

MATRIX

56

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BSFA

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!

MATRIX NEWS.

Oh my God! In the space of the few weeks I've been on Matrix, I feel as if I've aged ten years. No, make that twenty years! It all started when Alan Dorey sent me the first batch of material for this issue. "Where's the fanzine reviews and the competition?" I enquired over the 'phone. "I'll bring them down on Saturday", came the reply.

They never did appear.

"What artwork do you have?" John Harvey asked. "None." I replied, "but don't worry, I think I can put my hands on some." As I attempted to bash my head square against the walls at home, I wondered to myself "How could you have been so naive?"

Fortunately, John bailed me out, but there is still a distinct lack of pretty pictures in this issue.

Then, three days before the mailing, session, came the cruncher. As I ran down the stairs to answer the 'phone, I was cursing the intruder to be for dragging me away from my coffee and cigarette. "Dave, it's John. My plate-maker started smoking last night and Matrix is being printed professionally." Oh wow!

I apologise for the poor quality of Matrix this time around, but things have been rather fraught.

What was that someone said?

"Disasterous." Very perceptive.

Still, let's look to the future. Beginning this issue are two new, regular columns- 'The Name of the Game' and 'Comics Review'- designed specifically to expand the frontiers of Matrix. Volunteers are required to contribute to them, and I will be attempting to get a regular supply of review material for them. Hopefully, in the April edition, the news service will be greatly expanded and we may even get a few promo photographs to illustrate the film and TV reviews sections. An SF computer games column begins next issue, so people willing to review

P.T.O.

A Transatlantic Fan Fund.....Hurrah!!

With this mailing you will find a TAFF voting form. Now is the chance to do your bit to support Anglo-American fan relations by helping to bring an American fan(s) across to the British Eastercon in 1985 - Yorcon III (see p.11). TAFF is the oldest fan fund in existence and in order to keep alive and vigorous the support of as many UK fans as possible is required.

So, look in your mailing envelope, find the voting form, read the candidates' platform and VOTE for your favourite NOW.

SUPPORT TAFF

THE SHAW FUND

Yet another Fund eager for your money, but this time you get something a little more tangible in return for your hard-earned pennies. The Shaw Fund has been set up to send Bob Shaw (the real one) to Australia for the 1985 Worldcon - Aussiecon. To raise funds for this, a booklet has been produced of Bob's Serious Scientific Talks given at the Eastercons in 1982, 1983 and 1984. All money received for this publication will go to the Shaw Fund, so order your copy now:

Signed copy - £1.50 minimum
Unsigned " - £1.00 minimum

Send your money (cheques made payable to E Harvey) to:

Eve Harvey
43 Harrow Road
CARSHALTON
Surrey SM5 3QH

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M A T R I X N E W S .

(continued from cover)

games (and I'm sure they'll be plenty of you) should also get in touch. Of course, all of this is not without its drawbacks. Contributors are going to have to be a lot more demanding of the media they review, and look much deeper into its merits. They are also going to have to be a bit quicker turning the material around, I certainly cannot afford to have to put an issue of Matrix together in less than a fortnight whilst also chasing for advertisers, media material, review material, and handling the projected much larger news section, and also doing a fairly high standard paste-up job for the professional appearance I'll be aiming for.

The news section is the thing I really want to take off. I want to make Matrix a competitor to Locus and Chronicle, but without the £2 price tag, and still retain the fairly fan-ish feel. Maybe it'll prove impossible, but if I don't try, we'll never know.

The last request I have is for a reasonable cartoonist who can produce two pages, maybe three, of comic strip work every two months. Even if it's only pencil work it would at least be a start, as I could find the time to indian ink and lettracote it. If anyone feels up to it I'll send them an idea of the sort of thing I want.

I've got quite a few more ideas for Matrix, but I think that'll do for now. It's starting to make me feel

C O N T E N T S .

Thoughts of the Chairman Now.....	3
Media News.....	6
Name of the Game.....	8
Comics Survey.....	10
Conventions.....	11
Clubs Update.....	12
Reviews...Conan the Destroyer	
The Philadelphia Experiment	
Return to Waterloo	
The Final Programme	
Three Radio Plays.....	13
Letters...Matthew Shackle	19
Andy Brewer	
Charles Stross	
Dominic Franklin	
Kilary Robinson	
Terry Broome	
Roy Grey	
Martin Smith	
Sandy Brown	
Bernard Smith.....	19

THANK YOU ALL.

a bit tired already and I haven't even started in earnest. So, without further ado, I'll hand you over to my first, rather skimpy issue of Matrix.

Dave



THOUGHTS OF THE CHAIRMAN NOW

**Alan
Dorey**

I sometimes get the feeling from letters I receive that some BSFA members expect me (as chairman) to be an overweight, brandy-drinking, cigar-smoking, high-powered business tycoon. The letters always start "Dear Mr. Dorey" and end "Yours sincerely" and generally make me feel as if I was pushing sixty. Not that I'm particularly bothered, you understand, but it does set the mind thinking...

In an ideal world, I'd have a BSFA office, work a strict nine-to-five day and have the services of an assistant, an unlimited telephone and postage budget and access, via hot-lines, to all the corridors of Science Fictional power within the UK. Oh, and yes, there would be the err..er.. slight question of ..er...that company Porsche and the five-figure salary and non-contributory pension scheme...

In the real world, I do have a desk, but admittedly, since our spare room is full of books and fanzines and other skiffy paraphernalia, I type in the kitchen (which, admittedly, is on the large side). Okay, yes, so I've got two typewriters, but that's my only concession to the office environment. Well, alright, the phone is right next to me on the wall. And yes, it is easy to have a coffee break whenever I want one- and I can't hear the door-bell too easily, so I don't get distracted, so I guess my role isn't too far removed from the ideal.

However, there are times when I do really begin to feel that the BSFA is more than just sitting at a desk and writing dozens of letters each month- and these occasions arise when something needs to be done. Like collecting Vector from the printer, going to a mailing session, or- as I am tomorrow travelling to London to have a BSFA summit meeting with new editor Dave Hodson and printing supremo John Harvey. And this what I want to talk about this month- and, at the same time, start telling you about the Very Important Things that are happening within the BSFA over the next few months.

