

The 1984 BSFA Awards were announced at Seacon '84 in Brighton on the evening of Sunday 22 April 1984 as follows:

**Best Novel**  
John Sladek: *Tik-Tok* (Victor Gollancz)  
**Best Short Fiction**  
Malcolm Edwards: "After Images" (Interzone 4)  
**Best Media Presentation**  
Android (dir. Aaron Lipstadt; Orion/Warner Bros)  
**Best Artist**  
Bruce Pennington

A total of 32 nominating ballots were received from BSFA members in the first round of voting, nominating (after discarding the ineligible suggestions in each category) 20 novels, 24 shorter works, 24 media presentations, and 13 artists. A total of 120 final ballots - 59 received by mail prior to the convention and 61 completed at the convention itself - were counted by the administrator (Joseph Nicholas) and his helpers (Judith Hanna and Justin Ackroyd) in the sanctity of his hotel bedroom on the evening of Saturday 21 April 1984; by tradition, we don't release the exact placings, but it can be said that John Sladek won comfortably, Malcolm Edwards only slightly less so, Android was streets ahead of everything else in its category (a fact which rather baffles your administrator - it was all right, but not that brilliant, surely?), and Bruce Pennington made a late run to just seize the prize over his nearest rival (damn, damn, damn...).

For further comment see P.30

## MATRIX NEWS

by Alan Dorey

As you will have noticed, this is a somewhat strange issue of *Matrix*. Editor Simon Polley has decided to relinquish the post. I would like to thank Simon for his efforts over the past months. He has - often in difficult circumstances - kept *Matrix* ticking over and it is important that we all realise the work that has been put in, no matter what individuals may feel about the finished product. I for one wish him well for the future.

Simon's departure obviously means that we are seeking a new editor. This particular issue has been a committee task, taking items from Simon's prepared *Matrix* and adding our own bits and pieces. I have commented on the letters and included some items of news, whilst the typing, design and production have been done by John & Eve Harvey. I hope that this issue meets with your approval. As regards future issues - well, we have Chris Hughes lined up to produce the next issue of *Matrix* and we are looking forward to that particular number with great interest. Thereafter we will need a new dynamism!

Those interested in taking over the helm should, in the first instance, write to me explaining why they think they will be able to do the job. I will send out a General Questionnaire in order that the committee can make a considered opinion of the merits of each application. There are a number of essential qualities that should be taken into account by prospective applicants, but don't let these put you off. Amongst those qualities are:

- 1) The ability to work to a regular deadline
- 2) The ability to liaise effectively with correspondents and contributors
- 3) Previous editing and fanzine production experience
- 4) The determination to make *Matrix* succeed
- 5) Access to a decent typewriter

It is a tough job editing *Matrix*, and the rewards are few. However, the more you put into it, the greater the satisfaction you can derive from producing the finished product.

Let me be deluged with applications! Remember, it's your magazine; let's all make sure that it continues.

## CONTENTS

NEWS ... ..	1
MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD & MORE NEWS ... ..	2
PIN-UP ROBOT ... ..	3
TALE OF TWO CITIES Eve Harvey ... ..	4
NEW FORMS OF ADDICTION Lilian Edwards ... ..	7
OTHER EYES ... ..	12
STRANGE RELATIONS Ed. Alan Dorey ... ..	19
COMPETITION & EVEN MORE NEWS ... ..	29
WOT MORE NEWS? ... ..	30

## YORCON III WINS

### EASTERCON BID

At a rather controversial bidding session during Seacon '84 in Brighton, Yorcon III won the right to hold the 1985 Eastercon. Despite being unopposed (of course there was the mandatory spoof bid, this year for a con in the Falklands) Yorcon received plenty of flak from the floor for offering an Eastercon split between two hotels.

As those of you who attended Yorcons I & II will know, the Dragonara has only limited function space and with Eastercon attendances growing, finding sufficiently large hotels is becoming a serious problem for con organisers. Yorcon's solution is the two-hotel approach and they have lined up the Queens Hotel, about 5 minutes' walk from the Dragonara, to provide additional function space. It remains now to see if it works. See convention list on page 2 for details.

## HANSEN WINS TAFF

As you may already know, the Transatlantic Fan Fund was set up to foster fanish contacts between the USA and Europe. Each year fund raising activities are undertaken to pay for, on alternate years, a Brit fan to attend the major American con, or a US fan to attend the British Eastercon. The 1984 race was between D West and Rob Hansen, to attend the Worldcon 'LA CON' in August this year.

Voting was as close as it could be in Britain, with both Rob and D getting 41 votes, but Hansen won overall due to his heavy American lobby. The 1985 race will be to bring an American fan over to Yorcon III.

## MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

## ORBITER

Enough people wrote to me after the last Matrix ad to set another Orbiter on its way. The folder is once again empty. Want to come along for the ride? SAE to Dorothy Davies, 3 Cadells Row, Faringdon, Oxon.

\*\*\*\*\*

## FICTION

Manuscripts wanted - The Women's Press is launching a feminist science fiction list in 1985. We are looking for full-length novels and for original short stories for an anthology, from women writers. Please send submissions to Sarah Lefanu and Jen Green, The Women's Press, 124 Shoreditch High Street, London E1 6JE.

\*\*\*\*\*

## NFFF STORY CONTEST

We have received a letter from Donald Franson in connection with the 1984 National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F) Amateur Short Story Contest. The N3F would love to receive entries from BSFA members and so below we give a few details extracted from the Rules and Entry Form. If you are interested, Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Ave, North Hollywood, CA 91606, USA, would love to hear from you and will forward further information etc.

- The contest is open to all amateur writers in the field, whether members of N3F or not. We define amateur as someone who has sold no more than two stories to the professional science fiction or fantasy publications.

- Entry fees are \$1 for N3F and BSFA members and \$2 for non-members.

- Cash prizes totalling \$50 will be awarded.

\*\*\*\*\*

JIM ENGLAND, "Roselen", The Compas, Kinver, West Midlands DY7 6HT would like to contact other SF writers living near the above, new address. Would also appreciate ideas for cooperation in production of a magazine with proposed title: "SPECULATION FACT AND FICTION".

\*\*\*\*\*

## FOR SALE

SF/Fantasy magazines, American and British. Also "Lost Race" novels and various SF bits and pieces (7). Help a poor man survive the recession. Send an SAE to Kevin Broxton, 37 Mellor Road, Leyland, Lancs PR5 3JL.

## THINGS TO COME

## CONVENTIONS - 1984

ALBACON 84: 20-23 July 1984  
Central Hotel, Glasgow, Scotland.  
GoH Marlan Ellison  
Attending membership £9  
Supporting membership £4  
Write to: Ms F J Nelson, 62 Campsie Rd, Wishaw ML2 7QG Scotland

\*\*\*\*\*

FAIRCON 84 20-23 July 1984  
Ingram Hotel, Glasgow, Scotland.  
Comics-orientated.  
Attending membership £9  
Supporting membership £6  
Write to: Bob (fake) Shaw, 2/L 244 West Princes Street, Kelvinbridge, Glasgow G4 9PD Scotland.

Faircon is still fiercely trying to compete with Albacoon. The two hotels are only a few hundred yards apart. There was beautiful anecdote going round at Novacon... it seems that the 2000 AD team, staged as GoH at Faircon, showed up with the organizers of Albacoon at a recent conicon, saying they'd seen that Ellison was GoH at Albacoon and that they were working on a comic strip adaptation of one of his stories, so could they please get attending memberships?

\*\*\*\*\*

SILICON 8: 24-27 August 1984

A small fannish convention with minimal programme, held at the Grosvenor Hotel in Newcastle. Details: 2 Seaton Ave, Newsham, Blyth, Northumberland.

\*\*\*\*\*

OXCON: 25-27 August 1984

St Catherine's College, Oxford.  
GoH Brian Aldiss  
Attending membership £8  
Room rates (single rooms only) £14 pppn. Information: Catherine Watson, 18 Norham Gardens, Oxford.

\*\*\*\*\*

BENELUXCON 11 7-9 Sept 1984

Ghent, Belgium. Fabiolahome - through the programme will take place in con centre "van Eyck" (10 min. by foot from the Fabiolahome). GoH: Robert Sheekley, James White, Michael Kubick (BRD). A convention with a relaxed, fannish & multi-lingual atmosphere. Attending membership 500 Bfr, room rates 400 Bfr pppn (tnat's ca. £4.50). Details from Andre de Ryckse, Eendenplasstraat 70, B-9050 Evergem, Belgium.

\*\*\*\*\*

NOVACON 14: 9-11 Nov 1984

The Grand Hotel, Birmingham.  
GoH: Rob Holdstock. Membership is £1 down compared to last year at £6; room rates are £15 pppn. Details: Ann Green, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocaks Green, Birmingham B72 7SD.

## CONVENTIONS - 1985

YORCON III: 5-8 April 1985  
Draganara/Queens Hotels, Leeds  
GoH Greg Benford, FGOH Linda Pickersgill  
Attending membership £8  
Supporting membership £4  
Write to: Mike Ford, 45 Harrold Mount, Leeds LS6 1PW

\*\*\*\*\*

MEXICON II: Late Spring Bank Holiday 1985

As announced at Tynacon II-The Mexican, there will be a repeat event in 1985. Membership £6. Full information from Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London N11.

\*\*\*\*\*

Info on 1984 conventions, including scurrilous rumour thanks to Shards of Babel - Roelof Goudriaan.

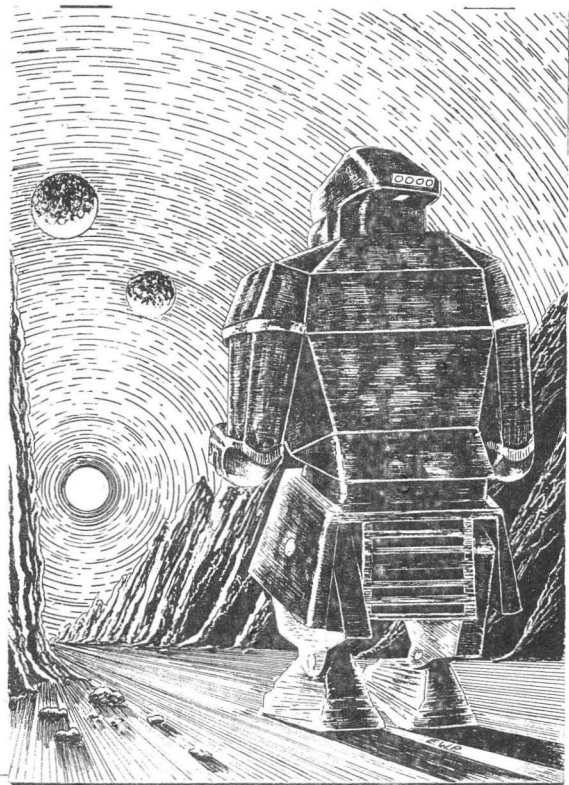
## A NEW LOOK FOR MATRIX?

by John Harvey

Unless you are a brand new member of the BSFA (and there are quite a few of you), or are extraordinarily slow, you cannot fail to have noticed that we've taken the opportunity, in this brief editorial reign, to try an experiment with the format of Matrix. Since this is a new departure, we'd be interested to hear your reactions to this break with tradition.

Let us quickly say that this style has not been adopted because of any editorial dislike of cover art. Nor has it been done to demonstrate to future editors the new house style they must adopt. Rather it is intended to show that the Matrix editor does not need to be hidebound by tradition. What Matrix needs is an editor who can bring vitality to this attempt to communicate with the whole of fandom. Whether you are a new to SF fandom or knew Arthur Clarke when he was a lad, Matrix should have something of interest to you. This is the hardest job any editor faces, and if you can do it, the bi-monthly deadlines are as nothing.

