dig out that special mailing and send your vote off to Joseph Nicholas now. If you're going to Seacon '84 in Brighton, you'll be able to cast your vote up to 6pm on the Saturday (April 21st). The ballots will be counted on the Sunday and the Awards will be presented at the Seacon Award Ceremony later that evening.

The AGM itself takes place at the Metropole Hotel, Brighton on Friday April 20th at 6pm. As usual, a number of council members come up for re-election, and this is your annual opportunity to make known your views. There are a number of things that will get discussed and I'll give you a full report in the next issue of Matrix (due out in early June). However, as I mentioned in my previous column, there are a few changes coming the way of the BSFA in the near future and in order to give you some time to digest them, I'll be talking about some of them in a short while.

Updates

There have been a few changes in the BSFA's function just recently; the BSFA Information service is now in the capable hands of Mike Moir, although as he has just moved house (!), please by all means keep sending the queries to me. There might be a slight delay in getting replies out to you, but fear not, they will all be dealt with. In order to streamline and improve the service though, could you all please bear in mind a few simple guidelines:

- 1) A stamped S.A.E does help!
- 2) Requests for autographs and photographs in general cannot be answered. We do try our best, but it's easier if you don't ask in the first place.
- 3) Do try to keep your queries brief and to the point. Requests for all the published novels, short stories, their dates of publication and whereabouts and so on, whilst not being discouraged, do take quite a while to answer properly - especially if it's Mike Moorcock (a BSFA bibliography of whom is imminent)

The BSFA's Orbiter service for budding writers is still being handled by the ever-resourceful Dorothy Davis, so if you're interested, do please contact her for further details.

Speaking of Dorothy Davis, I am very pleased to announce that she, along with Sue Thomason, have taken over the editorial reigns of FOCUS. I wish them all the very best with their new task, and look forward to their first issue which is due out in August. If you have any thoughts or suggestions on the sort of direction you'd like to see Focus moving in, why not write to me and I'll pass your letters on to Sue and Dorothy.

The All New BSFA

As I mentioned in my previous column, the BSFA has really only been marking time in the last twelve months, and I'd be the first to admit that our performance hasn't been all that it could have been. However, I am very much aware of the position, and steps are being taken to bring back a more professional image to get the BSFA pushed well and truly into the 1980s. One of the things that concerns me most at the moment is the membership turnover rate. It's always been quite high; we lose as many members as we gain each year. Now whilst a large number of leavers can be put down to things like

- 1) Changing tastes
- 2) Sheer forgetfulness to renew
- 3) Dis-satisfaction with the BSFA

there must be something we can do. I've had the position closely monitored for the last twelve months, and although it's early days yet, it does seem that the BSFA isn't all things to all people. And nor should it be. The purpose of the BSFA is simple - to promote the wider reading, understanding and encouragement of Science Fiction in the UK. We are not an outlet for people who wish to write their own SF (although, of course we do try through Focus and Orbiter to assist where we can); nor are we an outlet for all those who are passionately interested in the media side of SF (although again, we do cater for this to a certain extent with Film, TV and radio reviews in Matrix). What we do do, is to publish news, comment, reviews and opinion on Science Fiction as it stands in this country. If people want specialist views, then there are many other organisations which cater specifically for them. As I've said many times before, the BSFA is a clearing house for SF information; it acts as a source of information for various groups (ranging from the BBC, local press and some publishers), but does not set out to inform you in the minutest detail about, for example, Colin Baker's new outfit in the recent Dr. Who.

I believe that there are a number of people who join the BSFA for this sort of thing, bearing in mind the great surge in recent years of media-orientated interest. More and more people have heard of SF, and yet their view of SF is coloured by what they learn of it from the media. We at the BSFA must show them that there is more to it than that, and if we lose a few members along the way, then so be it. However, I still believe we are losing more people than we should be. The BSFA in the next few months will be endeavouring to put a halt to this. There won't be any change in the general direction, or indeed our stated aims, but we will be encouraging new members to take an interest in the various SF activities going on around the UK. This will take the form of a series of articles designed to whet the appetite, articles designed to inform new people of the more arcane side of things science fictional, whilst at the same time, maintaining a degree of mystique in order that people take up the gauntlet and start exploring and discovering for themselves. Part of this campaign will incorporate the Committee Member articles I mentioned last time, but it will also include items by writers, publishers, fans and so on who will try to illuminate this SF world of ours and why we are involved with it.

This campaign is going to provide A BSFA For The Eighties; a revitalising of our efforts, a redoubling of our energies in providing you, the member, with the very best that we can. And it's going to start right at the top; I shall lead by example (!) and ensure that we all get as much out of the BSFA as we possibly can.

Part of this new campaign will involve the increasing professionalism of the BSFA. That's not to say that we're all going to start paying our selves (that's precluded by the Articles of Association), but it will mean an improvement in the communications between council members and the general membership. A new 'corporate' image too - a standardisation of all our stationery and letterheads, memos and information sheets. This won't be achieved overnight, and yes, some of it might appear a cosmetic exercise, but the psychological effect will be such that the BSFA will again become the campaigning, forward-looking organisation it has been in the past.

We're going to start taking memberships on Standing Order; this saves us time and effort (in as much as its quicker and easier for us to receive your renewals) and saves you time too - no writing out cheques and mailing them off to us; it'll all be automatic, unless you tell us otherwise. Full details of these proposals will be available at the AGM. We're also going to commence another advertising campaign. Most of our new members have come recently from ads we placed in various Arrow SF paperbacks. The posters also have a useful effect, but our visible presence at cons and the suchlike has been a little subdued in the last year. This was quite intentional; it was becoming obvious to those of us manning the BSFA desks that we were talking to the same people all the time. Now however, as conventions are growing in size, and many new faces are coming along - and we've got our succesful back-numbers service on the road, it is most definitely a useful exercise to have a visual presence.

For Seacon '84 we've taken a full page ad in the Programme Book; we've got a set of tables in the fan room, we'll have back issues of Vector and Focus for sale, together with the bibliographies and memberships, we'll have badges for sale and posters to give away. We'll be there to help you enjoy your convention too, and as I mentioned last time, we've got a BSFA session on the Mexican Programme in Newcastle at the end of May.

So, what are you going to get out of all this? Well, a better run BSFA; one more able to adapt to the ever-changing SF scene in this country, a BSFA that won't please every one, but will bring you the best of everything that's going on. And for just £7 a year, that won't be a bad deal at all.

I'd like to take this chance to thank everybody who's worked for the BSFA in the last year, the committee, the council, those who have written for our magazines, those who have helped publicise our services. Let's all work together and make the next year the best yet.



The Doc Weir Award, which hasn't been presented for the past two years, has been traditionally awarded at the British SF Convention each Easter. Until 1982, it was administered by Peter Mabey, and in that year, it passed to the BSFA for safe-keeping, pending the outcome of a BSFA working party into its usefulness. The Working Party came up against very little comment, either good or bad, in its extensive investigations. After two years, it has been decided to try and revamp its image and award it at the 1984 Easter convention, Seacon '84. The Working Party have established a set of rules governing its presentation and it will be awarded by Alan Dorey, Chairman of the BSFA, on Sunday April 22nd at the Seacon '84 Awards Ceremony.

In line with our desire to provide as many features and services as we can for you, your children and your children's children, the attention of all members is drawn to the following open letter from the BSFA membership secretary, Sandy Brown:

THE SUGGESTION BOX

As you all probably know, each new BSFA member is sent a copy of our "Services Information Leaflet" which gives brief details of our services and the names and addresses of the Committee and Services Organisers.

We are aware that there's a demand for more general information (other than BSFA info) and that's where you all come in! I need suggestions from newer members (and those who are due for remission). Bearing in mind that Matrix has regular columns on forthcoming conventions, clubs, news etc, what general information would you, as newcomers to SF fandom, like to see in an expanded Info Leaflet?

Please write to me with your suggestions. I don't envisage being able to give you a personal reply (did you know that I send out an average of 700 pieces of BSFA mail per year, and receive about the same?) but you may get one through the pages of Matrix, and you'll have that warm glow that comes through being altruistic!

All suggestions will be considered, but limitations of space may preclude their inclusion.

Dealers: if you run a postal service, or a "wants-list" service, please send me details for inclusion.

SANDY BROWN, 18 GORDON TERRACE, BLANTYRE G72 9NA SCOTLAND.

Here at M, we will be in contact with Sandy, and will be passing on a lot of details sent in by members for the questionnaire last autumn. Hopefully you will contact him with your basic suggestions, and we can take it from there. I already have a number of possible inclusions for the Info Leaflet or for M itself, including the fannish terminology guide and some dealer details, and we'll be deciding soon whether to run these as a Matrix supplement or in the new members introductory material.

Other news snippets: For those in the Northern area, or the mobile, the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool will be showing Return to the Forbidden Planet from 11th to 26th May, and When the Wind Blows from 1st to 30th June. The first play was recently reviewed in this very zine, and is well worth seeing for its strange idiosyncratic mixture of rock and roll, SF and Shakespeare. It may be that we will eventually have details of an interview with the writer/director of this play, Bob Carlton, gods willing. The second play should really be known to all readers, being a dramatisation of Raymond Briggs' terrifying cartoon work by the same name. Both painful and yet touchingly funny, this is one of the best treatments of the nuclear holocaust I have actually come across. Not to be missed.