It has been a hectic last few months for me. I've been negotiating with the appeals organiser of MIND regarding a BSFA advert in the Programme Book for the Royal Charity Film Premiere of DUNE on December 13th. This has involved advising them about possible areas of financial support and led to us distributing an exclusive BSFA ticket application with the last mailing. In conjunction with MIND and the Birmingham SF Group, I also organised a raffle at this year's Novacon, with the first prize being a pair of £50 tickets for the film event. This raised over £100 for MIND, and it just shows the generosity of a bunch of fans at a convention. I'd like to thank everyone most sincerely for their generous contributions. In return, an advert that would have cost the BSFA a substantial amount of money in a very prestigious publication, is now being included free of charge- so it will not only help publicise the BSFA as an SF organisation at an important SF event, but it will also generate new memberships.

What else have I been up to? Well, mundane things like making sure bills get paid- things like Vectors printing, postage, mailing expenses, signing the audited accounts and getting them submitted to Companies House. Drawing up a financial forecast for 1985. Sending out a news update Chairman's Newsletter to the committee (a useful four page 'letter' that I send out once a month to keep the wheels of power rolling ever onward). Collating some of the contents for Dave Hodson's first issue of Matrix. Sorting out a new editor for Paperback Inferno (probably appoint-

ed by the time you read this); confirming the new BSFA Clubs Liason Officer and still, desperately attempting to interest someone in the editorship of the BSFA Flagship, Vector.

Plans are also coming together for the February 1985 Re-launch of the BSFA's magazines. The printing quality will be better; the content more carefully planned and designed; the roles of the individual magazines more carefully delineated. This has taken a lot of time up, but the results will be worthwhile. It's going to cost more money, but this will be offset by the more buoyant income derived from advertising and the fact that we are at last seeing a larger percentage of BSFA members renewing their memberships each year. This means that the total membership throughout 1985 should start increasing slowly, providing us with the necessary cash-flow to enable us to maintain and improve the quality of the products we have to offer. Both Vector and Matrix have seen a major re-vamping recently, and the next to be tarted up will be Focus, with the February issue. Sue Thomason, one of the co-editors, came to stay with us recently, and it is pleasing to report that the quantity and quality of fiction submissions is slowly on the increase. Focus should be going to an 'Every other mailing schedule' next year (ie; three issues a year) and will benefit from an improved layout, design and printing quality.

One area that we have been devoting some time to recently is the move over to glossy covers, and with a bit of judicious juggling of funds, colour covers, certainly for Vector, if not also for Matrix and Focus. Paperback Inferno too will have its new editor wringing his changes as from June next year. We are trying very hard to give you all a better service.

So, what is going to be happening with the February mailing?

Well, apart from the revamped magazines becoming complete (with Focus), we'll be introducing one or two new services. Firstly, under the aegis of Mike Moir, our new In-

formation Service Officer, we are launching the first three leaflets in a projected series on Science Fiction authors. They have been designed to give you an essential bibliography on the writer, together with other relevant information. They'll be constantly updated (and, of course, YOU can help us in this task) and expanded. Initially designed as standard answer sheets to the most popular questions asked of the Information Service, they are sure to be very popular and useful.

What else? Well, we are very aware that we've got to start advertising the BSFA a lot more. We've got to start taking account of the growing interest in areas of peripheral interest to SF. Like computer games, programming and role-play. More BSFA adverts will be appearing in more magazines, at more conventions, at more bookshops- all in an effort to show the vast mass of folk interested in SF that here, at the BSFA, we have an organisation which they will want to be part of. All-in- All, I am confident that 1985 will be a year to remember- also a year which sees the start of my sixth year as chairman and a redoubled determination to make sure that we keep looking forward.

In This Mailing.

First off, sincere apologies for not getting the 1984 AGM minutes out with the last mailing. My fault entirely, but they ARE in this one. Secondly, and of more immediate importance, is the BSFA AWARD 1984 Nomination Form. This gives you your annual chance to vote for your favourite science fiction of 1984 in the following four categories:

- 1) BEST NOVEL
- 2) BEST SHORT STORY
- 3) BEST MEDIA PRESENTATION
- 4) BEST ARTIST

It is vital that as many of you as possible return the ballots so we can issue the Final Ballot with the February mailing. You will notice that Joseph Nicholas, who has

administered the award for a number of years now, is stepping down. I am sure that you'll all want to join me thanking him most sincerely for all his efforts in popularising the awards and them more relevant. The new administrator is going to be Mike Moir, the BSFA Information Service Officer, and his first moves can be detected on the reverse of the ballot form. In order that you may know, one or the other, which books are eligible for nomination, Mike has produced a lengthy list of published works, plus a note of magazines and anthologies you may care to recall for short stories. The lists aren't exhaustive, but should be a very helpful guide to you when you sit back and ponder your selections. And, to offer that little bit of an inducement, that little extra bribe to encourage you to get your ballots sent back quickly, I'm offering a years free membership to the BSFA for the first two ballots drawn out of a hat on the day after the January deadline. Go to it!

Also in this mailing, and VERY IMPORTANT TOO, is the official TAFF ballot for 1985. For those of you who think TAFF is nothing more than a village in Wales, I should point out that it is the TRANS-ATLANTIC FAN FUND, a long-standing organisation which raises money to take a fan from the USA to a British Eastercon one year, and a British fan to the USA for a suitable con in the following year. It started in 1953, and although transatlantic travel is more accessible these days (and cheaper), it still remains an important constituent part of international fannish endeavour. It gives us Brits and them Yanks the chance to meet the people they read, or read about in fanzines, and see how the other half of fandom lives. As many of you will know this past year saw ROB HANSEN win (against D.WEST) and take a trip to the Worldcon. As the winner, Rob takes over the administration, and it is now his task to get as many ballots issued throughout Europe as possible in order that lots of you can vote for your choice as the next TAFF candidate from the USA to next years British Eastercon, YORCON 111 in Leeds. Nominations

close on December 31st, and in this mailing, you'll find a ballot for completion and return as quick as possible to Rob Hansen. It is vital that you do this so that as many British and European people as possible have a good say in who they wish to see next Eastercon otherwise, it'll all be decided on just the vote within the USA. The choice of candidates this time round is between:

1) RICH COAD

2) PATRICK & TERESA
NEILSON HAYDEN

Now far be it from me to suggest that you should vote one way or the other, but, I always say the more the merrier. Send ye form back now, together with at least 50p (hopefully more!) in order that you can make your vote count (and make Rob Hansen a very happy chap).