MATRIX 53 June/July 1984. Edited by Alan Dorey, Eve & John Harvey. Typing, layout and printing by Eve & John Harvey on the BSFA Press. Editor for the next issue is Chris Hughes who'd love to receive all your articles, letters, artwork and advice at: 128 Whitley Wood Road, Reading, Berks RG2 8JG  
Deadline for articles, reviews, letters: JUNE 30TH 1984  
Deadline for news etc: JULY 7TH 1984



*ANNIE the Android loves her job wandering around this deserted planet collecting litter. In her spare time she does social work amongst down-and-out craters and enjoys a visit to the local tandcori for a meteorite vindaloo.*

**Artwork Credits:**

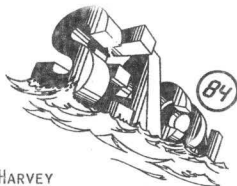
P3 - E W Puddicombe (with our apologies for the sacrilegious treatment!)

P11- Fanzines: Some Days You Eat The Bear, Anne Warren; artist Margaret Wellbank  
 For Paranoids Only 2, Nigel Richardson; artist Pete Crump  
 Eyeballs in the Sky, Tony Berry; artist Harry Bell

P29- Nic Morton



## A TALE OF TWO CITIES



EVE HARVEY

Both by the sea, both hotels happier in the more genteel days of Queen Victoria, both hosting science fiction conventions, both having hosted sf conventions in previous years; but there the similarities between Seacon '84 held at the Metropole Hotel, Brighton over Easter weekend and Tynecon II - The Mexican held over late Spring Bank Holiday weekend at the Station Hotel, Newcastle, end. This is not really surprising, since the very *raison d'être* of each convention was diametrically opposed, but the differences went far beyond alternate ideologies.

SEACON '84 was not only the British Eastercon, but a EUROCON as well, and this combination should have led to a very unusual and exciting convention. I was looking forward to it - far more than usual. This was to be the first of the three cons so far held at the Metropole I could appreciate as a normal con attendee, having been on the committee for both SEACON '79 and CHANNELCON. For the first time I would be able to see things from a man-in-the-street viewpoint, (well, woman-in-the-street, actually, but who's splitting hairs!). This was not a good idea. Spread over not only the hotel, but the extensive exhibition centre as well, obviously in the expectation of hordes of European fans, those that did attend rattled around like a pea on a drum. This would not have been so bad if the programme had lived up to the challenge and opportunity of an influx of guests not usually seen in this country. Not so. The programme did look interesting, with items such as 'King Arthur: Fact and Fantasy', 'How to Write a Block Buster (and How Not to!)' featuring J. May (I hadn't realised until then that she was a she), 'Humour in SF, Use & Abuse'. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to actually arrive at the right time for many of the items - not just the usual case of con time running in an alternate universe, but also the fact that apparently the programme sheet contained many errors, and the committee decided to run by their original timetable rather than the printed one. This was fine from a logistics point of view, but didn't help us very much. There were computer terminals dotted around the place supposedly giving updates on programme changes, but I very rarely found one that had a sufficiently clear screen to be able to see what was being shown.

Those items I did manage to attend in the main convention hall were marred by the fact that the cathedral-like hall was capable of seating about 10 times the number of those present. Unfortunately, the one item that was tailor-made for this cavernous edifice was not programmed there; instead, HAWKWIND played in the much smaller Winter Gardens Suite in the hotel. I'm not really a Hawkwind fan, so I can't pass judgement on their performance, but it was an interesting diversion from the usual convention banquet. Much as I like food, a free rock concert will always appeal more than a costly and mediocre con banquet.

The highlights for me were only 3. Firstly the Bob Shaw Serious Scientific talk - good as always, and at long last using all that spare seating in the hall. This was Bob's 10th talk, though, and having heard all of them I do think it is time the poor man was left alone for a while. It must be very difficult to think up something novel and funny each year; especially when your reputation has run before you. Not only must Bob be good, he must be better than everyone remembers him being last year.

The second and third highlights were such more because of the cozy atmosphere generated in the alternate programme room. The Norfolk Room, capable of seating at most 100 so long as they were all friends, was a sanity-restoring change. In

here was held the 'Trivia Bowl', the most computerised quiz game yet seen at a convention, but still with numbers on cards for the scoring! The questions, as always, were too obscure for me to attempt, but with the audience consisting almost entirely of supporters of each team, rivalry was the order of the day and much fun was had by all.

Lastly, Alan Dorey had organized a fanzine production panel in this same room. After a very shaky start, the panel developed into a very interesting discussion. Until the Mexican workshop on the same subject, I would have said it was one of the best discussions I have seen. Perhaps it is symptomatic of the increasing fanzine activity today, but there seems to be a far more knowledgeable-but-wanting-to-know-more audience than in former years. About 90% of the small audience for the panel had attempted to produce something of their own, and were asking pertinent questions about their own problems. Only about 4 'old hands' were present, and that included Alan Dorey and John Harvey who were on the panel! A few years back, the room would have been taken over by well-established fan editors, and hence the discussion mainly invalid.

I will say nothing about the fanroom, since it virtually did not exist. If it wasn't for Ian Sorensen performing yet another regurgitation of his Rock Opera - great fun the first time, but this is the fourth time I'd seen it (not in the same format, but same basis) and so it has begun to lose something - many people would not have even realised where it was. Most of the time it looked like an unused room that a few people had found for a quiet chat. Back to the Rock Opera, anyone who has seen Ian perform, can only but marvel at his ability and inventiveness. If you haven't seen his show, do. Just make sure you sit at the front, since the actual words are of paramount importance, and unfortunately no one so far has been able to provide Ian with adequate PA equipment to reproduce his music.

I will also say very little about the main bone of contention with the attendees - the security staff. It wasn't the hotel's night security manager who was at fault this time, but the fannish 'guards' used to check name badges and prevent interlopers. Admittedly something was needed, especially after the security were inefficient enough to lose a whole batch of badges! But there are limitations. God, I even got asked for my badge as I was leaving the hotel! Unfortunately, the type of person who is willing to spend the majority of her/his convention sitting at a desk in the main foyer, is also the type of person who likes dressing up in uniforms and assuming stances of dictator-like power. The benefit of using fannish security is that the committee should be able to tell a fannish guard to go soak his head when he's going overboard, whereas you can't argue with hotel security. Unfortunately the committee failed to do this, and the harassment from supposed fans just got worse as the convention continued.

Despite all that negative rhetoric, I did enjoy myself. There were people around to talk to, old friends and new acquaintances. That is all I need to enjoy myself at a convention - only neos are solely dependent on the programme for the success or failure of their convention. Talking to Eric B. Tard, almost gaffiated French fan, it would appear that as a Eurocon it had proved very successful, so all is not lost. My lasting disappointment, though, was the lack of contact with all these Europeans. Although I passed groups of people speaking undecipherable gibberish which I assume was some foreign language, I did not actually find the opportunity to sit down and talk with any of them. Still, I did meet Ashley Watkins - that was enough. Ever had the misfortune to think of someone as a man, only to be introduced to a woman? Embarrassing eh, especially when you then find it's a man after all - and a damn site more attractive one than you are! Still, enough of that, if you want to know more, get his fanzine (see Lilian's Fanzine Review Column).

Most people I met leaving Brighton, parted with the words: "See you at Mexican - that's going to be good!" Hype just isn't the word for our pre-conceptions of the success of Mexican. Inspired by the growing size and diverseness of the

Eastercon it had started out as an alternative, but instead has become yet another convention in the all-too-full calendar. Tynecon II - The Mexican was a return to the type of Eastercon prevalent when Tynecon I was held at the Station Hotel 10 years earlier. Not necessarily more 'fannish', but a complete break with the 10-ring circus type affair Eastercons have become. There was to be one programme stream only (except for the fanzine workshop); without the sundry special-interest groups numbers would be reduced so that there could be a wider choice of hotels; the organisation would simultaneously be simpler and thus a better job could be done since the committee would not be so overworked that things started falling apart.

This was the ideology - a science Fiction convention devoted entirely to the written word (although I'm not too sure how they fitted the films into that, but since they were not all straight sf I suppose it doesn't matter).

Did it work? YES.

Why? Aha, now we get to the problem. It was a good convention, the programme ran to time(!) (except for one hiccough when the projector broke down), and it was a reasonably interesting programme. As always, panels that sound like they are going to be interesting did not always live up to expectations, in particular Rob Hansen's Fan History panel - basically do we really need all this backward-looking tendency - and the panel on alternate fanzines, comparing rock, comics and sf fanzines. The ideas were good, but in both cases the chairmen allowed too much leeway either to their own ideas or to the ramblings of both panellists and audience.

The committee were very lucky in that their two major guests, Russell Hoban and Alisdair Gray, proved to be excellent speakers and very good socialisers. This is where the size of the hotel and the number of attendees is of paramount importance. At Seacon, I only saw one of the numerous Guests of Honour, Chris Priest, to speak to personally. At Mexican, one could not help but bump into them and I will ever be proud to say I had breakfast with Russell Hoban and he's a really nice guy!

The social side of the convention was a success, not only because the size was conducive but also because the committee had made a concerted effort to programme social events (disco, free punch, etc). Many people say that room parties and socialising just happens, you don't have to worry about that when running a con. But that's not true. I think it is very important to have some structured 'socialising', just to throw everyone together. If the social side is merely 'left to happen', groups of friends get together and the 'clique' rears its ugly head.

The most successful programme item was the Fanzine Production Workshop organised by Abi Frost. Instead of a panel discussion, several of us were collected together with our accoutrements (stencils, styluses for hand-cutting artwork, electro-stencils, litho plates) and stood around waiting for people to ask us practical questions. And they did! We showed how to 'let in' an electrostencil piece of artwork into a normal wax stencil, Harry Bell hand cut an illustration, and then we took it over to the duplicator to run off a sheet to show the final result. And we talked, and talked, and talked. A re-run at other conventions should be a must.

Is Tynecon II the way forward? I have no idea, ask me next year when I can compare the second coming with the Yorcon III alternative to size problem - the two-hotel convention.

## NEW FORMS OF ADDICTION

Lilian Edwards

Well, no florid headings this time, no appealingly offbeat categories, just depressingly efficient ones to encompass all the fanzines that are fit to print - and a few that aren't. Let's get the predictable ones out of the way first...

### NEWSZINES

#### Ansible 38

Dave Langford, 94 London Rd, Reading, Berks  
£2 for 6 issues

#### Thyme 32 & 33

Roger Weddall, 79 Bell St, Fitzroy 3065  
Australia. Roger has essentially given up asking impoverished Brits for real money - though he'd still appreciate it - and will now supply for trade or begging letter.

As far as comparisons of these two go, Roger has the edge for frequency - at fortnightly, Thyme is now paradoxically the most frequent fanzine in Britain - but Dave remains unbeatable for sly glancer and literary style. Being practical, as surely everyone must know by now, these two respectively cover developments in the UK and Oz fannish worlds, and with the additions of Shards of Babel to cover Europe, provide a comprehensive guide to Things Fannish.

### FANZINES

#### Dumble in the Works 2

Lesley Ward, c/o Lady Mountford House, Carnatic Rd, Liverpool, L18 8DP. For the usual (FTU).  
The address cunningly disguises the fact that Lesley is yet another of the bright'n'bushytailed new Brummie fans being secretly mass-produced somewhere in Steve Green's cellar. Her subject matter is pretty typical - Empathicon, getting drunk, student life - but her style is bright, punky, enticing and the zine skips along, finishing too soon for my like. There's also a delightful surreal elvish front and inside cover, apparently drawn by Lesley as well.