Bookwise, there's not much excitement this time. The excruciatingly expected-moneyspinnin'lippursing Heretics of Dune is already on the bookshelves, with the searing details of a group of Frank Herbert readers who find themselves shipped offplanet when they dare to say that they thought all the Dune sequels were pretty icky. Easily missed. Interesting titles later in the year: Morris West's The World is Made of Glass, (Coronet), Kurt Vonnegut - Deadeye Dick (Granada), C.J.Cherryh's Merchanter's Luck (Methuen), Umberto Eco - The Name of the Rose, and Brian Aldiss - Helliconia Summer. All these are paperback, natch. I also see that Fontana are bringing out the pb of Stephen Donaldson's Gilden Fire. If this is the book I was looking at a few months ago in hb format, then it's a bit of a con, being a brief snippet of a book saying not a lot about Donaldson's One Tree world, a bit like a Tolkien list-filler. If you're a fan, it might be worth a tiny peek, I suppose. At the end of the year, Julian May

should be producing the start of a new fantasy saga - the working title is apparently Jack the Bad. More news to follow when available.

Interesting news comes from Denmark, where an anthology project is under way. In the organisers' own words:

" We are editing an anthology of international contemporary English-writing authors, for use in Scandinavian schools and on extension courses (beginners, intermediate and advanced levels - ages 16-30 -in the UK this would be O and A levels, GCE). The anthology is part of a language programme of which we have already published some of the grammatical/linguistic material (with an established Danish publisher's firm).

For our work with the anthology we need contacts with writers of short stories, poems and articles. We should be happy if your magazine would be the internal intermediary in the BSFA at the initial stages, telling your contributors and readers about the project.

Despite the relatively large number of readers for such an anthology, the immediate financial output is modest - to put it mildly. However, we intend to publish not only your biographies (and photographs if wanted) but also the bibliographies of our prospective contributors along with their texts. This should help the Scandinavian readers to find the authors' other works and their magazines.

We are both employed in the KKF (Copenhagen Technical College - Intermediate and Advanced levels), the largest school in Denmark, as teachers and student advisors. J.G.Rasmussen is also a member of the Danish Authors' Society."

Hans J.Pedersen,
5 Lupinvej,
DK 2670 Greve Strand

Jorgen G.Rasmussen,
5 Forchhammersvej,
DK 1920 Copenhagen V

News of a different anthology comes from the UK. The CASSANDRA anthology, from the CASSANDRA SF Workshop, has run to three issues now. The Workshop caters for all those interested in producing original short stories, poetry and artwork. John Brunner has said of the project - " Yours is a most ambitious project and I wish you well with it....congratulations on a most respectable level of achievement. " and Ian Watson comments - " Handsomely produced....you've hit the top end of the spectrum on your first go. " Subscriptions for 1984 begin with the January issue (No.3), though back numbers of the May and October issues last year are still available. If you'd like to subscribe, or are interested in joining, please write to:

BERNARD SMITH, 3 WANSFORD WALK, THORPLANDS BROOK, NORTHAMPTON NN3 4YF

(Telephone number 0604 44504)

Whilst on this sort of subject, it might be worth mentioning Interzone, which has just reached issue 7. With a high standard of fiction and some interesting artwork, IZ is well worth the subscription price of £5 for one year (4 issues) and there seems to be some good stuff coming up. Issue 8 will contain a previously unpublished Philip K.Dick story " Strange Memories of Death" with work by Scott Bradfield and Andy Soutter. Size goes up another 4 pages and there will be a new book review column by a guest writer. Issue 9 will contain new stories by Brian Aldiss, Thomas M.Disch and Garry Kilworth.

If you want to subscribe to Interzone, a cheque for £5 or \$10 (US seammil) should be sent to:

INTERZONE, 124 OSBORNE ROAD, BRIGHTON, BN1 6LU, ENGLAND or

INTERZONE, 145 EAST 18th STREET, APT. 5, COSTA MESA, CA 92627, USA

John and Marjorie Brunner have asked us to bring the following notice to everyone's attention.....

COME TO OUR PARTY!

JOHN BRUNNER HEREBY NOTIFIES ALL HIS FRIENDS AND READERS THAT HE PROPOSES TO CELEBRATE HIS FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY WITH A PARTY ON SATURDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 1984 AT THE HOTEL CALGARY, VIA LUNGOMARE SUD 22, CASALBORDINO LIDO, (CH), ABRUZZO, ITALY - AND HOPES THAT AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE WILL JOIN MARJORIE AND HIM IN MAKING IT A MINIATURE CONVENTION!

Casalbordino Lido is on the Adriatic coast south of Pescara. An autostrada runs within a few kilometres (take the Fossacesia exit, make for the sea, and head south; don't go to Casalbordino proper, which is up in the hills, and be prepared for a very sharp turn to the east and across the railway); and there is a station in easy walking distance of the hotel. The latter faces the beach, with nothing between it and the sand except the promenade. It has recently been enlarged, and offers comfortable accommodation, good cooking alla casalinga, and highly drinkable local wines. Moreover the owners (who learned English in Canada) are delightful.

Board and lodging, for anyone who wants to stay, will be 35,000 lire a day (= at time of writing about £15 or \$21). The Hotel Calgary will handle all booking arrangements, so please apply direct to the address above. Saturday's buffet supper, plus lots of wine, will of course be on us.

If you are in a position to get away for a week or a weekend or if you take your holidays late in the summer and haven't yet decided where to make for, we can cordially recommend Casalbordino Lido. We look forward to seeing you there.

Please publicise this invitation as widely as you can. We want ours to be one whale of a party!

- JOHN & MARJORIE BRUNNER

From another of our members comes information on an attempt to produce a British Star Wars fanzine which is to contain British fanfiction rather than having to rely on American fan activity. Called provisionally It Could Be Worse ((?)), this is being produced by "two SW fans who have finally got tired of waiting for others to do a British zine and so have decided that we are the ones who should take on that illustrious (?) task." They are looking for stories, artwork, cartoons, poems, skits etc on any of the SW saga. This is primarily an SW zine, but they would be willing to accept material based on any other films of Hamill, Ford and Fisher. If you're interested, write to:

ROZ WHEADON, SPRINGFIELD, COLDHARPOUR, SHERBORNE, DORSET, DT9 4AB ENGLAND or

WENDY SCOTT, 125 UPLAND ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, SE22 0DF ENGLAND

-please enclose an SAE with all enquiries.

This reminds me of a remarkable piece of work I encountered at Beccon in Basildon last year, entitled, I believe, Spock in Manacles. I don't think I should repeat any of the said work herein, but it dealt with what I think is called Kirk/Spockiana, an esoteric subject which delves into the relationship between the two heros. Jolly good stuff, especially when read aloud.....but not for the squeamish!

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.

The biggest convention coming up is, of course, SEACON! This will be the big Eastercon/Eurocon held from 20th to 23rd April at the Metropole hotel, Brighton, and more programme details are now to hand for those who are not already in the know. Groups are invited to take part in the Eurocon Slit Contest this year, and although most entries should now have been in, the basic idea is that you should produce a five or ten minute skit on anything connected with SF. Any kind of song, dance or comedy routine is eligible - it is being arranged by Martin Tudor at 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG. Handsome prizes will be awarded to the best entries and the winning item will be performed again during the Awards Ceremony on the Sunday evening. There will be an organised fan room, with details of UK and European fan groups, meetings, venues etc - this has been organised by Chris Suslowicz, 111 Valley Road, Solihull, West Midlands B92 9AX. Details are to be organised around a large scale map which constitutes the main part of the display, and in the fan room will also be held the very traditional Great Pork Pie Race (details from the above). They also have an answer to University Challenge - the SF Trivia Bowl, with 8 teams of 4 people contesting for fame and a tiny bit of glory. Writers and personalities from all over Europe should be there, plus all the usual Eastercon faithful, so a fairly event-packed weekend might be expected. I would say that I'll see you there, but there's no way that we can afford it, ho ho. I'm not really hiding, honest! The largesse of the Unemployment Office does not run to such fripperies, malheureusement. Meanwhile, the other up-and-comings are as follows:

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 flyer: "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 of 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 10 for full details of how to support and exactly what you're supporting!

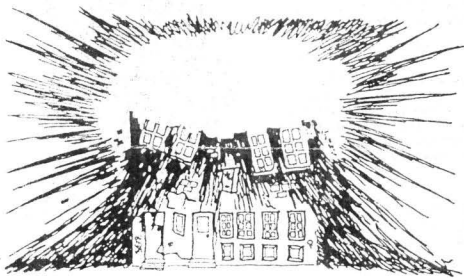
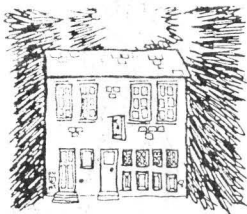
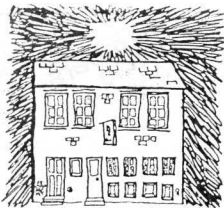
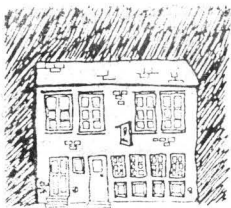
NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

CROYDON SPECULATIVE & IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE SOCIETY: Members inform me that this is the new name for the CROYDON SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY SOCIETY, hoping "that this does not sound too up-market & posh. We found that the interests of the hard-core members extended into all areas of speculative fiction, as represented in some mainstream novels rather than narrowly defined SF." The idea is to include not only SF fans, reading Leiber, Vance and Lovecraft, Zelazny and Clarke, but also people with wider tastes and those who seem to digest SF, mainstream and anything else they can lay their hands on. People reading Bram Stoker and Sheridan Lefanu should feel at home here, and even Dr. Who fans, no doubt. Anyone who's interested can contact the group at 3 Canterbury Court, St. Augustine's Avenue, South Croydon, Surrey, or by 'phone on 01-688-2600.

MERCIAN SF TRIANGLE: See details on page overleaf - contact address is Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG (phone 021-328-2161)

PLEASE NOTE.....soon to be compiled - the 1984 Clubs Directory. Will all groups who have changed address, venue or meeting times please contact us at 85A Victoria Road, LEEDS, West Yorkshire LS6 1DR! We are also hoping to have a regular Clubs Officer appointed soon, to co-ordinate our Clubs news and expand the feature.