Now then, that almost wraps it up. I've just a few hours before my train departs for London and that all-important Matrix summit. No doubt we'll also thrash out the our ideas for the future shape of BSFA magazines and mailings, and have the odd drink or two, just to keep body and soul together.

All that remains for me to say now is that, although I write this in November and Xmas lights have been up in Manchester since the end of October, the festive season is almost upon us and I wish each and every one of you a very merry Christmas. The BSFA party in London was a great success, so now I wish to return all my thanks to everyone who, in whatever capacity, has helped the BSFA in any way throughout this past year. Thank you, one and all, I'll see you all in 1985, the year of Anthony Burgess.

Very Best Wishes,



Media news

* Warner Bro's. are seriously considering a sequel to "Greystoke, the legend of Tarzan."

* The Batman movie originally intended as a follow on to Superman 1/11/111 & Supergirl is not now going to be made because projected director Joe Dante will be too busy with Gremlins 11.

* "V" is back for thirteen one hour long episodes and has the Earth re-invaded by them pesky varmants (?) the lizardmen. Two paperback novelisations and a US D.C. Comic will tie-in.

* Dan Aykroyd is already working on "Ghostbusters 2"

MEMBERS NOTICEBOARD

****The MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD is a free advertising service for all BSFA members who wish to exchange items or information, make contacts, publicize fannish ventures, etc.

Mark Mendham of 126, Dunes Road, Greatstone, New Romney, Kent, TN28 8SP, is a Mike Moorcock fan and, unfortunately, finds his collection a volumn short. So, anybody with a copy of "The Swords of Heaven, The Flowers of Hell", a collaboration with American artist Howard Chaykin and published by Star Paperbacks in 1979, that they don't want should get in touch.

ORBITER.

There are four people waiting to become an autonomous group of enthusiastic writers and they require one more to 'come along for the ride'.

An SAE to Dorothy Davies, 3, Cadels Row, Faringdon, Oxon, SN7 7AX for details.

Dorothy adds "Don't forget the SAE. I'm broke." You have been warned.

STUFF THE BSFA AWARDS: Vote-rigger seeks signed forms to further his secret plans. Send forms and ideas to the Battlefield Earth/Hotel du Lac ticket, C/o Peter Cohen, 2, Belgravia Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants.



* Fans of the British comic Warrior will soon be able to buy colour US versions of the strips. Eclipse took over the project after the collapse of the Pacific comics line, who were the originally intend US publishers.

The first title will be 'Axle Pressbutton', with 'Marvelman' following shortly. The British publishers are also looking at plans for a 'V for Vendette' film.



* Rumour has it that all of H.P. Lovecraft's work is to be re-issued early in 1985 to tie in with a film version of his "The Colour out of Space". No news yet as to script writer or director.

* Plans are afoot to turn L. Ron Hubbards' Battle-field Earth into not one but two films.

* Fighting Fantasy continues on its' course of world domination. There are now no fewer than six versions of the theme from four different publishers, as well as two magazines and five computer games.

* Larry Nivens Ringworld books are the basis of a new 'Dungeons & Dragons' style role-playing game. It's published in the USA by Chaosium and available in this country via Games Workshop for a whopping £24=95.

* Christmas cuddly toy sales are in for a boost, what with Gremlins and "The Ewok Adventure", based upon those cute little flea-bags from the "Return of the Jedi".

* A.E. Van Vogts' novel "Slan" is to be made into a film in 1985 by MGM/UA.

* CBS are to begin making an all new series of the 'Twilight Zone', to be screened in the States in late '85/early '86.

* The British edition of Omni seems unlikely to reach a third issue, as sales are not exactly staggering- probably due to all that reprint material and competing against the US editions that are still being imported into this country.

* George Lucas has given in and is now letting CBS release 'The Empire Strikes Back' on video cassette. 'Return of the Jedi' will follow sometime next year.

* Phillip K. Dicks 'I Can Remember you Wholesale' is being filmed in the USA at the moment by David Cronenberg, the man responsible for the exploding head in 'Scanners'. It's being co-scripted by Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett, who have done 'Alien' and 'Dark Star'.

* Games Workshop are to release a new SF role-playing game called 'Rouge Trader'. They are also releasing, through their subsidiary company Citadel Miniatures, a range of 1/300th scale spacecraft.

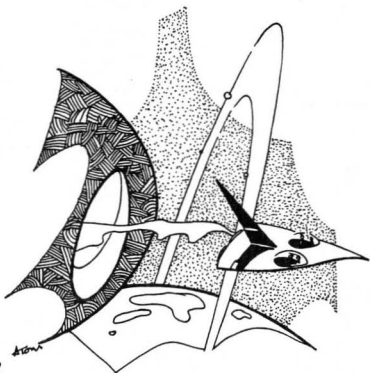
* Argus Press Software have just acquired the games rights to the film 'Alien', and it should be in the shops now for the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64. They also acquired similar rights to 'Alien 2', does this mean it's to be made at last?

* J.G. Ballards 'Empire of the Sun' has captured yet another award- The Guardian Fiction Prize for 1985.

* We could all end up paying more for books. The Government intends putting VAT on book sales, which, up to now, have been zero-rated.

* The 1984 Hugo Awards were presented at the 42nd Worldcon in California. The results are Best Novel of 83 : Startide Rising by David Brin; Best Novella : Cascade Point by Timothy Zahn; Best Novelette : Blood Music by Greg Bear; Best Short Story : Speech Sounds by Octavia Butler; Best Dramatic Presentation : Return of the Jedi; Best Professional Artist : Michael Whelan. Robert Bloch was given an honorary award to acknowledge 50 years of SF & Fantasy writing.

* Mad Max lll is now in production in Australia, and will co-star Mel Gibson and Tina Turner.