#### Dragonbreath

Oscar Dalglish, 67 Robslee Rd, Giffnock, Glasgow. FTU  
It should probably be emphasised when reviewing DB that this is a Very Personal Fanzine. Not because it's all written by Oscar - it isn't - but because his editorial policy appears to revel in the discussion of those sides of life many people would prefer not to deal with in print; death, depression, love, life. This issue is less heavy than some previous, and it contains a male viewpoint on feminism and an open letter to Oscar's father - which I will freely admit is something I would never have put in public in a fanzine in a million years. This semi-caveat out of the way, however, this is a considerable improvement on previous DB's: the production values are much higher, the standard of writing more consistent and the fake examination paper, compiled by a bunch of Oscar's University chums is very funny and uncomfortably true to life - at least at Glasgow uni! All Oscar needs to do is change that awful title...

#### Empties 5

Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Rd, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG. FTU  
Also from Martin, of uncertain availability, comes T'zine 4, his Apa-B-zine. Martin must be one of the most active fans in Britain (and almost certainly

the shortest of sleep); Empties may no longer be quite so incessantly frequent as it was of yesteryear, but it's grown correspondingly, and I found this less scrappy, better produced, more substantial Empties considerably more readable than previous efforts. The unstated theme of this issue appears to be non-sf fandoms; Helen McNabb on Gilbert and Sullivan fandom, Ahrvind Engholm on Swedish fandom (OK, that is sf), Maureen Porter on the social life of bellringing(!), Paul Vincent on D&D. There's also the ubiquitous Steve Green with seeming hundreds of fanzine reviews even more facile than mine (but great for stealing addresses from) and Judith Hanna on the more serious ground of the Australian perspective on the nuclear debate.

Empty Hands 4      The Durham University SF Society Fanzine, available from Elizabeth Sourbut, Collingwood College, South Road, Durham DH1 3LT. For 10p.

I always used to hate it when reviewers would slam groupzines. It was so predictable and so patently biased. But this is a groupzine and, um, it's pretty bad. Not in any intrinsic sense of badness, but simply because it's got the same old stuff; the plot regurgitation of an old Dr Who episode, the Gor/Dune send-up (not funny either) the short-short twist-in-the-tail story, a piece on various definitions of sf, even a two-page expansion of a Hitchhiker joke... old faithfuls all. Nor, to be honest, does the production help; double spacing is an immediate source of irritation and something that should have been eliminated by a fourth issue. EH does however feature one genuinely good article, a piece (predictably) by the editor on her weekend on a Tuttle/Brunner writing course... I'd like to see what she could do in a less restrictive format.

Fantasmagoria 6      Chris Hughes, 128 Whitley Wood Rd, Reading Berks GR2 8JG. FTU.

It's been a long time since the last Fantasmagoria. This ish gives no explanation of Chris's sudden return to print, indeed it contains no editorial burblings at all which gives it an oddly detached feel. Instead there are simply three long anecdotal pieces of Chris's past experiences, linked by the theme of travel: 'On the Road' on the perils of hitch-hiking, 'Across the Sea' on the ditto of North Sea Ferries, and 'Ann' impressions of Northern Ireland and his eponymous host in that country. I found myself initially reluctant to read this zine because of the lack of fannish trappings but when I had got past that barrier, it became obvious this was by far the best zine I received at Seacon - the writing is uniformly polished, extremely amusing in the first two pieces, evocative and darkly humorous in the last and best piece, 'Ann'. Little fan-writing goes beyond the momentarily amusing to the truly memorable but 'Ann' achieves that with ease. Recommended.

Fubar 1      Ashley Watkins, Seamist, Flat 3, 2A The Leas, Westcliffe-on-Sea, Essex, SS0 7ST. FTU

After last time's spate of first efforts, our sole solo debut of this occasion comes from famous fannish transvestite Ashley Watkins. This is an odd zine. Technically, it is as bad as Empty Hands - Ashley's typewriter appears to be shot to hell, resulting in numerous messy letters and typos, and his style is still often unformed and ungrammatical - but the major difference between the two, that makes this compelling and not drudgery reading, is that Ashley is not doing a fanzine for the hell of it, but has something very important to him that he wants to tell; the story of how he was wrongfully arrested by the police and his subsequent hassles and recovery. This raises the same question as Dragon-breath to some extent; should fanzines be a place to spill one's metaphysical guts? I can only say for myself that I am in favour of anything that produces good, honest reading, so long as the literary pleasure does not become voyeuristic. And for those readers who are more squeamish at the sight of human entrails, there is always, as with the TV, the 'off' switch - the invisible one behind their eye-lids.

Helpmaboab 3      Jim Barker, 113 Windsor Rd, Falkirk, Stirlingshire.  
And back to solid, meaningless fannishness with jovial Jim's third quickie



personalzine. That was not meant to be a putdown; it's just hard after reading something like Fubar to take anything as trivial as the Mexican/media fans/sf fans debate quite as seriously as most of Jim's loccers appear to. Indeed the meat of this zine is entirely on that topic, so you'd better get it quick if it's to be of anything other than historic relevance.

Mince 5 Ian Sorensen, 142 Busby Rd, Clarkston, Glasgow. FTU.  
('Five Go Mince')

And if you thought Helpmaboab was trivial, this zine is verily devoted to that concept... It struck me the other day that Mince is like nothing so much as an overgrown school magazine, from its obsession with the exploits of its more hyperactive pupils (the endlessly and tediously anecdotalised Mike Molloy) to its lousy filler jokes to its scarcely edited locs shorn of addresses - you almost expect to find 'VI B' after the names instead. And as is often the case with school magazines, the cover is the only passable bit, by the very competent Jim Gallagher. C'mon Ian, we all know you could do better than this.

The Odonian 2 Jeremy Crampton, 10 Vicarage Rd, Hoole, Chester CH2 3HZ.  
For editorial whim.

A quick follow-up by Jeremy to his debut issue and another very competent ish at that. As with last time, the contents are more solid than sparkling, but Jeremy himself shows visible improvement both as a writer - with his oh-so-true description of the horrors of applying to American universities - and as an editor, with his efficient and entertaining arrangement of the lettercol. I wish though, that he had not been so pleased to print either a long piece of fiction of the Very Profound/Oh God Not Nuclear War school, or one of Pete Tresford's more boring one-pagers. Jeremy is apparently about to transplant to one of the aforementioned American universities, so what will become of The Odonian is now uncertain; it would be a shame to see this promising zine vanish.

Sic Biscuit Dave Rowley and Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland St, Hanley, Stoke-on-  
Disintigraf 4 Trent, Staffordshire ST1 5JG. For loc, contribution, whim or 40p - not, apparently, for trade.

Sick biscuit, as it's known in the trade, must be the largest and most eclectic genzine being regularly published in this country, and to some extent seems to have taken up where Shallow End left off in the encouragement and printing of new and inexperienced fanwriters. It would be nice therefore to be able to thoroughly recommend it, but it has to be said that as well as some undoubted gems (often apa reprints), SED does print some awful rubbish. It would also be nice if the editorial style was less abrupt - many of the articles dovetail into each other with no intro or outro causing virtual culture shock - and if the ideological bent of the editors was a little less obvious in the choice of subject - at least the first four articles deal with some aspect of sexuality or sexual abuse. Having made these points, however, there is a lot of stimulating reading in this zine, particularly Adrienne Fein's mindboggling account of American erotica and decadence, and some excellent art from Cath Easthope and Shep Kirkbride among others. For the future though, SED would benefit greatly from an injection of editorial presence and discrimination.

Spaghetti Mike Dickinson and Jackie Gresham, Via Vittorio Veneto 9 (C5),  
Junction 3 21013 Gallarate (VA), Italy. FTU. From June, the editorial  
address will be c/o Dickinson, 146 North Parade, Sleaford,  
Lincs, UK.

More foreign tidings from the fanzine with that special Italian flavour. Actually, barring the compulsory piece on the execrability of Italian TV, this SJ is rather lacking in its usual 'Tourist' features; instead we have two very interesting pieces by Mike on football fandom seen from the inside, and, surprise, surprise, the trend to self-revelation/voyeurism in fanzine articles already observed in earlier reviews. While Mike's examples are out of date, his conclusions are still valid, and the area is certainly one that would benefit from some serious analysis. I hope Mike continues reviewing as there's not enough people about who can do it both perceptively and entertainingly.

2400 Fulton 4

Owen Whiteoak, Top Flat Left, 112 Polworth Gdns, Edinburgh EH11 1LH. 'Available on whim only' i.e. for some show of interest.

Owen's fanzines get more bizarrely named each time. Does anyone know what this one means? Like Anne Warren with her Blue Reprint, Owen has decided to hand out selected nuggets of his Frank's APA contributions with his zine, and the result is a more substantial, if also more opaque, offering than usual. Owen rambles on in his usual style, intermingled with obscure song lyrics, about various hideous problems affecting conventions, including the awful Mediafan Threat, of which I am becoming increasingly weary. The problem, it seems to me, both with Fandom at Large, and Owen's fanwriting in particular, is that it, and he, are taking themselves too seriously. Much. It will not be the end of the world if 500 people sit watching Blakes 7 videos the entire time at the next Eastercon, and the topic is not worth six close-typed pages of agonising by Owen. Particularly when judging by his Frank's APA work, he has the potential to be a damn good writer if he could get away from the suffocating sameness of the ol' fannish infightin. G'wan, spread your wings a bit.

Tales From The  
Beaverbank 1

Matt Sillars, 8 Beaverbank Place, Edinburgh. FTU.

Pure coincidence that two Edinburgh zines follow each other, but oddly handy as Matt's laid back style rather echoes Owen's. Matt's obsession though is not so much fandom as, um, farting, which is one of those supposedly hysterical activities I've never found very risible. Still, it has to be said that his description of trying to teach his doomed goldfish to fart is bloody funny - and several other anecdotes are pretty good. Not of anywhere near Chris Hughes's literary calibre, but probably the next funniest zine in this batch: I enjoyed it.

Wodwo 1

From Jeremy Crampton, address above, or Pete Crump, 9 Llys Wylfa, Mynydd Isa Mold, Clwyd CH7 6XA

Well, another groupzine (the Chester mob this time). Er um. This one's rather better, at least for my sentiments, because the group members are more integrated into the fannish mainstream and more conscious of what is expected of a zine. It's still not exactly fantastic, though; the best piece is probably Justin Rogers' description of the Bristol SF Group, which raised a wry smile of recognition. The question to ask, I suppose, is why are they bothering? and the answer, I suppose also, will be, for trades. Sometimes I think sf could save a lot of wasted time and effort if it was socially acceptable just to buy zines. But then again...

Xyster Goes To  
The Seaside 5

Dave Wood, 1 Friary Close, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7QA. FTU.

Oh no. It's That Man Again. Honestly, I can't keep up with Dave Wood. He now must have long replaced burnt out hacks like Langford and Tudor as most frequent fanned in Britain (it must be all that beer he drinks that keeps him so regular). I haven't even had time to read this one properly, but I have observed with great delight that it contains the transcript of Dave Langford's terrific onslaught on numerous recent sf blockbusters, the undoubted highlight of the Season programme. The Dragonhiker's Guide to Battlefield Covenant At Pune's Edge: Odyssey Two. Miss it at your peril. The rest of the zine looks quite nice... And just for Dave, who appeared to appreciate my culinary metaphor of last time, I should say this is more of a lime candystripe issue than a cornflakes one. OK, Dave?

\*\*\*\*\*

And that's the last I'm going to say about fanzines for some while. This fanzine reviewing bit's a dead loss anyway: either you're involved in them in which case you sit wondering why you're doing this when you ought to be pubbing your own ish - or more likely, scrambling to make an apa deadline - or you're not involved, and you just sit around. Wondering what the hell's going on and where all the zines have gone. And either way you end up trying to think up ways of not really

insulting people's pride-and-joys while still preserving a reputation as a no-nonsense, incisive reviewer... no wonder it's so difficult to find a replacement.