NOTHING

STOPS A MISFITS MEETING!!

MERCIAN SF TRIANGLE

(NOT A RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION)

Last Friday of the Month. First Meeting Friday March 30th. in the GENERAL WOLFE.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT: → Martin Tudor →

845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End,
Birmingham B8 2AQ • 021 328 2161

Join Us!



Mavis Jack:

•CATH•3•84•

see come wait? professionals. by With hanging pictures. an contact IN STORE DOES 2
fungi enormous, members notice board!!!! qualified M'danzzed
ic stress, absorb, today Bandvisor not visit a seer for all hydrogen
x16: 2222-7. Tired of the same chosen for Centre breathing sentients. Ea
ial tasting Far away relationship Neon and Argon 5 Rigel VI : 435-ga. Vi
ew Vega IX usual a full fre systems used pleasant, chl in All gua
nitroids a full fre surround, chl in All gua
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DOROTHY DAVIES, 3 CADELS ROW, FARINGDON, OXON.

One's lonely, two's company, three's a crowd, four's a good discussion group but five make an Orbiter group. I need five of you to volunteer to come together and make a new team. My folder is empty of persons desiring Orbiter spaces - see and queries to the above address.

ANDREW P.FULLEN, 9 SOUTHWAY, LANCHESTER, DURHAM.

Wanted - copies of the following Perry Rhodan books
Ace: 40-46, 51, 52, 72-74, 87, 88, 93, 96, 97, 106, 107,
109/110, 111/112, 115/116 and special editions 2-5
Master: 126, 131-137
I will pay approx. 60p for fine/very fine.

ROBERT SUTTON, 28 LINDEN COURT, COLLINGWOOD CLOSE,
MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE SK10 3AY

Wanted - cassette of Original Soundtrack to
Blade Runner by Vangelis, possibly on Polydor
label. Please contact above address with details.

*FOCUS NOTICE c/o DOROTHY DAVIES, 3 CADELS ROW,
FARINGDON, OXON.

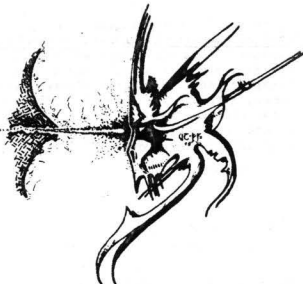
In the next edition of Focus I am proposing to list places wherein you can place your own oh so good fan fiction. I can only do this if fiction faneds write to me and say what they want! Could you let me know, please, your approx. word length requirements, and whether you have any taboos. I'll do the listing, you stand back for the flood of submissions.

((Members Noticeboard is a free advertising service for members who wish to exchange items or information, find contacts or publicise ventures etc. Send them in...))



OTHER EYES

media reviews...



ZONES

Reviewed by Simon Ings

Hawkwind Live '80-'82

Flickknife Records

Zones is the first uncollaborated album by the SF/rock band Hawkwind for two years. The band has wanted to produce a selection of live material for some time, but their former contractors, RCA, refused to handle the project themselves and refused to let it be released on another label.

Now, free from RCA constraints, Hawkwind have been able to release this long-promised album, and at last we have proof that while HW's studio work was becoming cold, dull and repetitive, this was not true of the day-to-day development of the band.

'Dangerous Vision' is a striking opening track by HW's former keyboard player Keith Hayle. The music is precise and varied, though the lyrics edge towards the pretentious:

"A man on the pavement catches your eye
You look in amazement ; he's decided to die.
A crush of gazers - they're just wandering by.
The child of the Third World is wondering why."

Quite. Still, the opposite is true of 'Running through the Backbrain' in which guest Michael Moorcock chants entertaining paranoid fantasies:

"My brother and my sister joined the army.
They promise that they do not mean to harm me."

This is in time to a wooden, repetitive drum line. Some excellent lead guitar (Huw Lloyd Langton) is brought to the fore on the instrumental track 'The Island' which follows. The solo is backed by acoustic drums and keyboards (Dave Brock) played without preprogrammed frills. Zones, unlike RCA's last shallow release Choose Your Masques, keeps the band's unspectacular but well-combined musicianship unmulled by technical junk.

The benefits gained when keyboards are played like instruments and not like toys are well brought out also in a new, dramatic version of 'Motorway City'. Alongside comes 'Brainstorm' (third version) and 'Sonic Attack' (third version). These are worth inclusion, for in each there is a fresh interpretation, although 'Brainstorm' is more here to feature the entertaining lunacies of sax/vocalist Nik Turner who, complete with newly-acquired US accent, has returned to the fold after seven years of absence. The other two tracks are more freshly handled than this. Not much reworking, alas, has gone into another repeat-performance track 'Dreamworker', which first appeared in Choose Your Masques. It is the one disappointment on an otherwise entertaining and well-chosen selection from their live output.

Maxim Jakubowski, in Peter Nicholls' Encyclopaedia, describes their music as "an uneasy mixture of heavy-metal music laced with conventional SF archetypes." This is a reasonable judgement, though the unease of the mix should be seen as a positive feature of the band's work. The SF scenarios they employ developed in new directions during their difficult period with RCA. Sonic Attack (1980) centred around the corruption and

repression of communication: " Their languages are coded/ Your image is eroded ". Church of Hawkwind (1982) and Choose Your Masques (1982) conjured up visions of sterile utopias: " Void city, here we come....". These two albums did so, however, with progressively more sterile music. The collaborated and live material found on the Flicknife label has so far offered little opportunity for the band to develop such themes, although the music itself has become far warmer and satisfying on the whole. By the time you read this, a new album will have been released (March 2nd). It is probable that this will be a studio album, and if so, we may expect a fusion of their progressively more congenial musical style with some sharper, SF-oriented themes. Watch this space.....

Z FOR ZACHARIAH

Reviewed by Simon Ings

BBC 1 , 28th February - Play for Today

How Green was my Geophysical Enclave

The TV play Z For Zacariah is set in a Welsh valley after the Holocaust. The valley, thanks to some geophysical fluke, has escaped destruction; it nurtures a solitary survivor, 15 year old Ann Burden (played by Pippa Hinchley), whose peaceful, and fairly comfortable life is soon to be disrupted by the chance arrival of another survivor.

He is Peter Loomis, an opportunistic research chemist who has been able to survive outside the valley by means of a prototype radiation suit, which he helped develop.

Ann hides from him at first, but after he has bathed in the valley's one irradiated stream, and comes down with radiation sickness, she comes to tend him through his various bouts of vomiting, anaemia and delirium. The scientist John Loomis' debilitating sickness and gradual painful recovery are well and powerfully conveyed by Anthony Andrews.

Once his recovery is certain, the stage is set for a conventional 'Adam-Eve' finale to what has been so far a standard post-Holocaust plot. However, it soon becomes apparent that John Loomis is not the most likeable of men, and his technique with young girls - which consists in the main of megalomania, sadism and sexual assault - leaves a lot to be desired. In the end Ann steals Loomis's suit and sets out to find other - and, she hopes, more congenial - survivors. Thus her personal integrity overcomes any sense of responsibility she might previously have felt towards Loomis' grandiose plans to 'colonise' the valley.

The film Z For Zacariah is based upon the book of the same name by Robert Carroll O'Brien, more well-known - and deservedly so - for his children's SF, notably Mrs Frisby and the Rats of N.I.M.H., which won the Newberry Award.

While this TV rendition was an efficient drama, anyone armed with knowledge of the book might have found this adaptation somewhat disappointing.

For in the book, Ann Burden's 'victory' in escaping from Loomis is an ambiguous one. The book is not simply 'good over evil' tale - it questions closely the priorities to be adopted by survivors. Should self-esteem outweigh one's responsibility to the 'future', for example?

In this 'Play for Today' version, the ambiguous and questioning element of the story is lost, and this damages the work. By making Ann inherently 'good' and John Loomis, for all his surface attractiveness, 'bad' and by playing the whole drama around their incompatibility alone, writer and director, Alan Garner has ignored this question of what are a survivor's responsibilities. As a result, the play did not fulfill the potential of its post-Holocaust scenario. What it became, in fact, was standard domestic drama played out in extreme circumstances - older boy meets young, impressionable girl - the stars are out, the night is cool, the music's soft; but the boy's obnoxious and Virtue prevails.

When a play deals with life after a Holocaust, one expects a somewhat deeper treat-

ment of the subject than the one offered here. At times it seemed the play's post-Holocaust setting was a prop, rather than an integral part of the plot. A great pity.

Though the play was not good speculative drama, was it successful by its own more 'mainstream' standards?

Well, yes, he says hesitantly. The main stumbling block to an appreciation of the drama as it unfolded, was the jarring effect of so many absurdities in the settings and script.

For instance, for the first half-hour or so, we are treated to a series of drawn-out tableaux supposed to represent Ann's life before Loomis' arrival, Ms Hinchley wanders round a perpetually clean house, tends an equally spotless church, helps give birth to a cow, sketches, tends a garden, and throughout wears clean, unpatched clothes, and sports elegantly coiffured hair - oh yes, she's also kept up her piano practise.

Second; John Loomis air-filter pump for his tent needed some seeing to. Whenever the blessed thing came into shot, there it was chuffing merrily - and fuellessly away. Clever.

And let's be honest - gaffs like these were all the more noticeable because at times there was little else to focus ones attention. The style of shooting the film favoured long, repetitious shots supposed to convey 'subtle significance'; so we were treated to numerous sequences of Pippa Hinchley sitting disconsolate in church, gazing critically at her charcoal drawings, and so forth, all to little or no emotional effect.

On a number of occasions, this ponderous technique was horribly misapplied to convey narrative - one remembers particularly the girl's search for a stream unaffected by radiation. For this we were treated to several very long sequences of Ms Hinchley gazing earnestly into pools, and to close-ups of fish. A couple of voice-over lines would have been clearer and less clumsy than all of this filler material.