The Name of the Game

By Dave Hodson.

It occurs to me that the best place to start a new column is at the beginning, so this issue I'll have a look at some of the SF role-playing and wargaming systems that are currently being published. At the end of the piece, I'll include a short glossary of terms used, for people that have never indulged before, at the end of the article.

TRAVELLER - (Games Designers Workshop). Traveller is still, just about, the best selling SF role-playing game, although it shows its age hideously these days. SF RPGs are, by nature, rather complex, and Traveller, although the easiest of them all, is no exception. It is let down by its poorly thought out combat systems- both personal and ship- to- ship- although there are at least three alternate systems published by GDW- **STRIKER**, **MAYDAY**, and **HIGH GUARD**. There is a huge amount of supplementary material manufactured by a large range of companies which, up until recently has suffered from very dull packaging. Although GDW have gone a long way to putting this right recently, rumours persist that Games Workshop, the main British importers or RPGs intend to drop the system due to lack of sales.

GAMMA WORLD - (TSR). Gamma World is set on Earth after the nuclear holocaust and, with a good games master, is one of the most exciting of all RPGs to play. Although overly American, it has a lot in common with its sister set of rules, **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**. The advantage of being easily adaptable to any setting is probably the greatest of these similarities. The system has suffered from a lack of back-up material, although TSR are now showing signs of putting this right. GW is now in a second, and heavily revised edition, and is based on a much older set of TSR rules called **METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA**.

STAR FRONTIERS - (TSR). Similar to Traveller, but a much less archaic system, less prone to degenerating into an endless series of hyperspace hops than any other, essentially, ship based game. Uses a percentile

combat system, which is a lot more accurate than the 6 and 8 sided dice employed by Traveller, GW and D&D. Again, the system suffered from a lack of back-up material until recently, TSR have obviously sussed out that Traveller is on the wane and have 'beefed-up' their SF RPGs in order to compete for the hole that will appear in the market.

SPACE OPERA - (Fantasy Games Unlimited). I've never played SO, but from sources that have, I've been told that it's for the Luke Skywalker style of gamer. Not surprisingly, in most other systems, if you are shot with a laser, you end up as a smoking wreck on the metal floor, due to the sheer power of the weaponry. Life for the characters of SO is far less hazardous, and a lot more light-hearted.

LASERBURN - (Tabletop Games). My personal favourite and the first game in this list to be British in origin. More of a skirmish wargame than an RPG, but at least the option is there to play it either way. Again it is a system that suffers from a lack of supporting bump, although there is a huge range of 15mm scale white metal miniatures, available from Tabletop, to tie-in. Also the cheapest of the systems listed, the basic rulebook is only £1=95, as compared to an average of about £10 for the others.

STAR TREK, THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME - (Games Workshop, under license from FASA). Only really useful to RPGing fans of Star Trek, although it does have an excellent ship- to- ship combat system. Also the biggest rip off physically, £9=50 for three very skimpy booklets in a huge box, padded out with vast expanses of photographs from ST episodes.

STARFLEET BATTLES - (Task Force Games). Primarily a boardgame with seemingly hundreds of add-ons to cover various options and strategy levels. Totally over the top when it comes to the complexity of play, and flagging now that Star Trek, the RPG, has taken away the market it was originally aimed at.

STARFORCE 300, COMBAT 3000, & STAR HOUND - (Tabletop Games). All inter-related and compatible, these rules are for, in the above order, armoured combat, infantry combat, and fighter combat. They all use the hideously small 1/300th scale miniatures preferred by conventional wargamers, although this does mean you can stage a quite large battle on an area no larger than the average coffee-table. Again they are in keeping with Tabletop Games philosophy of charging a lot less money for approximately the same amount of detail of the US games.

CALL OF CTHULHU - (Games Workshop, under license from Chaosium). Based on the works of H.P. Lovecraft, this is 'the Gamers Game'. No shooting everything in sight in this game, unless you want to end up nicked. If played correctly, C of C, can be an extreme test of mental agility. It requires pains-taking investigative work, and the common sense to realise when you have bitten off more than you can chew. The mobsters in this are real tough bunnies. Death or Madness are inevitable in this game, where a brush with even the weakest of Lovecrafts cosmic horrors erodes sanity (a characteristic peculiar to this game), and this helps the players to accept that death is an inevitable part of role-playing in general, as well as opening up endless, interesting possibilities at some kind of personal development.

STORMBRINGER - (Chaosium). This was Chaosiums first attempt at adapting literary SF and Fantasy into games, and, although a good game, is really nothing more than RUNEQUEST (Chaosiums flagship game) re-titled and given a more potent magic system. The problem is that the reworked magic system is too potent, and going into a magical duel or war is akin to suicide. It requires far too much work from the games master to make it enjoyable to run, and too much caution from players to really let go.

INDIANA JONES - (TSR). Probably the closest we will ever get to original D&D these days- fast, furious, fun and corny. I really don't know why they waited so long to release this sort of game when there are plenty of this sort of character to base it upon- Doc Savage, Biggles, David Innes, Secret Agent G8, the list is endless. Very light hearted and good fun.

SUPERHERO GAMES. There are now quite a few of these on the market and more coming all the time. MARVEL SUPERHEROES - TSR, GOLDEN HEROES - Games Workshop, CHAMPIONS - Hero Games, JUSTICE INC. - Hero Games, and at least two more that are designed to be compatible with the last two listed. All pretty much of a muchness.

CAR WARS - Steve Jackson Games and BATTLECARS - Games Workshop. These are both designed to appeal to fans of films like Deathrace 2000. Plenty of machine gunning, running over pedestrians, dropping mines and spikes, and gratuitous violence. BATTLEBIKES is an add-on for BATTLECARS for fans of Mad Max.

All in all a pretty mixed bunch, and that's not to mention the boardgame of Dr. Who, which is more of a joke than a game, and the upcoming ROGUE TRADER, JUDGE DREDD RPG, and Dr. WHO RPG, all of which are supposed to be ready early in 1985.

GLOSSARY.

d - dice, as in d6, a six sided dice.