\*\*\*\*\*

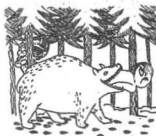
We have, actually managed to persuade yet another masochist to take on the job.... Sue Thomason has 'agreed' to do six issues commencing with the August issue of Matrix. So, please send your fanzines to:

Sue Thomason  
9 Friars Lane  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA13 9NF

But please, mark fanzines 'DNR' if they are not to be reviewed by her in Matrix.

And now, for a selection of fanzine artwork that has, for one reason or another, appealed to John and Eve Harvey recently...

SOME DAYS YOU EAT THE BEAR...



... SOME DAYS THE BEAR EATS YOU

# OTHER EYES

media reviews...



MARK GREENER  
2 White Hart Cls  
Buntingford  
Herts

The current debate over 'video nasties' is still raging strong with both sides dug in and slinging mud at each other.

The erosion of liberty which threatens us is an attack on two fronts; the first is the removal of choice. Choice of what we watch in our own time in our own homes; the second is the removal of parental control over what is watched, by their kids. The implication is that the parents do not know what to allow their kids to watch.

But the attack is also in other areas. The 'banning' of underground material (i.e. books which tell you how bad drugs are) and the recent clampdown in Soho is another aspect of this. OK, the 'ban' is merely the police seizing the material - but can you obtain it?

This clampdown is a bitter pill - it is sugar-coated with good justifications (i.e. it'll 'corrupt kids') - and it suits the paternalistic style of government undertaken by the present administration. At the moment the clampdown is in the form of a parent wagging his finger at his son for masterbating over a copy of Penthouse - and perhaps sending him to bed early (i.e. the imprisonment of Britton). But where will it lead?

Books, too, are becoming easier to control. Fewer books are being published and those that are are blockbusters or movie tie-ins. Smaller companies could easily die out and the chains of stores such as 'Smiths' can already make or break a magazine.

The reason for all of this is control. If by using the TV screen, i.e. by presenting kids with a certain attitude via TV, then control is easier. The government can impose what they wish, What's more this attitude can be passed on.

Cable will make matters worse as it can cater for minority interests and then it may replace magazines. TV will be easier to control as it does not have the press's traditional freedoms.

But we're adults, it can't happen to us can it? The current nuclear arms debate in *Matrix* is proof it can. The government is using CND as a safety valve. By allowing people to get upset over something they cannot easily change their anger can be held in check. If that anger was pushed against the government, against something that could be changed (sexism or homosexual discrimination) then something more worthwhile could emerge.

Admittedly, these ideas are not new. In particular the channelling concept has been put forward by Moorcock in his book *Retreat from Liberty*. However they need repeating. Our liberty is being destroyed. You are your experiences and if these are directed more than in the past, who will speak for man?

VIDEODROME

Producer: Claude Heroux

Screenplay: David Cronenberg

Cast: James Wood.....Max Renn

Deborah Harry.....Nicki Brand

Reviewed by Tom Wiltshire

Director: David Cronenberg

Special Effects: Rick Baker

Max Renn runs a small cable TV station, one catering for those whose tastes lean towards violence & pornography. In his quest for new material to broadcast, Max believes he has found the answer to his dreams of higher ratings, when one of his technicians stumbles across a very bizarre scrambled broadcast - Videodrome. On one never-changing set ( a lurid red room) a stream of people are brought in to be tortured and sexually abused.

Videodrome seems to be all Max is after for a new programme, offering outrageous material in a low budget format. So he attempts to track down the station that produces Videodrome in the hope that he can buy "the show". Max's lover, a pop psychologist called Nicki Brand, is also seeking the makers of Videodrome; not to aid Max in his search, but with the aim of becoming a 'contestant' to satisfy her own masochistic tendencies.

What Max discovers is that Videodrome's producers are using the show to attract his attention and using Nicki as a lure to maintain Max's focus on Videodrome. The makers of Videodrome go to this effort because they plan to sue Max's cable station to rid the world of the people they despise as moral degenerates - namely the audience.

Unfortunately, what Max doesn't learn until too late is that the Videodrome signal causes hallucinations and mutations in its watchers which eventually allow its producers to 'program' and destroy those they wish to remove from the world.

In this, David Cronenberg's latest offering in the horror/sf genre, he has maintained his stand against the current trend of hack films which concentrate on gore rather than plot or feel: Cronenberg famous or infamous (depending on your point of view) for his exploding heads in 'Scanners', has included some pretty powerful special effects, but these don't occupy centre stage and over all the film has a strange, rather seedy, 'non-techno' feel.

However, Videodrome is no simple thriller. Like all his films, this has strong moral comment. One of the effects of the hallucinations caused by the Videodrome signal is that they bring to the surface Max's subconscious desires. Some of these remain illusions, but others, due to the mutating influence of the signal, become brutal and horrific reality. At times it is difficult to distinguish between reality and illusion, but both facets are very powerful and disturbing. They deal, however, with 'feelings' that are not unthinkable because they are a part of everyone, the part kept buried in the conscience or unconscious.

The strongest 'moral' comment in Videodrom is the message of the effect (noticed and unnoticed) TV has over most people's lives.

In much of the film Cronenberg is simply expanding this simple message (at times perhaps too far) and to this end employs the character Prof Brian Oblivion - 'A TV Messiah' - preaching a strange mixture of rejection and at the same time greater acceptance of the power of this form of direct media.

Videodrome fits well into both horror and the science fiction genre. It shows a 'vision' of man's best friend no longer being his dog, but his TV

screen. A strange film, not one that I would instantly recommend anyone to see. Enjoyable if watched on a very superficial level as a 'straight horror film', but the closer it is examined the greater the flaws become.

Watch out for The Dead Zone, Cronenberg's next film. It should be good.

\*\*\*\*\*

# THE DEAD ZONE

Director: David Cronenberg

Reviewed by Philip Collins

Johnny Smith, following a car crash, lapses into a coma for five years. He awakes to find he has developed the psychic ability to be able to see dramatic events from the past or future life of anybody he touches. At first Smith tries to hid his powers and live in isolation. But he soon realises his destiny, for when shaking hands with an upcoming Presidential candidate - Greg Stillson - he sees that if elected Stillson will start a third world war. If this is to be prevented Smith must act quickly and assassinate Stillson.

Based on the best-selling novel by Stephen King, The Dead Zone is in my opinion the best new fantasy film released so far this year. The acting throughout is very fine with Christopher Walker (most recently seen in the ill-fated Brainstorm) conveying hauntingly the confusion and alienation of Johnny Smith. Particular mention must also be made of Martin Sheen as Greg Stillson. Perhaps it's Sheen's physical resemblance to John F Kennedy (he actually played him in a recent TV series) that makes him so convincing as the insanely obsessed politician.

The director David Cronenberg's previous films such as Scanners and Video-drome have all relied on gorey bloody special effects for their shock value. 'The Dead Zone', bar one brief scene, eschews all that, but still remains an engrossing and disturbing film which sneaks up behind you and grabs you unawares.

\*\*\*\*\*

# FACELIFT

ITV 21/4/84

Reviewed by Terry Broome

I've recently bought the record of the TV musical 'ZERO ZERO' which I did not see when it came on Channel Four. It was written, produced, sung and probably starred Mike Batt.

I've also recently seen the television musical 'FACELIFT'.

Both used the sf device of giving people in the future Numbers instead of Names. In fact, when sf IS portrayed on TV, this is beginning to represent a cliché. In 'ZERO ZERO' the use of names is scowled upon, and love is a disease: Names are a familiarity and have emotional connotations: In fact it examines exactly the sort of society that the Numbers represent in 'FACELIFT'. 'FACELIFT' is different, however, in that the Numbers represent Scientists and pure logic; Names are inferior beasts, who, too often, give

way to irrationality and emotion. Both films concern the fall of men brought about by their love of unattainable and emotionally-lacking women.

Though the music in both is generally excellent, the storylines are a different matter. 'ZERO ZERO' is stale. It owes much to 'THX 1138' - could even be a loosely adapted musical version; and it sometimes gratingly parodies itself and modern-day (modern day as we know it) life. It aims to be a literary work, but falls terribly short. Though the music is great, it has nothing new to offer, and is therefore BORING!

On the other hand (oh, cliché of cliché's) 'FACELIFT' - on the whole - works: it is a successful piece of fiction, and has some wonderful musical numbers, though many are introduced with all the subtlety of an unfunny Python team. The characters feel real, they have real concerns, they have MINDS! They contain free will. The society in 'FACELIFT' is split into the two groups: Numbers and Names. The Numbers like to think logically, rationally, they do not like emotion, and they are completely dedicated to their work. They come across as the only stale characters in the play, but THIS is intentional. As one of the characters says about Bruce, the talking building - Bruce is more human than the Numbers: parallels with Hal in 2001. The Names are jobless, they are slaves, they are animals and if they touch a Number they are killed!

The Numbers are carrying out an experiment to remove the soul of a person from its body. The Names have certain Psi powers - or one of them does at least - Zax. Zax has created a simulacra of one of the Numbers and controls it telepathically - but it has no soul. He discovers that the person the Numbers are using in the experiment is the same one he has fashioned his simulacra on: and his love for her forces him to attempt to steal her soul and put it in the body of the simulacra. Here we have the Dracula myth: the stealer of souls, and the Golem myth too. But when the change is effected the Number's soul makes the dummy a flesh and blood thing and it and she dies. The Numbers are left with a human cyborg, a flesh and blood robot without a face. Zax is accused of murder by his fellow Names and is pelted to death with stones. The only escape from death that he can see is trace the Number's soul's origin back to the place where the experiment was carried out - and his soul becomes entrapped: vague suggestions of Philip K Dick and his worlds abound. Zax's body is carried off by his loyal-again followers: echoes of Jesus and Evita attend the whole religious ceremony. The Numbers that were the colleagues to the woman in the experiment suffer an horrific shock from their fellow's change (Incubus and Succubus?) and Zax is among them in an immortal Hell.

The woman who enticed Zax's followers to pelt him with the stones after his murder, smiles triumphantly at the end, as she takes over his role of the Name's leader.

There are vague echoes of a great many stories here. Tim Rice and Lloyd Webber have been an influence in the music, styles similar to the musical 'EVITA' and 'JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR'. Zax is betrayed by a person close to him. The Number he is in love with is betrayed by her own folly: science and sorcery, science and the powers of the mind conflict. Science instigates the experiment, but sorcery or psionic powers brings it to an end. Which are the more foolish and self-deceived? The Numbers or the Names? Which should we put more hope in? 'FACELIFT' is an extremely depressing and horrific future-vision - either Society is undesirable: the Number's Utopia and the Name's Dystopia are equally stale and inbred.

So, finally, this is why I write. What I have, I hope, pointed out, are two SF musicals that have been on the box recently, which deserve a closer look at, and which I think BSFA members would be interested in.

O ALIEN  
by David Gladwell  
'40 Minutes' BBC2 26/4/84

*Reviewed by Simon Ings*

David Gladwell's short speculative documentary set out to show how our world would seem to an alien. At least, such was the claim.... in the event 'O ALIEN' turned out to be the most infantile, cliché-ridden downright silly package of nonsense ever to darken the portals of media SF.

For forty minutes we were treated to the morbid, guilt-ridden inconsistent ramblings of a man whose shrivelled imagination at no time bordered on anything so reckless as originality.

The film opened with out 'alien' landing in the middle of a field. It was suggested that he (hes, he) might regard trees as sentient beings. Really, why? we asked. No answer, came the stern reply....

Then, with something approaching logical progression, we moved up the food chain to take a look at cows from a fresh and different angle. Their posteriors, it seems, were of particular interest to Alex Hansen, who is blamed for the film's unambitious, unimaginative photography.

Then at last we come across humans. Or rather, a human. And, to the delight of voyeurs everywhere, it was a young woman, and she was taking all her clothes off in slow motion.