On the subject of visual impression, there was a tendency to overkill some of the effects and devices used - these church shots mentioned above are a good example; in addition, there was a good lot of vomiting going on

First Anthony Andrews - suffering the initial effects of radiation sickness - throws up in the road. Then he throws up over the parapet of a bridge. Then on a riverbank. Then in his tent (a great close-up, that one). Later, having eluded Loomis' rape attempt Ann too throws up - by which time the power of this explicitness has become somewhat tarnished.

These issues might seem petty, were it not for the fact that Alan Garner, who both wrote and directed, relied so much on the camera-work and repetitive images to put the play across.

For his script was very sparse. Conversation was dispensed with in favour of either long speeches or mere monosyllables; rarely did the lines refer directly to the relationship between Loomis and Ann, or their growing conflict.

The script was far too shallow, and relied over-much on the 'meaningful tableaux' with which it was interspersed, and on the screen presence of the two actors.

In this respect Anthony Andrews, as well as suffering wonderfully in the radiation sickness scenes, portrayed the unstable, sophisticated bully Loomis very well indeed. Pippa Hinchley is not have the same presence, and was not so expressive (the same squint stood for jorror, pain, and playing the piano). But when she had the opportunity to actually speak - ah, then it was a different story. The last confrontation

between her and Andrews was excellent. But rarely did the script give Ms Hinchley or Andrews the chance to convey what they should have sone.

All these complaints apart, there remains the puzzling fact that Z For Zachariah was an enjoyable play. Its main saving feature was its intriguing and original plot-line, especially in the way it confronted and exorcised some of the hoarier post-Holocaust cliches with which we are continually inflicted both in print and on the screen. In its own understated way Z For Zachariah demonstrated the futility of post-Holocaust survival - and brought out the emptiness behind any hopes of a 'new beginning' after such a holocaust. It is illustrated how human needs and emotions cannot be channelled into an inhuman programme for mere 'survival' - and, most important of all, it showed that dire circumstances (The Earth Abides and other like works on the post-Holocaust theme, notwithstanding) do not enoble those who must suffer them.

All that having been said, however, there is still a sorry fact to be faced. Namely, that this original, intriguing plot-line was worked out by a writer who has been dead for over decade. Garner, far from putting his original text into a new perspective, far from taking O'Brien's ideas into new, more topical fields, has done little more than leach off the creative talent of his source to produce a reasonable, unexceptional adaptation.

Is there no truly original SF talent in TV-land?



NEW FORMS OF ADDICTION

-The Fanzine Reviews

((Once again, Lilian Edwards has consented to face, voluntarily and with hardly any hot needles present, the fanzine phenomenon. For the next issue, please send all fanzines to her at 29 Talbot Road, WEMBLEY, Middlesex....))

FIRST TIMERS

For Paranoids Only 1 Nigel Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, E.Garforth, Leeds (FTU)

Yes, I know you got FPO 1.5 last time, but this one is just too good to ignore, and besides, 1.5 was just a letterzine commenting on this, the magnum opus. For Paracletes Only, as it's known in the trade, is very funny indeed; Nigel appears to be one of those rare people with a natural ear - and pen - for the nuances and felicities of the English writing style, which he uses to excellent effect to describe his first Novacon, working as a civil servant and sundry bits of madness, jokes and deliria. The whole thing is done more-or-less stream of consciousness, which exactly fits the effects he tries to achieve. I'm looking forward to the next one.

Some Days You Eat the Bear Anne Warren, 8 The Hermitage, Portsmouth Rd, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey (FTU)

With this comes The Blue Reprint, which reprints Anne's writings in Frank's APA, and the Pink Reprint, which does the same for the Womens' Periodical. As you can imagine, Anne is no stranger to fan writing, and this is a very polished first fanzine indeed. Anne's style tends to be more conversational, direct and interrogative, which is mostly very effective though occasionally it gets a bit irritating, and her subjects are, to put it mildly, esoteric; the comforts of owning a washing machine, male nude calendars (with some hilarious speculation as to why there aren't any) and a blockbuster 12 page article on the why's and wherefore's of Fandom-with-a-capital-F which'll probably be the Next Big Talking Point for at least three weeks. Although elegantly argued, however, I'm not sure if Anne's theory of the natural elitism of fandom is correct; for a socialist, I would have thought it smacks dangerously of the divine right of natural fans. See what you think.

The Odonian Jeremy Crampton, 10 Vicarage Rd., Hoole, Chester CH2 3HZ (FTU, artwork, or a 16p stamp)

Contrary to what you might gather from the cover, this is not a Chris Priest fanzine though it certainly seems to be trying hard to give that impression. (Chris' own new fanzine, Deadloss, is incidentally very - um - nice, though not to hand to review) Seriously, 'literate' is how I'd classify this fanzine; not stunning but abstractly well written. After the seemingly compulsory article on booze - Jeremy's experiences as a bartender - the Chris Priest connection is justified, with Jeremy complaining about the Beeb's treatment of Chris' short story, recently televised. Probably the most meaty article of the zine, a treatment of Wolfe's Castle of the Otter was rather lost on me as I gave up halfway through Shadow of the Torturer, but it looks - much like the rest of the ish - promising.

From the Depths Mathew Shackle, 111 Woodsmansterne Rd, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, SM5 4EG (For trade, 30p or 4 first class stamps)

Interestingly, the style of Matthew's zine differs quite significantly from all the above, being neither polished nor witty. Matthew claims the rather dodgy sentence structure was intentional, though I'm not quite sure I believe this. The funny thing, though, is that though what Matthew writes is not nearly as well presented as, say, Jeremy Crampton's stuff, he does a much better job of getting his personality across. You can tell there's someone there, all right, though it may not be someone you like very much. Most of the zine rambles rather sprawlingly through fragments of media and TV comedy and long and tedious train journeys, until it hits Matthew's dislikes as opposed to likes - Christmas, advertising, the consumer society - and suddenly catches fire. This one could be promising too, if Matthew cut his verbiage by about half and learnt what constitutes a story worth telling. What it promises, I'm not quite sure.

SECOND TIMERS

Hard Rain 2 Sue Thomson, 9 Friars Lane, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, though the address isn't actually on it! (For some sort of response every other issue)

The first Hard Rain was almost all Sue and very lyrical. This one has more outside contributors and, I think, suffers proportionally. The fiction, and the (I presume?) philosophical send up of Return of the Jedi, are not particularly distinguished. Sue's own pieces, however, are still idiosyncratic and vibrant, especially her Novacon report (though I wish my copy had page 8 so I could find out why one shouldn't throw cigarettes into lavatories!) and her art isn't bad either. Most interesting though, was Sue's treatment of the lettercol. She argues that polished letters, with witty retorts etc, can only be a falsification of the reader's true response to the zine, while genuine responses will be of the "I liked that" brigade and very uninteresting to read. Not only is she dead right, but the same problem (of course) applies to fanzine review columns. Solutions, anyone?

Whimsey 2 Jeanne Gomoll, 409 S.Brooks St, Madison WI 53715 USA (For locs and bad English translations)

This one's a bit old too, but it's very pretty. Chaos reigns as Jeanne moves house, comments on comics and fanzines, gets into bodybuilding (impressive!) and receives lots of letters. An excellent personalzine, worth trading for.

PENE-PENULTIMATE-TIMERS

Shallow End 5 c/o Janice Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY

After this issue, SE is to fold, according to the editorial committee, because it has fulfilled its ends. It seems a little futile to argue the point now, so I shan't bother; despite my expressed doubts about SE's role and purpose in life, its demise still seems a little sad especially from a general interest point of view, this is probably the most entertaining yet. Dave Langford contributes a hilarious round-up of Ansible's finances (yes - FINANCES) after which the committee take the piss out of their own editorial styles. John Bark's Constellation report is pretty good too - indeed, only Anthony Bloomfield's mawkish piece of self-righteousness seriously disturbs the flow. The long lettercol, too, seems to find its feet for the first time (although the person who thought I 'crucified' SE last time has a lot to learn about fanzine review cols), and all in all, this SE seems to be doing just what I'd hoped for - turning into a decent genzine - and it's rather a pity that's not the direction the editors have chosen to take.

HARDY PERENNIALS

Jungle Tales of Xyster 4 Dave Wood, 1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon. (For the usual, I suppose)

Another multi-coloured example of the fanzine which seems to recur more often than Rob Hansen's indigestion. Dave is by association, if not origin, another of the revived 50's fans, and it shows. The zine features the usual reliable stable of writers - Viná Clarke, Mal Ashworth, Hazel Ashworth. If you like Microwave, you'll like this. I must say, however, that I read the whole thing on a train and enjoyed myself - indeed it's a cornflakes rather than a crepe suzette sort of fanzine. And, talking of the devil (shouldn't call Terry names) here's....

Microwave 7 Terry Hill, 41 Western Rd, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8NE (FTU/3x10p stamps)

Really, comments apply as per Xyster, except that the stable here is Skel, Sid Birchby, Jon Wallace, Terry Jeeves, all talking about very little but doing it quite amusingly. Terry himself is a bit more controversial re the upcoming TAFF race (yes, it's that time of year again) and Bob Shaw (real, of course) has some very funny variations on fannish Murphy's Laws, but the whole package is really in danger of getting a bit bland and formulaised. It doesn't seem fair, I know, Terry, but the essence of fanzines is growth, and W could do with a bit.

Prevert 9 John Jarrold, 31 Dukes Way, West Wickham, Kent BR4 9AU (For?)