Percentile - a system whereby 20 sided dice numbered 0 - 9 twice, or 2 10 sided dice numbered 0 - 9 are rolled to reach a number between 1 and 100.

Role-playing - taking the role of an imaginary character in an improvised game in order to achieve a set task.

Skirmish - a battle situation set up on a table no more than 4 feet wide, using lead miniatures to represent forces usually no larger than platoon size.

Wargame - a full scale representation of a battle on a tabletop no larger than the above, after all you've got to be able to reach across it to move the pieces, usually lasting many hours and using a pre-selected set of rules to decide the out-come of combat.

In February, I'll get under way in earnest and write about the new RINGWORLD RPG, based on the novels and stories of Larry Niven, and PSI WORLD, all about the plight of mutants in the future.

COMICS REVIEW...

A wind of change appears to be blowing through 2000AD, although Judge Dredd still holds the colour centre spread and is still the big attraction for the kiddies, serious comics fans feel that the influence of Warrior, Dez Skinn's brain-child, is starting to have quite an influence on the IPC comics content.

Most notable has been the change of artist on Nemesis the Warlock. Bryan Talbot, creator of Luther Arkwright and Chester P. Hackenbush, has combined with scripter Pat Mills to produce one of the strongest SF comic storylines I have ever seen, and, at the same time, has reintroduced Ro-jaws and Hammerstein, two of the robot members of the ABC Warriors. The story centres around the planet Goth, populated by chameleon type creatures, who, for thousands of years, listened in on the first radio signals of Earth and then copied human society as they saw it. The result is an alternate Earth style story in the best traditions of Mike Moorcocks 'Oswald Bastable' novels, and features characters with names like 'General Cornwallis of the 3rd Space Hussars' and 'Manchu, the Chinese Governor'. Nemesis is definitely recommended reading at the moment, it has always been one of 2000AD's better strips, but it now leaves all other British material behind, including the best of Warrior.

Speaking of Warrior, there has been a distinct drop in quality on the title recently. Marvelman has not appeared for the last couple of issues leaving a plotline just hanging in thin air, and V for Vendetta appears to be suffering as well. Is this a consequence of Alan Moores heavy duties on the DC title 'Swamp Thing'? Admittedly that book has been made interesting for the first time in years, but I think I'd rather see the Quality Communications' stuff back on the top of the pile.

On the media news pages are cover reproductions for the first two issues of the US Pressbutton comic, the original publishers were due to be Pacific Comics, publishers of the adaptation of Mike Moorcocks 'Elric of Melniboné' by Roy Thomas, Craig Russell and Michael Gilbert, but the collapse of their comics line due to the heavy competition in the States

the heavy competition in the States between Marvel, DC, and the major independent publishers has allowed Eclipse Comics to step in and take over the title. Eclipse have also acquired the rights to all the other projected Pacific titles, and are currently negotiating with the creative teams of books like Sunrunners and the second Elric series. What has not been said is whether Pacifics distribution side has also folded. I used to receive their catalogue every month, but have heard nothing since September. If the company has gone, it will be quite a comedown, as only a few months ago they appeared in the list of the 100 fastest growing companies in the US, and it will also make life hard for specialist shops on both sides of the Atlantic. Marvel and DC continue to flood the comics market with sub-standard and reprint mini-series in what is unmistakably an attempt to freeze the smaller publishers out of the action. World Color Press, the biggest comics printers in the world, are still being bogged under with work from the big companies, and are rumoured to be charging well over the odds for the smaller publishers material to be run off. Most comic shops have also had to reduce the size of orders to the likes of Eclipse and First Comics due to having so much cash tied up in DC and Marvel stock, and this has undoubtedly aided Pacifics fall, as they were given larger rates of discount to handle the work of smaller publishers. All of the reprint material hitting the market has also killed off some of the trade in back issues. All in all, it is not a good time to have large quantities of cash tied up in comics if you happen to be a US dealer. Will this effect the UK market? Undoubtedly. And with the weak pound against the dollar, it is becoming a very expensive hobby to collect import comics.



Con news

YORCON 111.

5-8 April 1985. Dragonara and Queens Hotels, Leeds. Guest of Honour: Gregory Benford. Fan Guest of Honour: Linda Pickersgill.

Room rate: Twin/Doubles: £15=50 per person per night. Singles: £18=00 per person per night. All prices inclusive of VAT and full breakfast. Attending membership to 31st Dec '84 is £8=00. From Jan 1st '85 is £10=00. Attending membership for the unemployed is £6=00.

Details from Mike Ford, 45, Harold Mount, Leeds, LS6 1PW.

USA : Attending \$16=00 to 31/12/84. \$20=00 from 1/1/85. Contact: Mary Burns, 23, Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550, USA

CAMCON '85.

13-15 September '85. New College Hall, Cambridge.

Room rate: Provisionally £14=50 per night, including VAT and breakfast. Supporting membership is £5=00 and attending is £9=00 with £1=00 reduction for pre-supporting members. All registrations, offers of help, money, and booze should be sent to Neil Taylor, c/o Perspective Design Ltd, 9, Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3QY.

MEXICON II

February 1986. Still somewhere in the south of England or maybe Birmingham?

Membership up to 31/12/84: £6=00.

Contact : Pam Wells, 24a, Beech Rd, London, N11.

Please make cheques payable to MEXICON. PRI out now.

More con news p.25



APRIL 5th - 8th 1985

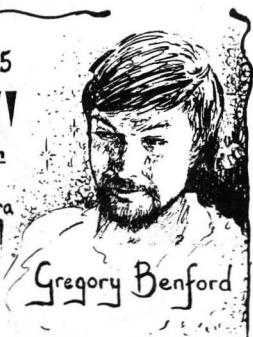
ORCON III

The 36th British Easter SF Convention

- at the Dragonara
and Queens Hotel
LEEDS



Linda Pickersgill



Gregory Benford

£8 attendance - until 31 Dec

£10 attendance - from 1 Jan

£4 supporting - membership

CONTACT:

Mike Ford
45 Harold Mount
LEEDS LS6 1PW

CLUBS UPDATE

Some of information regarding the Chester SF Group in Matrix 55 was out of date. Interested parties should now contact Peter Crump at 9, Llys Wylfa, Mynyddisa, Mold, Clwyd, CH7 6XA.