There was no clear declared explanation for this sequence, but you can make what you will of the accompanying narration:

"this creature is peeling off skins like a snake..."

Hmmmmmmmmmm.

By the way, every Freudian cliché you hoped had died the death had a cameo appearance in this film - even the classic "instinct for self-destruction". That went out with drainpipes and penis envy, but you'd have a hard time persuading David Gladwell of that.

In fact, you'd have a hard job persuading David Gladwell of anything if his snide, self-opinionated script is anything to go by.

"I am finding it more and more difficult to be objective" he cries, midway through the film. He can say that again! In this oh-so-objective overview of our everyday lives we are presented, not with an intriguingly cock-eyed view of 'reality', but with a dreer 'World According to Gladwell' spell. This includes a Vegetarian's thought for the day, a CND rallying call of such inanity, it would make your average Greenham Common protester want to curl up and die, a Pink-Floydish swipe at authority in Education, an incoherent, unsubstantiated condemnation of Patriotism (the sole example given was the Falklands War) and the odd, shallow snipe at The Consumer Society.

The only thing Gladwell found pleasant about us human beings was our ability to make music. Perhaps, a la 'Close Encounters', music would prove to be a universal language? he suggested. Did he explore this idea? Did he dwell upon it? No.

The film was totally lacking in original speculation - the transparent plagiarisms provided us with much unintentional humour. Even the 'Shoe Shop Conspiracy' from 'Hitchhikers Guide' makes a ponderous appearance: ("Ah, the cult of the adornment of the lower extremities...").

So what general impression was left with the viewer after A Very Meaningful Atom Bomb Sequence had closed the programme? Well, I for one was left with no new insight into our world - wierder sights have been screened through Play School's



Round Window than were presented here. However, it did leave me with a very clear impression of David Gladwell. I didn't like him much.

Not only did he use an alien's 'objectivity' as a shallow disguise for his own political beliefs, he could not even express them in an intelligent, sensible fashion. His approach was two-fold: to be snide (the juxtaposition of the Lady Margaret with the line "how can we acquiesce so easily in the greed and inhumanity of the species?"), or to be simplistic (let's hear it for "man's inhumanity to man"!).

But one ought not to be too hard on Mr Gladwell. Indeed, he is to be pitied, rather than despised. For, moving on from his political to his philosophical views, we face a sorry sight. Through his phallus-shaped window, he describes a pseudo-freudian world where 'to touch (another person) is the hardest act of all', where purity is found only in babies because "only a baby has made no mistakes", where language is dangerous and threatening ("It's lack of accuracy is largely responsible for many of our problems" says Gladwell, which is like saying food is largely responsible for obesity), where spiritual experiences are "religious fantasies", and where (perhaps the most revealing comment of all) "one can only express love to one or two other individuals in one's lifetime".

Really? Poor man....

Gladwell's sense of humanity is nothing to write home about, it seems. Perhaps he is fit to act out an alien's part, after all...

'O ALIEN' was an execrable piece of television, and for it to be advertised as "entering the fringes of Science Fiction" can do nothing but harm to the genre and its followers.

\*\*\*\*\*

BILL THE GALACTIC HERO  
Radio 4 Stereo

*Reviewed by Matthew Shackle*

16 - 20 April 1984     5 x 15-minute episodes

Admit it, you missed this early morning reading of Harry Harrison's book and probably wouldn't have listened if you have known since so many people seem to be prejudiced against any non-book science fiction. Well, you missed a gem. This wasn't a Book at Bedtime adaptation with the reader droning on, but a dramatised rendition. Music, sound effects and the many voices of Kerry Shale, he of the tour de force reading of A Confederacy of Dunces a few years back, made this into a mini-serial.

Radio has always scored over TV for science fiction adaptations in two important ways. Firstly, it's slightly cheaper and secondly you are left to imagine the picture for yourself. The first two parts were particularly effective in drawing the world that Bill found himself in. From the arrival of the recruiting Sergeant at Bill's village, through his training and his shipping out to serve as a fuse tender on his Emperor's Fleet in the war against the Chingars, the characters were built up. Bill becomes a hero by pressing a button and travels far and wide becoming involved in a revolution, solving the problem of what to do with plastic trays, before the plot, rather limply, returns him to his old planet having become a model soldier. This piece of role reversal and reunion with his family under the same conditions that started the story seemed a desperate way of ending. Kerry made Bill such a country hick that if people like Bill were running the fleet, the Chingars would surely have won long ago: and that is The Point.

Harry Harrison's wry humour and subtle jabs at the more militaristic Star Empire type of science fiction came across well and the whole thing was, above all, enjoyable.

As an adaptation I cannot comment since I haven't read the book, but however it compares it was good radio. Since Harry Harrison's other humorous book The Technicolour Time Machine was so brilliantly adapted as a play three years ago I only hope there are a few more books that could make the transition to radio.

And now I must warn you of a grave threat to radio listeners. I refer to the not even intentionally funny SPACE FORCE. It does sound as if this series was time warped from the 50s when its writer last wrote a serial. The one concession to 30 years of science fiction and progress being the use of the 2001 plot without apes or suspended animation.

Any series which starts with a character saying "Well it all began" or "Who would have guessed..." is to be avoided, and this is one. Seven-foot tall aliens, covered in silver to reflect the sun's radiation, who go around hijacking perfectly innocent Earth spaceships with a crew of old narrator, young man who hears voices, stout commander and someone else I forget, have to keep explaining to each other how the spaceship works, and these aliens have a civilisation 'thousands of years in advance of our own', really should be allowed to win. If only because they seem to have been supplied with sliding doors by the company that made the Challenger in Earthsearch (I'll just wash my mouth out with an archbishop). Now, if only the computer went mad...

Is there no truly original SF talent in TV-land? Simon Ings asked in M52. Of course not. If there was and s/he had an original SF idea, then they'd write a book and follow it up with umpteen sequels. TV is essentially throwing all the old ideas together, adding the cast, the photography, sets and special effects: if a series, then the hero must always survive. For Example...

#### QUATERMASS

*ITV Repeat in 2 parts - 9 & 16 May 1984*

For anyone who has ploughed through the SF genre, they will not think much of a plot in which alien forces zap the young people of the world at Stone Circles while Quatermass tries to stop it (and look for his granddaughter). As television, though, it worked quite well in that it concentrated on the characters and the locations rather than being original in thought. It loses nothing in doing so since this is how television works. The script, by Nigel Kneale, is competent and it is backed up by the locations and photography. The scenes of a decayed London as rival gangs shoot it out, is realistic. With its considerable budget it is able to present the viewer with a credible world. It has the mysticism of the circles and ley lines, the boffin technology of wires trailing over rooms, the homely domestic scenes and the construction in the shots that are the basis for keeping the viewer's attention. Yet, on its first showing, many people were fed up or disappointed. I think this was because the alien presence was not in the usual TV form of armour-clad robots with lasers or actors inside costumes. Quatermass went for an enemy that does not confront for attempt to take over the world, so there wasn't that human impact of, say, seeing tripods destroying homes.

OK, some of the dialogue is tacky and Simon MacCorkindale's character is too jumpy but as television it is entertaining in its leisurely, non-action-packed way.

the  
letters...

# STRANGE RELATIONS

JEREMY CRAMPTON  
10 Vicarage Rd  
Hoole  
Chester  
CH2 3HZ

I am writing about the printing of Michael King's letter in the last Matrix. Now, I am not (for several reasons which should become clearer in a minute), going to argue with him point for point; I'm sure that Joseph Nicholas will be well able to do that himself.

Instead, I just want to say this. Ever since you published Mr King's first letter at the end of last year, I have been engaged in a personal correspondence with him, over roughly the same points he puts forward here. They are, in fact, an amalgam of 'arguments' already familiar to me. This correspondence arose out of the fact that I sent Matrix a reply to his original letter, as you know, which was quite long. In case you didn't have room to publish it (as turned out to be the case) I sent a copy to Mr King as well, out of politeness. He then chose to reply to me in turn.

These circumstances have placed me in a unique position with regards this latest letter. In my own letters I have (although curtailed, yet still at some length) put forward my own case as to why the things he reproduces in the letter in M52 are completely unbalanced and lacking in verity. I would like to quote from his letters verbatim, but he has not allowed me to do so, hinting at legal action. If I could, I would easily be able to show how he contradicts himself, ignores huge chunks of my letters because he cannot think of anything to say in his own defence (as he accuses Joseph of doing) and, most worrying of all, sets himself up to pronounce on things he hasn't the foggiest inkling of (his knowledge of Nicaragua for example, as far as I can see, is limited to one unfavourable Economist report. Despite my informing him of the Economist Intelligence Unit - part of The Economist itself - which provides thousands of facts about countries in quarterly reports, he has yet to mention it; I assume it is because they are more favourable to countries like Nicaragua, understanding their problems and so on).

I am all in favour of introducing politics into fandom, and, in a wider sense, of being more aware of politics in sf itself. I have welcomed this debate therefore; whilst regretting the language the participants have used (Joseph is nearly as guilty of this as Mr King). If there is one thing I have learnt from my exchange of letters with Mr King it is that he can be very rude, and rudeness can become infectious if you don't keep a tight reign on it. It is best to avoid it altogether.

So where do we go from here? Well, I would like to see more interest taken in the politics inherent in our literature, whether explicit or implicit. And as I said before, I personally would like fandom itself to be more aware of politics as well.

For the record, my own politics are fairly leftist, and I support the Peace Movement in denouncing ALL nuclear weapons, whether Russian or American. I oppose Russian involvement in Afghanistan as well as the American invasion of Grenada. I support the aims and ideals of the Nicaraguan revolution. And finally, when I get the chance, the paper I read is other people's Guardians!

\*\*\*\*\**More fuel for the fire. Politics in fandom is all very well, but shouldn't we perhaps try to see how political decisions have actually affected us in the UK? Remember the interview with Mike Dickinson in an earlier Matrix on the subject of unemployment? Now that's reality; I admire your standpoint, but what do other readers think?*

*And now back to the question of fiction - Terry Pyle weighs in with some very pertinent points on the role of Focus and Orbiter.*

TERRY PYLE  
28 Tweedy Rd  
Bromley  
Kent  
BR1 3PP

I have just finished reading M52, and feel motivated to write on two issues, the first being the role of Focus, and the second relating to Rachael Redding's letter in M52 on conventions.

Focus exists as a medium for the exchange of ideas and informed opinion on the mechanics of professional writing, aimed at the aspirant rather than the established writer. In this role, it has been extremely successful. It is a source of encouragement and much needed advice to all would be pro writers. It is not a publishing outlet for these writers!

Fiction, of itself, has no place in Focus, except perhaps in a critically annotated form, whereby the printed piece is criticised by the editors in a way that is informative to the readership.

There does appear to be a significant group of people in the BSFA who would like to see a fiction magazine. I would suggest that these members are not making use of the Orbiter service, which is available to them to exercise their writing talents, and expose them to their peers.

To come onto my second point, I can sympathise with the concerns expressed by Rachael Redding in her letter on conventions. However, to take her first reservation, I would like to assure Rachael, and all others who feel the same way, that there are fans in the BSFA who do not put a premium on alcohol consumption at conventions. I thoroughly enjoyed SEACON '84, without imbibing anything stronger than the Metropole's patent synthetic orange juice.

\*\*\*\**And a further request for a fiction magazine - however, perhaps we should address ourselves to the question of the validity of this "apparent" need. I'm all for promoting good writing, but surely, we must avoid the Vanity Press ethic that Tangent joyfully embraced. As an editor of Interzone, it is only too obvious that many prospective writers haven't got a clue. To me, a magazine about writing (Focus) is far more use and of greater value than a fiction magazine.*

HILARY ROBINSON  
25 Princetown Rd  
Bangor  
Co Down BT20 3TA  
N Ireland

With reference to the letters in the last Matrix about Tangent, I didn't know there had been a previous attempt at producing a fiction magazine, as this is only my third year in the BSFA. However, I would be greatly in favour of reviving it, preferably under a more dynamic title (my apologies to the person who thought it up). I suggest the new magazine should be:-

- (a) totally separate from any existing publication in the mailing,
- (b) edited by one of our aspiring writers who knows what it's like trying to get started,
- (c) open to ANY member who sends in a properly prepared script,
- (d) open to all members to comment on the stories (i.e. a letters page), and
- (e) published quarterly.