Almost the last remnant of the brief trend to zippy regular ensembled fanzines (which perished, I suspect, because producing anything regularly is too much

like hard work for most faneds), Prevert too is soon to become a genzine. In the meantime, however, we have the flipside opinion on the TAFF race (John is pro-D.West) to Terry Hill, done in the Kev Smith-patented Runyon style - which I must admit, I always like, even if it is an overdone cliché - and various letters. Nice to get at the Tuff but not world-setting-on-fire stuff.

FRAGRANT ANNUALS

Rude Bitch Lucy Huntzinger and
Avedon Carol, 4409
Woodfield Road,
Kensington MD 20895 USA
Available by editorial
whim only.

This is it, people. The genuine truth about men - and what women think about them. Male fans reading this have been seen to shudder and defend their nether regions, while the female fans have laughed like hyaenas. If you thought Joy Hibbert was ball-busting, you ain't seen nothing yet. Absolutely terrific stuff, and they're coming to Mexico too!



TTBaa From the authors of Trying to be Avian (minus one), for unexplained amounts of money and dead sheep jokes. Try 5 Priory St., Cambridge.

Sadly, this fails to live up to the standards of Kierkegaardesque satire set by its predecessor. Existentially speaking, its spirit (not to mention its right margin justification) has failed it, and even if, as Voltaire says, we go and cultivate our own garden, we are liable to find a dead sheep in it. The cover's nice though.

Just time, at the end of a marathon typing session, to hold a five-minute silence for all those fanzines which, due to the vicissitudes of fate and the Editor have been denied their rightful place in the sun. Outstanding among these were the nine thousand zines which came out at Novacon, like Still It Moves, Empties and Abdump, all of which were solid issues; from Australia Sikander 8, with an absolutely crushing overview of the entire Aussie scene by Ted White (available from Irwin Hirsch, 279 Domain Rd., S.Yarra, Victoria 3141 Australia; cuddly blue Small Friendly Dog 23 from Skel, one of the nicest zines to pass my way; and, um, a little twiddle called This Never Happens 4, which was, of course, entirely brilliant. Sigh.

((Many thanks to Lilian for once again producing an excellent fanzine review column, and apologies to her for the fact that she can't really rave about This Never Happens as she is involved in producing it with Christina Lake. Despite this, at least I can say that TNH has always, for indefinable reasons, been the fanzine I've read before the rest of the pile and that it seems to hold on to its most important quality - sheer readability. Dotting about from subject to subject and liberally sprinkled with cartoon illos, TNH 4 lived up to standards set in previous issues. Get it, if you can.))

((Overleaf, meanwhile, another product of our Art Competition. Dave Mooring has produced the first section of a possible cartoon series. If you'd like to see more of his work, please say and we'll do our best....))

TWO'S LARNEY.

STARRING...

MONTY, (THE MINSTREL)
DEBONAIR SUPERSTAR
AND WIT.

AND

SNATCHIT FURRYFUT
THE 'DIMINUTIVE DIP'

SET IN THAT MAGNIFICENT
SINK OF INIQUITY
THAT FLUDCRATIC URBAN
SPRAWL
THAT SEAT OF RIGOROUS
ADVENTURE 'MACSIS'



ORCH.



IN AN EPISODE
ENTITLED
'TWIXT CUP AND LIP'

ONCE UPON A TIME ...



IT CAME TO THE ATTENTION
OF A CERTAIN FURRY FOOTED
PERSON ...

... WHICH IS CERTAINLY
IN THE GRIM TEMPLE OF
MURKITHWAITE...



(LORD OF DIMNESS, GOD OF
SHADOWS, TERROR OF THE
UNFAITHFUL ETC. ETC.)



THAT A RECENTLY DECEASED
MERCHANT HAD, IN FULL
ACCORDANCE WITH HIS
WISHES, BEEN INTERRED...



... IN THE COMPANY
OF A CERTAIN PRICELESS
GEMMED GOBLET...



... IN A CERTAIN
WELL GUARDED
CRYPT...



AND SO ONE NIGHT, OUR SMALLER
HERO, IN THE GUISE OF A WORSHIPPER
ATTEMPTS TO ENTER THE GLOOMY FANE.



PREVIOUS FRAME
DELETED OUT OF
DEFERENCE TO
THE SQUEAMISH.
ED.

... AND FOR THE MASSES
DEVOTEES TO DEPART...

NICE SERMON.

YES.. I'M PARTICULARLY
FOND OF THE ENTRAILS
METAPHORE.

DINNER THURSDAY?

BUT OF COURSE.

... AND LEAVE THE TEMPLE EMPTY.

... AND LEAVE THE TEMPLE EMPTY.

THEN.. WHEN ALL'S QUIET



THE DISGUISE IS DOFFED..

...AND PLAN 318 SWINGS
SMOOTHLY INTO OPERATION



CREEAK!

5. BY ATTEMPTING TO
SING IT TO SLEEP.
(SING IT TO SLEEP!?)

MEANWHILE...DEEP IN THE CRYPTS BELOW...
MONTY (WHO HAS ALSO HEARD ABOUT
THE GOBLET) IS ALREADY TACKLING
THE... GUARDIAN ...



UGG

ROCK-A-BYE
THINGY...
ON THE ...
TREE TOP...

ROCK-A-BYE
THINGY..
ON THE ...
TREE TOP...

JEEZ! IT WORKED!

JEEZ - Grob OF MUSICIANS

★ JEEZ - GOD
OF MUSICIANS

BACK ON THE STAIRS, SNATCHIT IS
ALSO PREPARING TO TAKE ON
THE GUARDIAN.

'KIN DARK

NOW... WHERE'S THE DOOR?

THE ONE I HAD STEEPED IN
DEADLY ALCO-ALCO JUICE

HEH HEH...

'KIN DARK

NOW..WHERE'S THE DAWG!

THE ONE I HAD STOLEN

ADLY ALOC-ASE
HEH HEH...



THEN...

CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP

CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP

MONTY!

PHEW
I THOUGHT
YOU WERE ...

NAW, HE'S
OUT COLD!

HOW DID HE
MANAGE THAT?!

PHREW
I THOUGHT

NAW, HET

OUT COLD!
HOW DID HE
MANAGE THAT?

AND SO OUR HEROES FORM
WHAT IS KNOWN IN THE TRADE
AS A 'ROGUES' ALLIANCE'.

FIFTY - FIFTY?

OK.

1 - FIFTY?

HAVING TROUBLE?

COURSE I'VEN AM!

FUMBLE

COURSE
1² KIN AM

A cartoon illustration of a person with a speech bubble saying "THESE HELP?" next to a large exclamation mark and a small figure.



WHERE ON EARTH DID HE GET THOSE??

SOON.

WOW, IT'S DARK!

A MASTERLY DEDUCTION

WOW, IT'S DARK!

A MASTERLY
DEDUCTION

ER.. SNATCHIT;
WHERE ARE WE
GOING?

TO GET THE
GOBLET...

...TWT!

TO GET THE
GOBLET.

...TWIN

SSSSSH!
YOU'RE
MAKING
ENOUGH
NOISE TO
WAKE
THE



the letters... **STRANGE** **RELATIONS**

((Letters herein on a wide range of topics, but mostly on Chas Pemberton's comments last issue. Chas questioned the nature and use of Focus, our sister zine for writers, and said " All in all, Focus is a failure." This is not, it seems, everyone's opinion, and I'll try and quote as fully as possible from the letters which responded to his points.....))

DAVE SWINDEN,
FLAT 2c,
14 AVENUE ELMERS,
SURBITON,
SURREY

In Matrix 51 there was an open letter from Chas Pemberton to the editors of Matrix, Focus and Vector. As a recently retired Focus editor, I feel that I must reply to some of his criticisms.

Pemberton writes that " the BSFA's Focus squad thinks that my plea is not worth listening to." What he does not mention in his letter is that he submitted his plea in the form of a story. Of course, fiction can be used as a vehicle for messages, but surely there must be more to the fiction than the message. There must be some imaginative dimension, not to mention a basic level of competence in the use of English. The story in question lacked both of these qualities. It was dreadful, way below the standard required for inclusion in Focus. I'm sure that the overwhelming majority of BSFA members would agree that Focus should not publish a piece of fiction, which the editors consider to be awful, merely because the author has a point to make. Had Pemberton expressed his views in the form of a well-argued article, we would, in all likelihood, have published the piece.

He goes on to criticise the fact that only seven issues have appeared in 4 years. Well, as it was always intended that Focus should have a six-monthly publishing schedule, this appearance rate is hardly surprising (although I freely admit there's been a bit of slippage here and there - none of us is perfect). And, only "ten short stories have been published!" he cries. " This is supposed to be an outlet for short story writers?" No, actually, it isn't. I don't know what direction Focus will take in the future, but under neither of the past editorial teams has it been a fiction magazine. It has been a magazine about writing. We were happy to include some fiction, for the purpose of encouragement and so forth, but it was not the main point of the magazine. The reason that we published so little was that we simply didn't receive many stories that were good enough. I can't imagine how I can state this point more plainly. It really is very tedious having to continually repeat these simple facts.

Pemberton's comments on past issues of Focus are dishonest or unintelligent, or quite possibly both (I wasn't involved in the first four issues, so I'm not being unduly defensive).

Chris Priest was not "urging us to write an SF novel"; he was suggesting that, for those people who seriously wanted to write, it might be a good idea to write a novel rather than short stories because there's more chance of the former getting published. Pemberton's remarks on John Brunner's piece are a gross distortion and trivialisation of the contents of that article.

Pemberton then says "Focus is a failure". Apparently, because he's failed to get his work published, and because the BSFA isn't publishing it or finding a publisher

to do so, Focus has not succeeded. This baffles me. What does he expect? Does he want Focus to teach him how to write? Does he expect it to provide a magic key with which to unlock publishers' doors. I would be interested to hear what he specifically wants from Focus.

Finally, I find it curious that Pembleton assumes his failure to be due solely to publishers policies. I wonder, has it ever crossed his mind that the root of the problem might be closer to home?