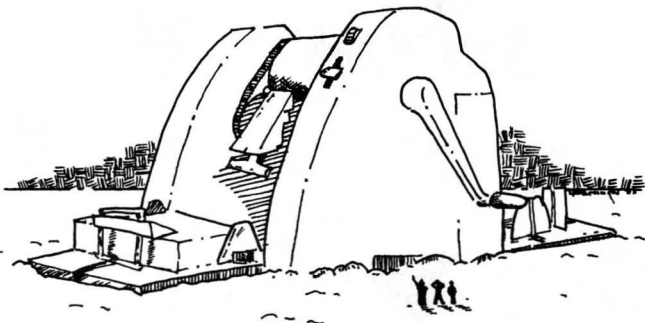
Unfortunately the Norwich SF Group mentioned in Matrix 54 bite the dust before it got a chance to get off the ground. Maybe if lots of you living in the Norwich area get in touch with G. Warminger at 72, Linacre Avenue, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 8PG, and offer a helping hand it'll live yet.

NORTH LONDON. Come and meet the new Matrix editor at the Random Roll of Chaos Games Group at Haringey Club, Tottenham Lane, Hornsey (opposite Hornsey BR station). Starts 12 noon each and every Saturday.

PORTSMOUTH. The South Hants Science Fiction Group meets on the second and fourth Fridays of each month at Scotts Bar, 37, Eldon St. The first monthly meeting is dedicated to drinking and plotting the revolution; the second is spent drinking and plotting the destruction of the fiends who arrange talks on Anne McCaffrey or comics quizzes for these nights. Interests include real ale, D&D (smash a few orcs for me lads - Dave H.), comics, media, and complaining about the encroachment of fringe fandom. Write to Phil Plumbly, 53, Havant Road, North End.

THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY SF SOCIETY. The CUSFS meets every Thursday evening during term time in the Bird in Hand, Newmarket Road (near the East Road Roundabout), at about 8.30pm. There are talks by fairly well-known authors three times a year, and members gain access to a library of over 2000 books and 3000 magazines.

This seemed topical considering the fate of John Harveys platemaker.



"FOR HOURS THE WORKS OF THE
ANCIENTS HELD US IN AWE..."

MEDIA REVIEW



Film.

CONAN THE DESTROYER.

Reviewed by Mark Greener.

Director : Richard Fleischer.

Conan is one of the few literary creations to transcend the humble origins of the pulps to become a multi-million pound industry. Magazines, comics, a never to end series of novels, and now films, all sell because of the attraction of the Cimmerian musclem.

It seems inevitable that Conan would be brought to life on the big screen, and it was Dino De Laurentis who eventually did it. Warning bells rang after remembering 'The Swarm' and the remake of 'King Kong', but I was prepared to let bygones be bygones and judge 'Conan the Barbarian' on its own merits. The first movie, directed by John Milius, failed to live up to Conans literary past. The film took itself too seriously, as exemplified by the quotes from Nietzschean philosophy ("That which does not kill us, makes us stronger"). When painted with the Milius brush Conan lost any real depth and became just a stupid barbarian- indestructable and impervious. The first movie just about succeeded as a movie in its own right, but failed when taken in the context of the Conan phenomena. With 'Conan the Destroyer', Fleisher has produced a film to stand above the 'Krulls' and

'Sword and the Sorcerer's of the sub-genre and join a short list of films where the sequel is better than the original.

As with most 'blood and thunder' movies, the plot is simple to the extreme. Conan (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is praying at a shrine to his love, Valeria, who was killed at the end of the last film, when he is attacked by the horseman of Queen Taramis (Sarah Douglas). After passing a trial of combat, Conan is promised by the Queen that, if he'll help her niece, the Princess Jehnna (Olivia D'Abo), she'll restore to life magically. The quest involves obtaining a magic key from the wizard Toth-Amon (Pat Roach) which will open the mouth of a dragon containing a sacred horn. The horn, when returned to the head of the sleeping God Dagoth, will bestow great riches on Conan and great power to Taramis.

Conan agrees and sets out with his companion Malak (Tracey Walter), The Captain of the Queens Guard Bombaata (Wilt Chamberlin), and Jehnna. They rescue Conans magician friend Akiro (Malo) from cannibals, and team up with a warrior woman called Zula (Grace Jones) who was left behind by her people. Conan does not realise that Bombaata has been ordered to kill him once the horn has been obtained, or that Jehnna is to be sacrificed on her return to the Queen.

This film is much better than the first due to the different style of direction employed by Fleisher from Milius. Milius' serious approach made it difficult to suspend belief, but Fleishers' tongue firmly in cheek attitude allows just the right balance to be struck between the comedy and the violence. The script complements the direction in this respect; the plot is a paradigm to hang the action on and is fast enough to cover any inadequacies.

Visually the film is stunning. The design is far enough removed from the 20th century for you to feel you're in Conans age, yet it retains a reality often missing from fantasy films.

The most surprising aspect about the film is the acting. Schwarzenegger seems much more comfortable in the role this time and Sarah Douglas was suitably evil. D'Abo was able to strike exactly the right cord between innocence and womanhood whilst

Tracey Walter is excellent in the role of Malal, making a rather cliched role his own. But Grace Jones as Zula steals the show. she is marvellous. It's easy to see how the stories of how she put several stuntmen in hospital got started.

I have but two criticisms. Firstly, the monsters in the films set pieces were comic, looking as if they'd stepped out of an episode of Star Trek. Surely, with the amount of money this film must have cost, they could have designed something more convincing. My second quibble is the characterisation of Conan. This man will oneday become (as he constantly reminds us throughout the films 100 minutes) king, yet he still relies on cunning and brute force rather than wisdom and intellect to see him out of hairy situations. He is an auton designed to kill rather than talk. If he is to become king, he'd better set out on an 'OZ'-ian quest to find a brain.

On the whole though, Conan is a marvellous film which I recommend you to go and see.

THE PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT.

Reviewed by Colin Bird.

Director : Stewart Raffill.