Is there enough fiction around, you asked. I don't know how many Orbiter groups there are (how many are there, Dorothy?) but at five members per group times x groups, circulating two or three orbits a year, plus all those trembling on the edge and afraid to join but wanting to write, I think we could do it. What we would need is a little helpful encouragement from the membership. With all due respect to Andy Hobbs, it's comments like his that stop people sending their attempts in. No one likes to think his/her first attempts will be laughed at. What was it you said, Andy? Some of the fiction in Focus was was 'dire'? Very helpful, that is. Could you be a little more

constructive?

Please, BSFA, consider seriously a fiction magazine.

\*\*\*\**Certainly some constructive points in Hilary's letter - but I wonder how many people would support the magazine? How much would it cost to print? How much to distribute? Who would want to receive it? Who else will turn up to mailing sessions to lend a hand? Over to you! Here's Nigel Richardson:*

NIGEL RICHARDSON      A big NO to Tangent or any other attempt at hoisting tenth-rate fiction on the BSFA membership! If the Focus editors say that only three of the stories sent them last year were worth printing then I can see no way that a BSFA fictionzine could work. Would-be writers whose work is not good enough to be published in more selective outlets, professional or amateur, might like it, but I doubt if anyone would read it. What percentage of the membership actually reads the fiction in Focus? Does Mr Pembleton? The two or three stories I've got around to reading haven't impressed me at all, and I'd much rather have seen their place taken by articles.

I think Mr Pembleton, and any other would-be writer who feels the same as he does, should ask why he wants to write, and what his aim is. To have a novel printed with a very limited audience consisting of people who are obliged to buy the book because he pays his seven quid membership subs? Put like that it sounds crazy, but it is exactly what he is asking. He shows no concern for what we or any other potential readership might want from him. He shows, too, an incredible arrogance; just because a lot of great writers had their work rejected at first doesn't make every rejected novel a masterpiece. 99% of novels are rejected not because they are too daring or original to be printed but because they are simply no good. And if something is no good it stays no good whether the BSFA is involved or not.

Mr Pembleton says that he enjoys writing (Vector 116). That might be enough if you're just doing it for fun, but it takes more than mere enjoyment to create a publishable novel. It takes determination and an awareness of the market. Whining and whinging and expecting the BSFA to wave its magic wand won't get you anywhere, I'm afraid.

\*\*\*\**Looks like this fiction magazine "thing" is set to run and run. I believe Focus is the answer though - let's get that up and running again (Sue and Dorothy!) and I'm convinced that it will continue to fulfill its obligations.*

TREVOR MENDHAM      Focus is certainly not a failure. It has fulfilled its brief excellently and is very interesting - like a lot of others I just wish it was more frequent, even if this meant a cut-back in one or more of the BSFA's other publications. Focus is not a place for printing reams of fan fiction. However, I do believe the BSFA should provide such an outlet - not just for the sake of all the potential authors, but to give the rest of us something to read! A BSFA which does not publish fiction is badly lacking, and despite conventional wisdom the impression I get from recent M's is that such a zine would be most welcome. Of course, the problem is lack of material of adequate quality - the vast majority of fan fiction is, as we all know, dire! However, if it's made clear that the magazine is not intended as professional, nor as a collection of pieces from which to learn writing, then I feel people will be willing to put up with a few less-than-brilliant pieces in order to get the occasional gem and encourage new authors. Yes, I'm fully in favour of such a magazine being part of the BSFA's regular output. If the only thing holding the idea up is lack of an editor, you've got a volunteer.

I've a feeling I might regret saying that! Perhaps if I move on to something else quickly enough you'll forget it...

I still don't think M is the right place to discuss politics (discuss it in fanzines, of course, but not an official organ of the BSFA). Still, since the discussion's going on I may as well ask one question of those who are pro-deterrent. If the Russians dropped a nuke on one of our cities, would you be willing to drop a retaliatory bomb on one of theirs? Would you be willing to condone or initiate the murder of millions of innocent Russians? If not, then where's your deterrent?

*\*\*\*\*People want fiction but realise there is unlikely to be sufficient to fill a fanzine - Graham Smith comments:*

GRAHAM SMITH      In Matrix 52 you asked for some response to the idea of  
23 Westmoor Rise      a revival of Tangent. Although Tangent was long dead by  
Bramley      the time I joined the BSFA I have read enough fan fiction  
Leeds      to realise that past editors of Focus who claim that they  
LS13 3DB      didn't get enough stories good enough to print are almost  
                 certainly telling the truth. I think an all fiction  
BSFA magazine would be a mistake. I found Focus fairly interesting - although  
I know that I'll never need to use the articles on submitting manuscripts,  
doing research etc, I accept that other people will, and, if part of the reason  
for the BSFA's existence is to help new writers, then Focus is the sort of  
magazine it should be producing.

If I want to read SF I'll buy SF written by a "proper" author. While I agree that everybody has to start somewhere, I don't think a "New Tangent" is the place to start. Perhaps if the editors of Focus printed more fiction, but wrote scathing comments under each piece pointing out where the writer had gone wrong, the standard might improve - I don't know. However, if we're voting for a reborn Tangent then I vote NO.

Unlike one of your correspondents, I didn't join the BSFA for Focus. Believe it or not I joined for Matrix! Mostly for the News section but also because of the letters. I am very disappointed when people write in to say that the BSFA is not a place to debate CND, unemployment, Soviet/US aggression etc, pay no attention. As I see it you have to print the letters on subjects people are writing to you about. I, like you, am hoping to see a reply from Joseph Nicholas to the letter from Michael King. Mr King's letter was well organized with very impressive figures to back them up. However, the trouble is that I'm not sure that the figures tell the whole story (lies, damned lies and statistics).

*\*\*\*\*Graham's point about where to read fiction (ie pro magazines) is a common - but entirely reasonable - argument. We still have to get people to the necessary standard to publish professionally, but again I go back and re-iterate, Focus is better equipped to do that than a fiction magazine.*

*Right, enough of such things. Here is the moment you've been waiting for - the continuing saga of KING V NICHOLAS. Round 1, Andy Sawyer:*

ANDY SAWYER      Just a comment or two on M52 - specifically the King-  
45 Greenbank Rd      Nicholas Letters. The trouble with opposing the view-  
Birkenhead      point Michael King puts forward is that you're then in  
Merseyside      grave danger of being accused of being 'soft on the  
L42 7JT      Russkies'. But accepting part of Michael's argument -  
                 that events in Afghanistan are part of a historic  
Russian expansionism which pre-dates the Soviet regime - doesn't mean accep-  
ting the whole of his thesis that the USSR is behind every troublespot in  
the world, nor does it invalidate Joseph's points that part of the Soviet

arms build-up rests upon a perceived need for defense on the Soviet part. (I think that's the gist of what was said somewhere about 3 Matrix's ago!)

Michael King appears to have said nothing about that point, because, I presume it renders shaky the doctrine of a plan for worldwide Soviet domination which, of course, is the rationale for NATO's arms race. The USSR is a vast country but it is also surrounded by hostile countries and has been twice devastated by war this century. Large areas of its economy are underdeveloped and it controls 'buffer states' between it and its enemies in one (Afghanistan) of which there is open war with rebel forces and in another (Poland) the whole basis of its domination recently seemed in danger of collapse. Given the attitude of some Western leaders and media figures towards the USSR, is it not surprising that Soviet leaders verge on the paranoid in their attitude to us? To give one example, if a Russian comedian at a gathering of the Young Communist League (or whatever the youth group of the Communist Party is called) had come on stage and shouted "Bomb Britain!", I wonder what Michael King's reaction would be?

That's not suggesting that Russian defence policy is not a major danger to world peace; it is suggesting that Western defence policy is also a major danger to world peace, and I hope Michael King can appreciate the difference.

As for his comments on Central America, they seem to be stretching the truth slightly. US policy (by which I include that of this country as well) seems to be based on a form of logic which follows the following stages:

- 1) A dictator or oligarchy rules a country as a personal fiefdom
- 2) A rebel movement grows up. It is given no support from the West, and moves ideologically leftwards.
- 3) The rebels gain massive support in the country and throw out the thugs who ran it. The USA institutes an embargo and does everything in its power to covertly bring down the new government. Lacking support from the West, the rebel government turns to the USSR.

That is more or less what happened in Cuba, and what is now happening in Nicaragua. The Soviet supporters were only one tendency among the rebels, and the Sandinistas are not a totally Marxist party. What they do know - and after what happened in Chile, who can blame them? - is that the Americans are not interested in bringing about democracy in the region and are only concerned in buttressing the regimes of their puppet dictators, to the point where when a dictatorship is overthrown, not only will the rebel government be given no chance to normalize the situation, but economic and military war will be waged against them. The build-up of American 'advisers' in Honduras and El Salvador has increased dramatically over the past few years. If American policy was really geared to anything more than seeing these countries as client states in the same way as the USSR sees Poland or Afghanistan, then considerable amount more aid would be given to democratic movements there and more pressure would be exerted on the local dictators to change their ways. No, I don't think you need go as far as the "Soviet threat" to work out what is happening in Central America.

\*\*\*\*And now, the NICHOLAS RESPONSE:-

JOSEPH NICHOLAS  
22Denbigh Street  
Pimlico  
LONDON

Michael King's letter in Matrix 52 seems almost the work of a completely different person than the Michael King whose letter appeared in Matrix 49, so much more reasonable is its tone (although if he thinks my previous letter was insulting he should perhaps re-read his previous letter). Personal abuse still surfaces here and there, however, especially in his opening remarks, and I shall do my best to ignore it. (Save for correcting one of those opening remarks: the claim that a horse was deliberately lashed with barbed wire - at the Greenham

Common demonstration on 10 December 1983 - is quite untrue, since the horse, and a number of people, were cut accidentally, - as The Daily Express, which printed the allegation, was subsequently forced to admit.)

So down to business. To save your equilibrium, I'll keep the statistics to a minimum, and refer readers wishing to verify my statements to the following sources: the Palme Commission's Common Security: A Programme For Disarmament (Pan, 1982), which contains excellent and substantially accurate tabulations of East/West conventional and nuclear strengths; Robert Aldridge's First Strike: The Pentagon's Strategy for Nuclear War (Pluto Press, 1983), a former missile designer's survey of the emerging US nuclear arsenal, stuffed full of data; and Jim Garrison's and Pyare Shivpuri's The Russian Threat: Its Myths and Realities (Gateway Books, 1983), a survey of the current East/West political and military balance and the factors that have led up to it.

1) It's true that the Soviet Union did deploy the SS20s before the arrival of cruise and Pershing II missiles; but it is not true that cruise and Pershing II were deployed in response to them. The SS20, in essence, is a MIRVed replacement for the older and less accurate single-warhead SS4 and SS5 which had been in place for 15-20 years and the pending replacement of which NATO had known about since 1976. Nor, then, had NATO any worries about the SS20s, claiming that the nuclear-capable F111 bombers based in the UK and the Poseidon and Polaris submarines assigned to Europe would be sufficient to counter them; only later, to provide a political justification for the deployment of cruise and Pershing II, did the SS20s begin to be highlighted. The only point of comparison between (on the one side) cruise and Pershing II and (on the other) the SS20 is their mobility; beyond that, and despite NATO's claims that they are merely "modernisations" of the West's existing arsenal, cruise and Pershing II represent a whole new generation of weapons, their accuracy so great that they cannot properly be called "deterrents". They are designed for no other purpose than fighting a nuclear war, as part of a pre-emptive first strike intended to destroy the USSR's missiles while they are still on the ground, and so destabilise what's left of the "balance of terror" that if we don't achieve arms control soon we can forget about planning for the future for the simple reason that there won't be one.