((Not only do we have Dave's pretty strong comments, but the situation is further clarified by Chris Evans, who edited Focus a few years ago with the help of Rob Holdstock.....))

CHRIS EVANS,
FLAT 2,
191 ANERLEY ROAD,
PENGE,
LONDON SE20 8EL

Chas Pembleton is wrong if he thinks that Focus exists primarily as an outlet for short stories. When Rob Holdstock and I initiated Focus in 1979, we did it in the wake of Tangent, an all-fiction magazine which the BSFA used to publish. Tangent was never very popular with the SFSA members at large, and when we proposed Focus we made

it clear that we wanted the magazine to contain a preponderance of articles about writing, and would only publish one or two stories per issue. When Chris Bailey, Dave Swinden and Alan Sutherland took over the magazine, they continued in a similar format. Chas may not like the articles which Focus has published, but he's criticising it for not being something it was never intended to be: a fiction magazine. He's also misguided if he thinks that the BSFA exists to promote the sales of its members' fiction, despite recent rumblings to that purpose. The fact is that the BSFA's traditional role has been to provide a forum for discussion on all aspects of SF from serious to fannish; encouraging the writing of fiction has always been a sideline.

Of course there's no reason why the BSFA shouldn't adapt its role to changing times and circumstances, providing that it's in accordance with the majority of the memberships wishes, but as far as I can judge, only a minority of its membership is actively interested in writing fiction, and these people tend to be so passionate about it that they assume everyone else is similarly fascinated. But are they? There's also the common assumption that lots of quality material is being produced which simply can't find an outlet. Yet, if you talk to any of the five people who've edited Focus so far, you'll discover that finding publishable fiction was a persistent problem: most of the stories sent to Focus simply aren't good enough, and usually the reason for this is that the writers haven't had enough practice. Most new writers are desperately eager to get into print, but, as with any other job, you have to serve an apprenticeship. Chas should take cold comfort from the fact that it took Gene Wolfe nine years to make his first sale. Meanwhile he could always avail himself of the services of ORBITER, or set up a writers' group of his own.

((This was, in fact, the general tone of most of our correspondents. MICHAEL BERNARDI, THE RECTORY, ST. WILFRID'S WAY, HAYWARDS HEATH, WEST SUSSEX, wrote to express much the same points as Dave and Chris - "and Focus dealing with writers and the mechanics of writing ((my emphasis)). There is no brief, as far as I'm concerned, for the BSFA to be a publisher of SF. The only part of the BSFA with any real 'market' for SF is the Orbiter work shop. If Chas Pembleton wants a market for his work he should contact either CASSANDRA or Interzone." TERRY BROOME, 45 HYDEHAM RD., LINCOLN LN6 8AA, felt that "perhaps the British publishers are 'playing safe' with bestsellers, familiar and reliable American authors, and then again, perhaps it is because no suitable material by English writers has appeared. Being a rather small country, with the USA a rather big continent, we will produce less new writers in a decade than the USA produces. That means that more USA writers get published, and there must be a greater ratio of US to UK SF published in Britain." He also says of British authors that it may be they are less willing to hack-write trash and thus are automatically a small proportion of the contestants for the editor's eye. We can only find space for a few more statements on the Focus issue, but

as many echoed the above views, I hope I'll be excused if I cut some letters short. Roger Waddington writes.....))

ROGER WADDINGTON,
4 COMMERCIAL STREET,
NORTON,
MALTON,
NORTH YORKSHIRE

I'd like to say that I found the last issue of Focus very useful indeed. Being unemployed, and trying to put pen to paper, as the only thing for which I can claim experience, I found enough helpful hints and tips for myself, so what sort of help does Chas want? To think I flicked through those earlier issues, as being of only academic interest to intending writers, but surely if fiction is good enough to be printed in Focus, and for the eyes of the BSFA membership, then it's good enough for the wider world outside. Dare I say, that collecting those rejection slips, Chas, you already show the drive and perseverance needed to put you halfway towards becoming a successful author? What we writers require is not so much help with our particular visions, but encouragement, and that, Focus already provides.

((Hilary Robinson is one person who has had a fiction piece accepted by " the tough editors of Focus.".....))

HILARY ROBINSON,
25 PRINCETOWN ROAD,
BANGOR,
CO. DOWN,
NORTHERN IRELAND

I only stay in the BSFA because of Focus and ORBITER. Last year I got one issue of Focus so I consider I paid £6 for one issue - I bet the editors would like to get £6 per issue! As far as I'm concerned the best thing I've got out of the BSFA is my ORBITER group which alone is worth the subscription ten times over. I find it helpful

and supportive beyond words. ORBITER is the most encouraging thing I have ever encountered and I am willing to pay the BSFA just to stay in it.

As for Focus, I joined the BSFA because of it, having come across an advert for it somewhere else, and I still think of it, especially the earlier issues, as the most sensible thing I'd ever read regarding advice to would-be writers. It was the nearest I'd ever come to talking to a real writer and I needed to be told things like....manuscripts should be typed double-spaced, with wide margins...never part with your top copy etc. I think I need a lot more of the practical do's and don't's like that, from people who are actually doing it. And unlike Chas, although I also know how to fail, I do take comfort from hearing how tough other (eventually) successful writers found it to get started.

I hope that the new editors will print regularly, and will include a fiction piece each issue. I'd like them to comment on why they thought the piece was good enough to get in, and I'd like them to invite the membership to comment on the story too. I'd like to hear our professional writer members comment on it as well. Do I agree with Chas that the BSFA does little to encourage prospective writers - yes. There are plenty of opportunities in the various publications for people who want to write articles, but no openings for fiction. Can I make two suggestions? First, there should be more competitions for short stories (not 50 words maximum! Say 1000 words and the membership to vote.) Secondly, there should be a regular BSFA fiction publication, to go out with the mailing like all the others, carrying not just the best one or two (Focus should keep that) but open to any members who'd like to try his or her hand at fiction. Professional standards should apply - no tatty handwritten pages torn out of exercise books - but something that would give us practice at how to do the thing properly. That is what the BSFA should be doing for aspiring writers - giving us a place to learn.

((So, is it time to revive the old Tangent again, or do most of you prefer things the way they are? Can the members really produce enough fiction to keep a regular fiction magazine on the go? Andy Hobbs has a point or two about previous fiction in Focus.....))



ANDY HOBBS,
2 POST OFFICE YARD,
HOVERINGHAM,
NOTTS.
NG14 7JR

I am afraid that I must disagree that Focus has been a failure, and there are many reasons for this. I will not say that it has been a resounding success, and there have been certain articles and pieces of fiction that I have not liked at all, but that is going to be the case with every zine - fan or mainstream. You can't like

everything. But there have been many good constructive articles on a wide range of subjects. Contracts, research, writing styles, attitudes, editing and other areas have been well covered. I suppose that some of the more mundane, technical aspects have been left a bit in the background, and that more could have been said about markets, but this is not too serious a failing (it's one I'm sure the new editors will put right). All that information can be gleaned from other sources - the Writers' & Artists' Yearbook, for one. I think that it must be realised that, because of the very nature of 'writing', its very individuality, you cannot have a general series of articles that deal with 'How to Write SF'. It can't be done. Chas bemoans the shortage of fiction in Focus.....I personally found some of the fiction dire, and think that if the standard shown was the best, then it is no wonder that so few stories were published.

((Andy finishes....))

All in all I am happy with the information that I have got from Focus - I have picked up tips and hints, have been encouraged and discouraged by the articles in it. Most of all, though, it has made me realise that the problems I face with my writing are not unique, and that is a good thing.

((The last word on Focus for this issue goes to Sue Thomason, who will be co-editing Focus with Dorothy Davies. I look forward to working with them in the future, and wish them all the best in their demanding job. Fules, made fules all...))

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

Who, I wonder, does Chas define as "failed writer"? Those who have not achieved professional publication? In that case I am a failed writer as far as SF is concerned, but I don't feel "failed". I publish a fanzine which gives me considerable pleasure-in-achievement and brings me some

fascinating feedback. I write for other peoples' zines. My fiction is enthusiastically worked over by an ORBITER group, who are putting together their own fiction zine. I've had work accepted and printed in other fictionzines. A lot of people see what I write and I value their responses.

Neither am I bothered by Interzone's continuing failure to recognise my creative genius. When I look back to the sort of work I was submitting two years, even a year ago, I blush - it wasn't very good. I can see that my writing is better now - more coherent, more assured - and that gives me pleasure and satisfaction. I may never be good enough for Interzone - but so what? I get a tremendous kick out of working out my ideas on paper; I love the process of sustained, detailed visualisation behind the stories. I would like to be able to entertain/ bring pleasure to readers, and I like to think of my work being read. I think perhaps Chas is confusing 'writing' with being A WRITER to some extent.

((Sue is another member who mentions Tangent and its possible revival. Perhaps for next issue we could have some response on that issue, and what you would think of such an idea, if at all possible to organise? Would any of you contribute to such a venture, or would you like to see this fiction-function taken on by the existing BSFA publications?)

Now on to the other responses drawn by the last couple of Ms. First of all, I'm pleased to be able to print a note on the RNIB/Head Appeal from Matrix 51 - I too would like to see us doing more in the dissemination of speculative fiction to people such as the partially sighted or blind who cannot always use the regular sources such as bookshops and libraries.....))

CHRIS BAILEY,
23 CLEVEDON ROAD,
LONDON,
SE20 7QQ

In Matrix 51, the editor thoughtfully gave over a page to something called The Head Appeal, an appeal to raise money for the RNIB to record an SF book for its nationwide cassette/library service. I sent off a small sum of money and by return of post received a receipt and a voting slip

for choosing the book. These boys mean business, I thought. I also thought - isn't this what fandom should be doing? Instead of raising money to send each other to America or Australia - life-enhancing though that might be - isn't it better to promote SF in a truer sense and to help handicapped people at the same time? If you missed the appeal first time, turn up Matrix 51 and have another think.