In October 1943, the US navy carried out an experiment on the destroyer, the USS Eldridge, in an attempt to render it invisible to radar. It failed terribly. The ship was displaced to another dimension and, when it returned, many crew members were found to be dead or injured. That's the premise Charles Berlitz begins with in his pseudo-factual book. As usual the military kept a shroud of secrecy over the whole affair, thus encouraging many mystic theories which have been published since the accident.

The film version takes off at an interesting tangent. The scientist behind the experiment is still alive today and decides to repeat the procedure, this time using a small, deserted, military base as the guinea pig. Again, the experiment not only makes the base invisible to radar, but also, the whole area disappears into a hole in the space-time continuum. A link is formed between 1984 and 1943.

Through this link, two of the Eldridges' crew are dropped into the twentieth century. The two men are handled by the military, who no more understand the situation than their unintentional visitors. (played by Michael Pare and Bobby De Cius). It also seems that the hole not only expels visitors, but sucks in huge amounts of air from the present day, causing havoc with heather conditions. Why the hole only pulls in matter at one end is never explained.

The paradoxes of time travel are over simplified and most of the 'surprises' are very predictable. the two anachronistic sailors gain quite a few unexpected laughs from their attempts to come to terms with the modern world. The best is when Michael Pare switches bemusedly between channels on a TV and finds Ronald Reagan giving a presidential speech. "Is this an old movie?" He asks, "I know this guy!" But, generally, the tone of the movie is too dark for the kind of fantasy adventure atmosphere it is trying to create.

Despite a reasonably warm performance from Nancy Allen, the obligatory romance seems trite, embarrassing at times. The heroes internal conflicts are glossed over rather too slickly to make him appear realistic. The film does have a few positive qualities though. The direction is expert (especially since Raffill is relatively inexperienced) and the visual effects, though unoriginal, are technically superb. There are a couple of exciting chase sequences, although excessive use of helicopter shots does detract from the tension.

The scientific side of the story is, of course, pure nonsense, and the film probably sits more comfortably under the fantasy banner than SF. In this kind of film, logic takes second place to excitement and spectacle, and that's fine by me. The only jarring loop-hole is that a scientist who was responsible for a terrible disaster in 1943 should be allowed to set up a similar experiment in 1984 and risk tragedy again.

The Philadelphia Experiment sets out to entertain, not teach about space-time continuums or the changing face of man across four decades, and on that level it succeeds reasonably well.

T.V.

RETURN TO WATERLOO.

Channel 4 - November 2nd, 1984.

Producer : Dennis Woolf.

Director : Ray Davies.

It is very rare too come across a television play or a film that deals with science-fictional themes in an innovative and thought-provoking way, so I was extremely surprised to tune into Channel 4's "Return to Waterloo", a musical that leans towards New-Wave and fantasy in much the same way as "The Wall" did. In fact, its format follows closely in the tradition of "The Wall" - the constant fantasising and slips into memory being sudden and undistinguishable from the reality.

The music was written by Ray Davies of the Kinks, who, with Louise Davies, performs the tracks, and, although it isn't as memorable as The Wall's score, or as smooth and slick as the score of another, recent SF musical, "Facelift", the numbers are introduced with great finesse and hold a rough, raw, realistic approach to modern-day concerns.

The musical, which was also created by Davies, follows the journey of a middle-aged commuter (played by Ken Colley) as he confronts reality through a mixture of sometimes bizarre fantasy and the memories that have shaped him.

We are left with an impression of an extremely depressed man, whose life is utterly boring and futile, that he must constantly overlaid it with fantasies of sex and violence, and memories... The real world has ceased to mean anything to him, so much so that he is unable to handle any situation in a realistic light. We learn that his marriage is crumbling and even emotional support and professional advice (in the guise of Agony Aunt Claire Raynor) is of no use because the situation has passed the point of retrievability.

However, as a warning of the many pitfalls marriage can fall into, it isn't entirely successful, due to the fact that the film is also a satire, and an extremely funny one. That leaves the question of why Claire Raynor agreed to appear in a cameo role: For the money? The publicity? Because she likes the Kinks?! Who knows?

We have the stereotypes of the vicious punks, the cruel sexual taunts from the punk girl to the hero (Colley), a civil-servant type; the snooty beauty, the shocked cronies and the other stuffed shirts. Saying this, though, two roles are briefly turned on their heads: The hero's pathetic sexual fantasies which lead him to be tricked by the girl and then wrongly accused of making indecent advances towards her are offset by his wild fantasies of violence in which he imagines himself killing everyone in a carriage. He has a sliding moral scale and a voyeuristic attraction to violence, as shown in his low opinion of the punks possible violent natures and the fantasising he does about them. The other role-reversal is during the latterly mentioned fantasy scene, when the punks start setting into their 'fellow' commuters and one picks on the 'poor-defenseless-old-lady'. The fantasy soon turns into a parody of horrors of the stalk and slash variety, when the old lady turns out to have colourless eyes and produces a carving knife which she immediately utilises.

The music is excellent, the flashback and fantasy sequences beautifully photographed and orchestrated, sometimes stunningly blending, as in the scene where Colley remembers himself as a boy in long shorts and confuses his fantasy with the memory, so that he hands his younger self his keys the keys to the future; to apparent or misleading success?).

The school system is satirised most poignantly and at the programmes end, the illusions he has created on the train are shattered (the punks are probably rock stars they climb into a limousine, the door opened by a stout, rich businessman with a cigar - the appearance that he is superior and they inferior is ruined by the now apparent fact they have been more successful with their lives than he has with his).

There is a brief moment when we believe he is going to snap out of his delusions, his own fantasy-world, and face reality and all of its hang-ups, but no, at the last minute he again finds himself slipping back into his past, his dreams.

I greatly enjoyed "Return to Waterloo". It generally succeeded

on both levels, of biting and often hilarious satire, and poignant, sober comment, without the one grating on the other. I found myself thinking very deeply about the matters this programme was concerned with, but, at the same time, could not stop laughing. The scriptwriter has enormous talent. And it really was filmed largely on an actual, moving British Rail train (gosh!), which added to the 'realism' and believability of the story.

If Channel 4 ever show this again, it is highly recommended.