Well, that last is perhaps a bit too rhetorical. But it should answer Michael's question as to why 2/3 of the SS20s are targeted on Western Europe: because it's from Western Europe that the main military threat comes. They're not targeted on the Islamic regions of the USSR because (a) the inhabitants of said regions don't have nuclear weapons of their own, and (b) the said regions are already garrisoned by conventional forces.

Which brings me to Michael's tabulation of the conventional balance in Europe. I'll take his points in the order in which he makes them:

(a) The Soviet and WTO troop strength in Europe is indeed greater than NATO's; but this ignores the national composition of the WTO forces. To begin with, the East Germans couldn't be used in an assault because of the strong probability that they'd refuse to shoot West Germans; secondly, the Romanians couldn't be used because they are constantly on the verge of resigning from the Warsaw Pact (and may resign anyway when the Treaty comes up for renewal in 1986); thirdly, the Poles couldn't be used because they're too busy keeping their own population in check... this doesn't leave much. Always assuming, however, that all the WTO forces were used in an assault on Western Europe, they'd still lose - because of a simple formula taught in military colleges around the world (including the USSR), to the effect that to overcome a defender the attacker must outnumber him 3 to 1. No matter how many times I try, I cannot make 1 million come out to three times 3/4 million.



(b) Again, the USSR does indeed have more tanks than NATO - but aside from the fact that such Western calculations usually include every tank in the Soviet Union, right down to the obsolete ones used by the reserve and training divisions, one does not fight tanks with other tanks but with anti-tank missiles... in which the West has both a qualitative and a quantitative lead. Similarly with artillery: if they're not SP, they're almost useless, and here again the West has the advantage. As for fixed-wing aircraft: to count the total while paying no attention to types is to grossly mislead. The fact is that the West has more strike/ground attack and long-range/deep penetration aircraft, while the USSR has more interceptors; thus the former's aviation is devoted far more to offence than the latter's, which is quite obviously more defensive (in the purest sense of the word).

(c) To compare the number of army divisions on each side without stating that a Soviet/WTO division is much smaller than a Western European/NATO one is an act of brazen deception.

(d) This is the numbers game taken to its ultimate, and a permutation of it that I find disgraceful. In the first place, Michael is counting only land-based missiles (as a point of future reference, it's worth remembering that while the USSR has something like 75% of its nuclear missiles based on land, the USA has a similar percentage based on submarines and bombers), and in the second place what really matters is not the missiles but the warheads they carry. Soviet technology is so far behind that it can mount an average of 3-5 warheads on each missile, while the USA is so far advanced that it can mount up to 14 - warheads which, when one counts in the MARV and NAVSTAR capabilities being developed for the MX and Trident II missiles, will have CEPs of 10-20 metres as compared to the USSR's current average of 1000 metres.

(e) The 1000 theatre nuclear weapons that the US withdrew from Europe in 1979 made no difference to the nuclear balance, for the simple reason that they consisted of such things as atomic mines, atomic grenades, and (the one that really amused me) atomic shells whose destructive radius exceeded the range of the gun that fired them. All, in other words, would do more harm to the people using them than to the people they were to be used against - and their withdrawal was a tacit recognition of that fact.

(f) To quote figures for military expenditure without stating what is being compared and how it is being compared just isn't good enough. I quote from Dan and Ron Smith's The Economics of Militarism (Pluto Press, 1983): "These four concepts (expenditure, forces, capability, and security) are commonly conflated, so that the threat to security is measured by an adversary's capability, which is measured by the force levels, which in turn are measured by expenditure. But high expenditure may not buy large forces since the money can be spent inefficiently or on a small number of very expensive items. Large forces do not always produce a powerful capability since they may be unable to perform the tasks required in war having been trained for quite different tasks. Military effectiveness can only be judged in war and is in many ways inherently unknowable in advance. The American war in Vietnam is a classic case of huge expenditure and large forces failing to provide the required capability. Finally, the threat which one state poses to another's security can only be judged by reference to the former's intentions, which in turn rests on an analysis of its interests" (p.15). And this is to leave aside the question of how the expenditure is calculated, a point I raised last time but which Michael ignores. Another point to make is that each nation's expenditure does not arise in a vacuum, but is a function of the other's perceived spending - so that if the USA did pull out of Western Europe (which isn't very likely) Soviet spending would decline substantially. Their desire to keep up with the Americans has placed severe strains on their economy;

they simply cannot maintain their current level of spending, and by forcing them to spend more than they can the USA is trying to bankrupt them.

*(Joseph then goes on to answer each of the other arguments raised by Michael, but by his own admission, the whole thing is too long for inclusion in its entirety.)*

I cannot end without reiterating a point I made in my first letter which seems in danger of disappearing beneath the weight of argument and counter-argument, to wit: I do not support the USSR, and I do not seek to apologise for it. What I am concerned with is understanding it; firstly because we have to live with it and secondly because only with understanding can there be freedom from fear. Fear, particularly of the kind pushed by Michael King, is not a basis for conducting international affairs; it will serve only to increase our dangers, not lessen them. To phrase it as bluntly as possible: we must remake our view of the world, and we must do so soon, before it is too late for us all.

*\*\*\*\*\*DING! DING! - ROUND 2 - Joseph had already sent the above to Michael King, which has prompted our Mr King to respond again, and he says in his covering letter "No doubt I will reply in greater length to Joseph..." There go another few trees.*

MICHAEL KING  
6A Newlands Road  
Bentley Heath  
Solihull  
B93 8AU

I expect Allan Lloyd's view of Joseph and myself is probably held by many others, so I have kept this letter brief.

To Allan I would just say I'd like to believe Joseph's view of the Soviets. I really would. However, the facts don't bear it out to my satisfaction. Of course I'd be happy to admit Joseph has a point and indeed will do so, when he makes a worthwhile one! No doubt he would say the same of me!

Instead of another long letter, I would urge anyone interested in the debate (which should be all of us - ?) to put aside whatever SF book they are reading (or in my case, "The Valley of Horses") and read: Inside The Soviet Army by Viktor Suvorov (Hamish Maitland, 1982) and The Nuclear War File by C Chant & I Hogg (Ebony Press, 1983).

Both books contain many facts which are far more frightening than any of the emotion-based rhetoric of CND. There are numerous others I could suggest (e.g. The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union by Edward N Luttwak (Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1983) with none of them being published by 'political' companies like Pluto Press.

Despite my opening remarks, I really must comment briefly on Joseph's M53 letter.

1) On cruise/Pershing II and SS20s. In the class that these weapons come, the Soviets have a 7:2 advantage in "arriving warheads" over NATO, or 2:1 if US SLBMs allocated to NATO are included. This is based on existing numbers (The Nuclear War File). Thus... "there is no doubt the Soviets have a marked superiority in theatre nuclear weapons. The installation at European sites of Pershing II and Cruise missiles will redress the balance somewhat in terms of numbers and capabilities, but it is unlikely that their deployment will be complete before 1990, and by that time the Soviets may have introduced large numbers of newer weapons such as the SS22 and 23 or increased the numbers of SS20s" (The Nuclear War File).

(a) The French, Italian, Turkish and Greek forces are no more reliable than some WP forces.

(b) Soviet tanks outnumber NATO's by 3:1 (Nuclear War File). Mr Suvorov's book explains why the Soviets don't make much use of SP artillery (mainly because troops cannot flee with static guns and are thus more likely to stand and fight). His book also contains much information on the Soviet airforce that does not equate with Joseph's views on their strengths or roles.

(c) NATO divisions are larger (in manpower terms) than WP divisions, but better "teeth to tail ratio" (roughly meaning the actual fighting manpower) more than compensates for this.

(d) The fact that most Soviet nuclear weapons are on land (and thus quickly operational) merely underlines the West's need for Cruise and Pershing (land based too).

(e) Fair enough.

(f) OK then, let's not talk at all about monetary spending levels, but instead, let's return to actual quantities of weapons. Thus we come back to the Soviet's nuclear superiority and its conventional advantages e.g. 633 major surface ships compared with 313 of the US - Jane's Fighting Ships 1980-81, and WP's 316 submarines (149 nuclear) compared with NATO's 237 (126 nuclear) - 1976 World War Three, ed. Shelford Bidwell.

Please try and read some of the books I suggest, though I don't pretend they make happy reading. On first glance I enjoyed them because they provided useful ammo (sorry!) to deploy against Joseph. Now, on reflection they depress me more than CND anger me. I do actually believe in peace....

P.S.

On the question of politics and the BSFA, Gregory Benford's article in Vector 119 was very good and I would enjoy seeing more like it. On his (accurate) two-dimensional scheme I probably fall somewhere between Reagan and the "Hard SF" writers!

\*\*\*\*As they say in the Times, this correspondence is now closed - unless of course you know better.

*(Oh no it's not, Alan - this is your friendly typist Eve taking the opportunity for a last word! Having witnessed the spectacle of Joseph in full flood on many occasions, I feel it would be very interesting to see him pit his wits against an equally strong adversary. Joseph is very good in debate, he has innumerable 'facts' at his disposal, is exceptionally adept at expressing himself both in print and verbally, and can literally out-talk almost everyone. Thus, if he appears to be 'winning' (not a good term, I know, but I can't think of a suitable alternative) it is often not solely due to the strength of his argument alone. What the present on-going debate has proved to me is that there is as much 'ammo' for each side - both are using statistics to prove their own ends. It would be interesting to see Joseph pitted against an equal talent who can counter each of his arguments with as much verbal & writing skill, who has equal access to counter-argument, who can shout as loud and talk as fast. Now that would be interesting and if there was a 'winner' in the debate, it would be more likely to be on the basis of the argument and not the personalities involved.)*

\*\*\*\*And now over to Bob Shaw for something completely different.

BOB SHAW  
66 Knutsford Road  
Grappenhall  
Warrington  
Cheshire WA4 2PB

I'd like to go on record as disagreeing with Lilian Edwards' statement that "the essence of fanzines is growth". This doctrine - a spin-off from the "You're-not-in-fandom-to-enjoy-yourself" theory - is completely unfannish to me. Especially when it leads to the crazy situation of Terry Hill being put down for the sin of publishing a bloody good fanzine in a format his readers enjoy!

\*\*\*\*Finally, a good word for Matrix (almost forgotten what this magazine was, hadn't you!)

SIMON D INGS  
10 Geddes Way  
Sheet  
Petersfield  
Hants GU31 4DJ

Needless to say I thought M52 yet another step up the evolutionary ladder. A good range of material in the last issue, even if there was no editorial. (My fault, probably, sending you that Z for Z review after the official deadline+) Of particular merit were the fanzine reviews, and the Dave Mooring strip. More!

It was most pleasing to get some feedback on the Malevil review. In answer to Stephen Davies, I didn't mention the source for the film - Robert Merles book, because I wasn't able to get hold of and read a copy in time. Given that it won the Campbell award in '74, the book clearly deserved more than the briefest mention I could give it, so I remained silent on the matter - a wise decision, it seems, since by the sound of it the film did little more than rip off a very careful, intricate work.

Were there real characters in the film Malevil as Philip Nichols suggests? It depends on terminology, I suppose. I don't think you can have a character unless he/she does interact with the plot. If there is no interaction, you are left with caricatures, rather than characters. But...points taken.