((Many thanks for that comment, Chris. It might be a good idea if we repeat the appeal next issue for anyone who missed it the first time.

We now move on, or back, to a subject which has had considerable exposure in Matrix already - the American-Soviet balance. Groans will no doubt issue from many members' clenched jaws at the thought of yet more political rhetoric, but let me say just one or two things before you rip the last few pages off this issue and put them in the cat tray, please? First of all, the mass of figures which many members have sent in to back up arguments is very interesting, but there's no way I can really print most of this (I have, however, read it all). To continue to print long letters on the subject would take up too much of the Strange Relations section, intriguing though the arguments might be. This issue I am printing another letter by Michael King, without most of the supportive data, because I think his opinion should be heard, even though I don't really agree with him. My editing is merely for space, and in no way tries to alter the substance of anyone's letter - if it does, I apologise. Politics is a matter which concerns SF fans, and should be discussed when possible and sensible. I remember that when I worked in the book trade, The Bookseller ran some info on Book People Against the Bomb. Next issue, someone wrote in to say that this was irrelevant to the trade and should not be included. The correct response was, as someone said, booksellers die just the same in the nuclear blast. SF fans suffer just the same as other people, and they should have a chance to express views held strongly which may not find space in the national press, but which we in the BSFA should have the time and consideration to examine. The Times may not have time to mention every letter sent in, but we usually do (and should). In the next Matrix, any submissions on this topic should be concise, or I will have to edit fairly ruthlessly, I'm afraid. Having said that, they will be printed in one form or another, regardless of handwriting, colour of paper or political persuasion. On to Michael's reply to a letter in M 50, in which Joseph Nicholas questioned certain attitudes and beliefs re USA/USSR relations...))

MICHAEL J KING
6A NEHLANDS ROAD
BENTLEY HEATH
SOLIHULL

Before replying to Joseph Nicholas' letter, I must say at once that I have no intention of even attempting to match him insult for insult. That type of gutter-level politics is best left to the likes of Warrington pickets and the "peace" protesters who attack horses with barbed wire. And anyway, his "hysterical frothings, as disgraceful, rabid and unconsidered as they are ignorant and pitiable" are more amusing than anything!

But I should apologise for representing Joseph's case in an unbalanced way. In doing so I was guilty of apeing the political bias within the BSFA, of which he is a prominent member. Of course, I do not use money given to a SF association to peddle my political views.

One final point, on newspapers. I do not think The Daily Mail any less biased than other papers. Nor do I use it as a source. I do, on occasion, use The Economist as a source and consider it the most honest paper in Britain. And so on to Joseph's case, point for point:

1) Would he care to explain why the Soviets deployed SS 20s before Cruise and Pershing arrived, and why they refuse to remove them if the US then agreed not to deploy its answer? If the Soviets "perceived" threat includes countries outside

Western Europe, why have 2/3 of the SS20s been aimed at us? could it be ours is the region they most want to threaten? And could Joseph explain how SS20s targeted on Western Europe will prevent an Islamic uprising amongst Soviet serfs?

As for the "actual" Islamic Balance in Europe, see Nuclear Deterrence: Implications And Policy Options For the 80s Edited by M R Dando and B R Newman 1982, the chapter by Group Captain R A Mason.

Vienna 1980 - Warsaw Pact troops in Europe excluding those based in the USSR = 1 million plus.
- NATO troops including US forces in Europe = 1/4 million.

Soviets have - 10,000 more tanks than NATO
5,000 more artillery pieces
1,600 more than fixed-wing aircraft

And 67 Soviet divisions 2 hours airlift from frontlines.
8 US divisions earmarked for NATO 3,000 miles away.

Mason's table on 1980 nuclear arsenals is of interest too:

	T.N.W	M.R.W.		SS20s/Cruise
NATO	1,200	180 missiles, 700 aircraft		0
WP	950	650 "	2,000 "	250+ (with 3 warheads per missile)

T.N.W = Theatre Nuclear Weapons
M.R.W = Medium Range Weapons

NB In 1979 US unilaterally withdrew 1,000 T.N.W from Europe. There was no Soviet reponse.

Also relevent here is Mason's figures for military expenditure for 1980, cited from The International Institute For Strategic Studies:

NATO		WARSAW PACT	
US	142.700	USSR	214.050
OTHERS	<u>98.186</u>	OTHERS	<u>16.670</u>
	<u>240.886</u>	Millions of US dollars	<u>230.720</u>

Thus is shown the huge amounts spent by the Soviets on arms and why it would be fatal for Europe if the US ever pulled out.

2) I certainly did not mean to imply the Soviets have "always had nuclear superiority over the West"; quite the reverse in fact. It is because they haven't there has been no nuclear war and peace in Europe since 1945. To allow the Soviets to deploy SS20s with no Western response would not be to give them superiority but a monopoly in one weapons system. It was just such a monopoly that encouraged the US to drop atomic bombs on Japan.

3) Again, apologies for being less than objective about Joseph's remarks on Afghanistanthe BSFA factor again I'm afraid.
In fact though, he is quite wrong about Afghanistan. Soviet occupation is very much prompted by the need for the Russian tradition- namely to expand toward India and the Middle East. Replacing a White Tsar with a Red changes little!

4) Joseph's contribution to the Central American debate offers a good guide to his general attitude - ignore what he cannot defend and attribute wholly false beliefs to those whoes views differ to his. (My excuse was undue influence from

the BSFA's lack of professionalism - What's yours Joseph?)

My only comment on Nicaragua was to doubt the Soviets' word they weren't involved. Joseph offered no evidence to support the Soviet claim and he ignored my point on oppression of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. The rather simple point about Cuba's African activities was also ignored by Joseph. If Castro acted on Soviet orders there, then it seems likely he would be prepared to do so in his own backyard of Central America.

I made no mention of the causes of the revolution in Nicaragua. Even the Daily Mail has carried reports of the genuine sufferings of peasants in the region (though if Joseph is right about the Mail, then the reports must be untrue!) My point was the Sandinists are seeking - with Cuban/Soviet aid - to export their revolution through out Central America. That would be fine if it were democratic or even had solved the problems Joseph cited.

However, the truth is since Ronald Reagan increased US involvement in the region, both El Salvador and Guatemala are "itching towards democracy" (The Economist Nov 5 1983) whereas "Nicaragua now looks more and more like the Marxist-Leninist original" (Oct 29) "and its people still lives in poverty.....in doorless shacks of mud. Meat is a once a week luxury. Bread is now queued for" (Oct 29)

Of course, the Soviets act by proxy all over the world! Castro in Angola and Mozambique and Qaddafi in Chad are on-going examples in Africa; Syria is another, in Lebanon, and what exactly, were those North Koreans doing in Grenada?

But to accept the Soviets stir-up trouble across the earth is not to deny the genuine problems of the natives concerned. What is open to question is the actual benefits the people concerned receive from Soviet "aid". Certainly not the democracy Grenada will enjoy thanks to Reagan's recent rescue operation.

The reason Soviet trouble making has not caused the downfall of the US, is because prior to Carter, US presidents always stood up to them. (Cuba 1962 etc) . Most Soviet aggression - Afghanistan Angola, Congo, etc - has come during the so-called detente. It may be significant the Soviets did not invade Poland with Reagan as president.

I hope Joseph prefers the truth to any form of lies and will therefore reply to this letter with a rather less offensive and prejudiced argument than before. And if he has one, perhaps he'd send it to Kinnock and the German SDP - they need one fast!

((I await Joseph's reply with bated editorial pen and a lot of tippex!))



((Not quite on the direct topic of US/Soviet face-offs, Allan Lloyd comments on the actual nature of the exchange within these pages.....))

ALLAN LLOYD
QUEBB COTTAGE
EARDISLEY
HEREFORD
HR3 6LP

The one thing that I do find annoying with both correspondants is that both are so firmly entrenched in their political positions. I did think that readers of science fiction might have tried to keep their minds slightly more open to ideas that did not agree with their own. It is my ambition to hear 2 politicians debating a point and to have one turn around at the end

and say "Hey, maybe you have a point there. You could be right!" I doubt if my ambition will ever be realised, but Matrix is a magazine for people with common interests and it would be nice if arguments could be carried out with a little less bitterness and prejudice. After all, most of us have read Philip K Dick so we should all have come to doubt at least some of the propaganda fed to us. The question that each must decide for himself is, which side's propaganda is closest to the truth?

((All very reasonable. The subject of opinion and propaganda leads me to comment on a recent article in The Guardian, written by Brian Aldiss. The article was printed under a photograph of the Greenham Common women, and entitled "Reluctantly I have come to believe that the women are right. These weapons are too obscene to be tolerated." I believe this to be a brave and forthright statement on the total insanity of continuing the nuclear arms race, and an incisive article, coming as it does from someone who previously condoned and supported the necessity for nuclear deterrents. Mr. Aldiss is to be congratulated for his article, although I would be interested to know whether his solution would now lead to total nuclear disarmament, including all possible atomic weapons? I must admit that I hope so. Anyway, I was fascinated by the varied opinions and treatments of the GC women by various groups, considering that they are factual, and fairly quantifiable as far as their opinions and intents are concerned. Despite this, the same women are treated totally differently in different papers and by politicians of the various available parties. I was extremely impressed by Alan Symes' comments. He is the Vice-Chairman of the Cookham Conservatives. How about "As the Greenham Common women are the contemptible agents of the Soviet Union, one expects them to be ugly looking scruff bags. They would win more support for their cause if they looked smart and pretty..." Thus if Mr. Aldiss, I or anyone else wish to further our particular cause, whatever it might be, we will stand little chance if we are not careful to remain "smart and pretty". This must be one of the problems of the BSFA, no? We're not pretty enough! Bleccch!

Back to SF, with mild apologies for the digression. Two or three members commented on Simon Ings' review of Malevil in M 50))

STEPHEN M DAVIES
APPLEGARTH
GALLOWTREE COMMON
READING
BERKS
RG4 9BB

I'd just like to point out that the film Malevil, which was reviewed by Simon Ings is based on a book by Robert Merle (who wrote Day of the Dolphin - a much inferior book), which I would like to defend. (I didn't see the film version, unfortunately). In the novel, civilisation is completely destroyed, and I consider the worst facet of the film (as reported) to be the wholly unnecessary addition

of a rescue scene at the end. The whole point of the book is lost (just where humans must rely on modern knowledge - the hero dies of appendicitis, armageddon having happened a few days before he was due to have his appendix out). The book ends with Malevil as the highest remaining civilisation, a hope for the future which is mirrored in the near-deification of the dead mayor, as a symbol of resurrection and self-reliance (the exact opposite to waiting for advanced people to come to the rescue). Apparently, the intricate web of relationships among the survivors fell by the wayside as well. I hope it didn't all go, that they at least left in the scene where the castle occupants are forced unwillingly to shoot a group of starving refugees, to prevent them from eating the last of the seed corn, an event which has drastic effects on the characters' reactions in the rest of the book. Has anybody seen both? I realise that this was meant to be a film review, but was it necessary to ignore the original?

((And some further media comments...))

PHILIP NICHOLS,
19 KENDAL AVENUE,
COPNOR,
PORTSMOUTH,
HANTS.

On Simon Ings review of Malevil: I don't entirely agree about the absence of characterisation, but he's right in as much as the characters had no effect on the plotting; they were just figures, some colourful, some not, wandering through a sequence of events. In a fantasy, that doesn't work. There must be a conflict, an interaction between plot and character, or else the plot is insignificant. Interestingly, I have much the same criticism of The Day After: none of the characters had any personal conflicts which could have made the events significant. Of course, The Day After styled itself as/on scientific fact, whereas Malevil is a fantasy. I suspect the thinness of character in TDA might be in part due to the removal (reportedly) of two hours worth of buildup to the bomb, leaving only the aftermath.

((I personally didn't watch the US bomb film because a) I couldn't stand any more info at the time on the nuclear playtime, and b) I'd read too many reports from the American showing to believe it was any more than Soap meets Cruise. Maybe I was wrong, but try looking at the review in this issue's Other Eyes. Philip goes on to make some other comments of a more varied nature.....))

Regarding the in-group/gang nature of the BSFA (described by Sue Thomason), it would be interesting to know how members found out about the BSFA. I discovered an American SF magazine containing an address for a British convention form which I obtained a convention report containing an ad for BSFA. I envy those members who discovered BSFA's existence by finding an ad in the back of a paperback! BSFA really is an invisible organisation; I sometimes wonder whether it really exists.

About that SF promotion in bookshops. I went in my local WH Smith, expecting to find an impressive window display. Nothing. It must be the wrong week, I thought. I checked Vector, and sure enough it was the right week, and what's more, I'd even seen Aldiss, Ballard and Harrison on Pebble Mill At One talking about it. Back to Smiths a few days later. Nothing. This allegedly national promotion doesn't seem to have reached this far south.

((Interestingly enough, virtually none of my friends, including those who read almost exclusively SF, had heard of the BSFA either. I think the BSFA exists, but for some reason it does possess this peculiar invisibility. If anyone has any ideas on how to render the BSFA more visible please feel free to pass them on to us. Saatchi & Saatchi could no doubt do it but I think they're a bit out of our league. As to the SF promotion, as I've said before not only did it not reach down south, but it didn't hit the north either. Perhaps Brum got it all? Back to the members))

RACHAEL REDDING
3 GREENBANK
ULVERSTON
CUMBRIA
LA12 7HA

I agree with Allan Lloyd about conventions. I have been a member for 3 and a bit years and none of your articles have got me to spend precious time and money to turn up to any. From the articles it seems they are primarily for a get together of the clique and a booze-up. This holds little attraction for a non-alcoholic (are there any others out there?) who as yet has not met any fellow members.

If articles were written on the talks and events rather than the allnight parties maybe this would get more of us interested.

Also are any provisions made for first-timers, or are we thrown in the deep end?

((This year we are going to try and provide some articles which actually explain a little about conventions. When I was a first-timer (which was only about 18 months ago) I was thrown in the deep end, But I do have the advantage of being a freedrinker. We'll see if we can make things a little clearer over the next few issues. Ian McKeer commented in M 49 on the division in fandom between left-wing technophobes and right-wing technophiles. Andy Sawyer takes up this point.....))

ANDY SAWYER
45 GREENBANK ROAD
BIRKENHEAD
MERSEYSIDE
14L 7JT

Ian McKeer's point is a lot wiser than it's rather throwaway appearance suggests; it's actually pretty ironic that there is this thing called science fiction and most of its most articulate and sensitive readers seem to spend half their time lapping it up and the other half criticizing it because of its most distinctive features! I'm exaggerating

of course..... I'm obviously on one side in Ian's division - yet I've never thought of myself as a "technophobe". I'm genuinely thrilled when I see, for example, pictures of the outer planets sent back to us by space probe, yet I appreciate the argument that all that does very little for a child starving to death in Upper Volta. Unfortunately no space exploration does not equal more international aid. Perhaps its because I'm no scientist that I enjoy SF which deals with science and technology as its raison d'etre (so long as its literate I hasten to add, and so long as it involves some sense of humanity). I think this point is worth the concentrated effort of several minds, because to me, it has a great deal of bearing on that other chestnut of the letter column, the 'membership question'.

To me, one of the most significant aspects of Matrix comes as the news items about the book/software tie-ins to be published by Penguin, supported by Spectrum cassettes, and the fact that the role-playing book Warlock of Firetop Mountain is top of the children's book best-selling charts. These programme-text books have been around for some years but have suddenly burst into mass-market: I am currently using one (Citadel Of Chaos) with my daughters, who are fascinated by the idea. What we should be asking of ourselves is how far we are, or should be, relevant to the 12 year old programmer-whizz kids with their ZX Spectrums, who are the market for these SF/fantasy 'mixed media' items? Do we dismiss them along with the Trekkies and Dr Who freaks and assorted 'media fans'? Or do we buy our own computers and get on in there?

I know little enough about that scene: I don't, as yet, have a computer and I doubt if I'd be much good at programming. But I do think that this one area of 'science' which is currently ignored by the BSFA as such, because possibly, it has overtones of the 'technophile right-wing-organisation/statistics oriented' axis. The current Personal Computer News has an item about a new TV series from Central Television called The Magic Micro Mission which will approach microcomputing through a scenario involving 'a spaceship supposedly broadcasting for the farthest outposts of the universe', starting on November 9 at 5.15 pm. Yet more SF imagery.....do we see it as a part of 'science fiction' as appreciated by the BSFA, or do we cringe at its debasement or perversion of SF? What do BSFA members think?

((I hope to hear from more of you on this point. Is this chaff or wheat? Anyway, that's the end of another Merry Melodic Matrix. We also heard from PHILIP COLLINS on the problem of what is trivia? and from DOUGLAS P. ATKINS on so many topics I can't find room to quote him. TREVOR MENDHAM sent a copy of his games-oriented zine Atu which we hope to cover in a future issue, alongside with the question of SF and fantasy games (don't all throw tomatoes at once, please) and some members will be pleased to know, if they need more ammunition to spear my innocent flesh, that I am a regular fantasy role-player. Yah boo sucks! Last issues cover received much praise, and I'll be heading back to Pete for a future cover soon. The increase in media coverage was also popular, and a big media review column will be returning next issue when there's a bit more space. Also next issue or two -if I'm still here - more on conventions, the scientific content of SF (slightly tentacle-in-cheek) and BSFA forthcoming changes. Oh, I should add that WAHF Matthew Shackle, Simon Ings, Jeremy Crampton and Andrew Fullen. Extracts from some of those letters next issue.

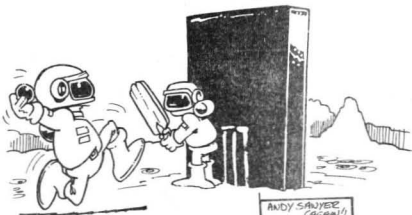
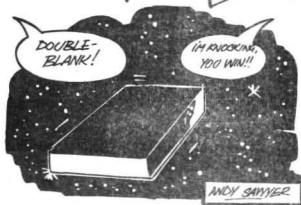
That's it. I hope that you feel we're getting on the right track now, and that at least someone appreciates my aching back? No, well, what the hell. Keep sending in the LoCs, info and news, and remember us in your prayers (nothing too nasty, please!).

Be happy....

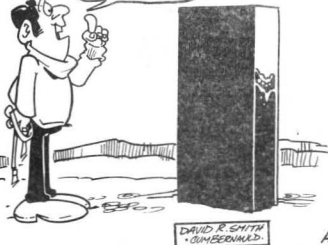
Simon

Extracts from "2001 uses for a Dead Monolith"

PART ONE



SHITTT!



A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE COMPETITION:—

There were a fair number of entries for this competition, with some very good entries. The ones shown are those I thought were the funniest, best able to stand as cartoons with the minimum of explanation. Congrats to them and thanks to all who entered. Now, having got the obvious ones, like headstones, dominos, Stonehenge, giant John Player packets etc., out of the way, what else can you come up with? Think of the 'Dead' books and see if you can think of any along those lines. Again, I'll draw up the best entries for publication in the next MATRIX. All entries to DAVE LANFORD, at 95 London Road, Reading please.

TB.

Jim Bohm