In M52's review of 'Zones', a live album by the band Hawkwind, I claimed that their March 2nd release was to be a studio album. This, not to put too fine a point on it, was a Damn Lie. The March release was an EP entitled 'Earth Ritual Preview'. Which, in case you were in doubt, is a preview for a forthcoming album entitled 'Earth Ritual'. Earth Ritual is to be another live album. Great. I think I'll just lay down and die somewhere - apologies to all.....

\*\*\*\*And that's it. Do keep writing, your comments and views are all important to us. Whilst the search for a new leader for Matrix is on, please address your letters on this issue to:

Chris Hughes  
128 Whitley Wood Road  
READING  
Berks RG3 8JG

A further update will be given next issue. Apologies for the complications of different addresses each time, but the solution is in your hands - someone offer to take over the editorship and we'll return to the simplicity of one editorial address for each issue!

And now, some notes on money matters from our esteemed Treasurer, Mr Tom Taylor...

#### BSFA FINANCIAL SERVICES

**Foreign Magazine Subscription Service - United States Dollars**  
If you have ever subscribed to a US magazine you know the high cost of purchasing US dollars. The BSFA accepts subscriptions in US dollars, so we now intend to put these to good use by selling them to members.

**Procedure:**  
All you need to do to purchase a US\$ cheque is to send a sterling cheque made payable to 'British Science Fiction Association Ltd' for 'not more than' the dollar amount in sterling, enclose a stamped addressed envelope and a covering letter and we will do the rest.

**Conversion rate:**  
The exchange rate used will be the Financial Times US\$ cross rate plus a 50p charge to cover bank charges.

Dollars may be purchased for any purpose - the magazine need not be remotely connected with SF. If you have a US\$ bank account and want to buy pounds sterling we will sell you these at the same rate using the same procedure.

**Example of a 'Not More Than' cheque:**

Suppose you want to subscribe to L Ron Hubbard's Short Story Monthly at a US\$ subscription price for Europe of \$25.00. Write a cheque payable to BSFA Ltd, put 'not more than twenty five pounds only' on the second line and leave the box blank. The bank will pay us whatever is in the box so long as it is less than \$25.00.

#### Payment by Standing Order

You may now pay your subscription to the BSFA by standing order. When your sub is due for renewal we will send you a standing order form. All you need to do is fill in your bank details, sign the order and return it to us, we will do the rest.

If you pay by standing order, the rate is £6-50 pa instead of the normal £7-00. Every year we will send you a reminder before your next year's membership fee is transferred, allowing you

plenty of time to cancel your membership. If we do not hear from you, your account will be debited with £6.50.

New members may opt to pay their first year's subscription by standing order. Forms will be provided with sample mailings and at BSFA tables at conventions. Unless you already pay bank charges, standing orders are free.

#### BSFA Membership Agencies

It is rarely possible for the BSFA to set up membership tables at conventions. We therefore propose that convention committees may become BSFA membership agents.

BSFA receipt books will be provided to con committees on request. They will be pre-numbered and in triplicate. Committee members may sell BSFA memberships at £7-00 for cash or cheque and £6-50 for standing orders while they are running a table selling memberships for their own convention, collecting cash and standing order forms and issuing an official BSFA receipt (top copy). After each convention, the committee is to submit completed standing order forms and cheques together with the second copy of the receipt to Tom Taylor. Commission will be paid at 50p per new member and 25p per renewal to convention funds.

Completed receipt books are to be submitted to Tom Taylor for detailed checking of the second copies. All unused receipt books are to be returned to Tom Taylor after the convention run by the committee. All spoiled and cancelled receipts must be retained. The committee will be responsible for all books and receipts issued. We believe that by offering an incentive to convention committees the total membership of the BSFA will increase and the funds will remain within fandom. This is in the interests of both conventions and BSFA members. Obviously we will have to restrict the issue of receipt books to bona fide convention committees who respect the aims of the BSFA as the organisation devoted to the written forms of SF.

## WHAT'S ORBITER?

So, what is behind the funny ads that appear in every Matrix? Just an excuse for Dorothy Davies to get her name in a BSFA mailing by hook or by crook? The question wasn't quite phrased that way, but the request for Orbiter info suggested some elucidation is needed - again. With a constant in/outflow of members, I often need reminding that there are people who don't know what it's all about.

Orbiter is a postal version of the writers workshop, in that it provides a medium for discussion criticism and comment, exchange of views and, if possible, market information. It is a simple procedure, based on trust, dedication and a degree of work.

One person elects to be Organiser of the group of 5. He/she (or she/he for the feminists among us) provides a folder, in which they put a contribution. It is mailed to the next person on the list, who comments on the contribution, and adds one of their own. And on to the next... By the time the Folio comes back, it contains 4 different comments on the 1st contribution, plus 3 others waiting to be commented on. And, hopefully, letters full of chat, and contentious views for the discussing of.

Trust comes into it, because the members trust one another to comment fairly and honestly on the work submitted, and to be a willing member, not to allow the Folio to stay in their homes for weeks, thus giving the Organiser

## COMPETITION CORNER

Competition M50 invited suckers - sorry, I meant to say "sensitive, cultured BSFA members" - to submit cartoon ideas for Jim Barker's planned 101 Uses of a Dead Monolith, and Jim took matters into his own hands on the back cover of Matrix 52. Since in his role of Guest Judge, Jim picked more of Andy Sawyer's notions than of anyone else's, and since furthermore Andy was the only person to submit anything for the follow-up competition (more of the same) set by Jim, I declare him the winner of the sacred £5 book token. Thanks to all entrants, including Anonymous, who may now be revealed as Anthony T Solomon.

Time for another competition, I think. Comp M53 is a nice, easy, topical one: in a doubtless splendid and laudable crusade for more law and more order, our doubtless wholly idealistic police have been raiding lots of nasty, rotten SF bookshops and confiscating wicked, depraved underground comics and things; also they've been seizing books, which are well known to rot the brain. The criteria used are so elastic that it's been pointed out that, for example, Doc Smith's Lensman books could be the same logic be seized owing to their descriptions of vile drug abuse ("thionite-sniffing", remember?). Thus your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to give (in not more than 20 words) a satirical, amusing, convincing reason for our supremely liberal and enlightened rulers to seize and burn - well, whichever innocuous SF/fantasy book you choose. The most far-fetched reason for censorship, the silliest stretching of the Obscene Publications Act's words "to deprave and corrupt", the funniest assault on the most seemingly pure and innocent work... these are what will win the fabulous fiver. (Copies of Matrix with the results will not be sent to the Dept of Public Prosecutions, in case it should give them ideas.) Rush in your entry in time for the Matrix 54 copydate, to the correct (as opposed to the version of sodden Jim Barker) address: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU.

nightmares. Dedication, because there should be something new to put in the Folio each time it comes around, which means a degree of work. Which is precisely what I said up there, having just looked back at the words!

That is Orbiter, in as small a nutshell as I can get it. Interested? Read my ads. I spend a lot of time thinking them up!

Incidentally, as at the time of writing this, (end of April 1984) I'm funding Orbiter from my own resources as an unemployed housewife. All SAEs much appreciated.

## SF PUBLISHING NEWS

Chris Priest has at last sold his new novel, **The Glamour**. Jonathan Cape, one of Britain's most respected publishers, has picked it up for a not inconsiderable advance and thus one of Britain's most respected writers joins Brian Aldiss and J G Ballard in the Cape stable. Chris went out and celebrated the good news in true fannish tradition and produced another issue of his fanzine **Deadloss**. With luck, **The Glamour** will be due towards the end of the year, so watch out for it!

\*\*\*\*\*

Rob Holdstock's novel, **Mythago Wood** (based on the classic F & SF short story of the same name) is due out towards the end of the summer.

\*\*\*\*\*

A new publishing venture to be applauded is **SF Alternatives**, a series of reprint hardbacks of classic SF novels. Publisher John Goodchild has commissioned former **Vector** editor Dave Wingrove to write an authoritative introduction to each volume, and the first six volumes were published on April 9th. They include:

**Tiger! Tiger!** (Alfred Bester)  
**The World of Null-A** (A E Van Vogt)

**Beasts** (John Crowley)  
**Hothouse** (Brian Aldiss - with the full text restored, as per the USA edition)

**This Immortal** (Roger Zelazny)  
**The Space Merchants** (Frederik Pohl & C M Kornbluth)

The publisher advises that a number of other classic SF titles from the last 40 years will follow in due course. Priced at £8.95 each, they are a worthy addition to any bookshelf.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Odyssey 7**, the Manchester-based SF bookshop have recently launched themselves into the signing-session market. Recent authors have included Gene Wolfe, Ann McCaffrey and Bob Shaw. Owner Graham Holt announced himself well-pleased with the turn-outs, and Bob Shaw, ever wary after a signing session in Oxford where only three people turned up, was very happy with the lengthy queue that formed almost as soon as he took his seat.

## THE HEAD APPEAL APPEAL

Towards the end of 1983 the Scottish fanzine **THE HEAD** launched an appeal to promote SF by producing a novel on tape to be distributed through the Royal National Institute of the Blind's Talking Book service. The target of the appeal is £500 - the cost of putting one book onto tape. Donations are always welcome and a voting system is in operation where a person donating 50p is entitled to one vote for the book to be recorded; £1 entitles the donor to 2 votes, etc. So far £150 has been collected and votes received are: **Heiconia Springs** - 20; **No Androids Dream of Electric Sheep** - 10; **Dune** - 4; **Lord Foul's Bane** - 3; **Left Hand of Darkness** - 2; **Orbitsville** and **The Dispossessed** - 1 each. Please send your donations to:  
Matt Sillars, c/o 8 Beaverbank Place, Edinburgh.

## BSFA AWARD RULES OK?

At the BSFA's AGM on Friday 20 April 1984, Peter Cohen questioned the eligibility criteria for the Awards, pointing out that the "first published or presented in the UK during the year in question" rule tended, in the novel category, to favour hardbacks over paperbacks, which perhaps restricted the number of nomination and final ballot received on the grounds that hardbacks are nowadays too expensive for most people. This is undeniably true, but - apart from the fact that they can always be borrowed from libraries (which in these days of PLR, are now safe to patronise again - and, in this era of Tory cuts in public services (or is that too political?), should be patronised anyway) - there has to be some common criterion applicable to each category, if only to preserve the Award's coherence. As I pointed out at the time, it would be rather nonsensical to have one rule for the novel category and a different one for the other three; and it would be even more nonsensical to remove the eligibility rule altogether since, if people were allowed to vote simply for their all-time personal bests, we might end up with (say) **The Foundation Trilogy** winning year after year. No, every award has its individual rules; and the advantage of the "first published or presented in the UK during the year in question" rule is that it does at least preserve, even enhance, the Award's British provenance.

By the time you read this, 1984 will be half over. It is not too early to begin looking

out what has already been published and presented, and considering whether you might wish to nominate any of the items in question for the 1985 Awards!

(Joseph Nicholas)

\*\*\* Using the typist's inalienable right to add her comments first - I'd like to disagree with Joseph's conclusions on the eligibility criteria for awards and ask him a few questions:

Firstly, how many of the newly published hardbacks appear in local libraries in time to have reservations made before nomination or voting closes? I usually find everything I want has a very long waiting list. Get them from the library isn't a sufficient answer in my view.

Secondly, I agree that there ought to be some consistency between the rules for the various categories, but why can't we have two sub-categories for the Best Novel - Hardback and Paperback? The eligibility rules could remain identical which would prevent reprints of old stories slipping in, but a novel would have two bites at the cherry - once when it appeared in hardback, and again when it reached its widest audience by appearing in paperback for the first time. I don't think it would detract any from the honour of the award, and would underline the quality of the novel if it was voted best not only by the 'elite' (not in any political sense, but just in the small group sense) who manage to acquire copies of hardbacks soon after publication, but also by the majority of the readership who, like me, usually wait until the paperback comes out.

How about the rest of the membership? Not many of you were at the AGM and haven't had the chance to put in your tuppenceworth. What do you think?