Reviewed by Terry Broome.

THE FINAL PROGRAMME.

Made in 1974, and broadcast on 11th November, 1984, as part of the BBC 2 'Future Tense' series. Preduced by John Goldstone & Sandy Lieberman. Directed & written by Robert Fuest. Based on the novel by Michael Moorcock.

Cast Includes: Jon Finch - Jerry Cornelius; Jenny Runacre - Miss Brunner; Patrick Magee - Dr. Baxter; Derrick O'Connor - Frank Cornelius.

The title music started. 'What was this?' I asked, 'some kind of comedy?' No such luck. The title said 'The Final Programme', based on a novel by Michael Moorcock, Written, Directed, Designed by Robert Fuest. Indeed, that is exactly what it is - Robert Fuest's version of the book, with only a pass-resemblance to Moorcock's original creation.

From the very start of the film it's obvious that Fuest doesn't take his material at all seriously. The title music enforces this point, it puts you in the right mood for the film in that it does not encourage you to take it seriously. This is a somewhat different approach from that of the novel. Fuest does the same with the characters of the scientists, after their antics in the Cornelius house, it is impossible to treat them at all seriously. Fuest's biggest joke came at the end of the film, when he turns the beautiful, hermaphrodite messiah of the book into a hairy, innately grinning caveman.

The inability of Fuest to take his subject matter seriously goes all the way back to

'The Abominable Dr. Phibes' and 'Dr. Phibes Rises Again', which are no more than a series of black jokes, but reasonably entertaining none the less. The plots take second place to a series of 'lets see how many bizarre ways we can find to do people in' jokes. Considering this, I found it strange that Fuest decided to have Jerry's brother shot as opposed to boiled, as in the novel.

Not content with turning the film into a farce, Fuest indulged in making seemingly unnecessary plot changes. For instance, in the novel Jerry chases Frank to Lapland, where he kills him in order to obtain the microfilm containing the final programme. After this Miss Brunner builds DUEL in order to run the programme. In the film we find Jerry chasing Frank to Turkey and that DUEL has been in existence all along, in Turkey we also run into Dr. Baxter, an old associate of the now deceased Cornelius Snr. The book situates Baxter in England, where he is assassinated by Jerry. To be fair, some things were beyond the film's budget and therefore had to be changed, but these were totally unnecessary. At the start they were in Lapland; or a reasonable facsimile, so why didn't they shoot the scene there?

Jerry's character also suffers in the film. A lot of the subtlety is missing, as it is from the sub-plots which survive the transaction from book to film. It could be argued that the pacing of the film necessitate that detail be shed, but what happened to the 'English Assassin'? What we got here was some sort of eccentric scientist. Also missing is the far reaching sub plot of Entropy, this holds all of the Cornelius books together, but is hinted at nowhere in the film barring the disintegration of the city of London, and the only scene to vaguely hint at the colourful population - is the glorified pinball arcade - What happened to the three month long party or mods of people in garish clubs.

Regardless of the above, the film does have quite a few good points. The production design is excellent and invoke a wonderful sense of strangeness. It's interesting to note that the assistant art directors, Les Dilley and Roger Christian, went on to become art directors of Alien.

The cast did an excellent considering the script and direction under which they were working. Jon Finch looked the part and with a good script could have really brought the character to life, he almost succeeded in the last twenty minutes anyway. However, the real star of the show was Jenny Runacre. She instilled the character of Miss Brunner with a strange sensual quality that the novels character did not possess. Indeed, at one point in the novel, Jerry tells her she has no sex appeal at all.

Lastly, the photography and photographic effects are beautifully carried out. When I read the novel I wondered just how the effects would be created if filmed (this was before I knew of the film). The effects when Miss Brunner absorbs her lovers are subtle and understated, as they should be. Being more explicit would have destroyed them completely.

So, here I sit, listening to Mike Moorcocks Deep Fix, wondering what the whole point of making the film was? What did the film makers expect to achieve? Certainly not a literary adaption, nor an artistic or commercial adaption. They didn't seem to realise that, in the novel, the characters were more important than the plot. The plot was only there for people who need such a thing to carry on reading. All Fuest has done is to create a mess and considerably lessen the chances of seeing Jerry Cornelius properly adapted to the screen.

Reviewed by Steven Hubbard.

Radio

THREE RADIO PLAYS.

GIZMOLOGY by Derek Lister (Radio 4, 5th Nov. 1984) is the story of scientist turned politician Sir Tommy Wittons political struggle to launch a satellite designed to help third world countries. Witton finds himself up against a vicious Pole, Snarski, an advocate of a satellite weapons system: the two are in competition for the one remaining vacancy in the Ariane rocket programme. Meanwhile, Wittons marriage becomes increasingly strained; but under the influence of an old flame, he abandons politics to

resume science at Cambridge.

Playwrite Lister makes a basic error of judgement in this play: Witton, supposedly popular, is downright obnoxious, arrogant and self-centred, but- and here is the error- he has no counterbalancing traits; he is certainly not lovable. Consequently, when he finally does make a breakthrough, satisfies an internal itch, we don't give a damn. A protagonist need not be a paragon of virtue, but surely he must arouse some sympathy. The play pretends that the public are behind Witton and against Snarskis "Star Wars" weapons; but does the British Public really give a hoot about the space programme? Regardless of that, the play only an in-group and their opinions; at no time is the great popularist Sir Tommy Witton even shown consulting the public. His negative aspects are clearly displayed, but his one positive attribute, his popularism, his "hero of the people" aspect is only spoken of, never shown. The claims for the character, in other words, are not substantiated.

Lister also comes unstuck with his forced attempts at symbolism, which are as likely to stimulate embarrassed laughter as to imbue dramatic texture. For example, gay junior minister Fiske tells Witton of his male lover- whilst a jukebox in the background thumps out unsubtly "...nothing you could do could take me away from my guy..." However, what ultimately floors the play is its all-round stodginess, its radio 4 tea & cakes on the lawn approach. This story of one mans encroaching political impotence (the poor chap can't get it up- the satellite that is) never gets into orbit.

HELLO OUT THERE by Keith Hagenbach (R4, November 13th 1984) begins in orbit, and is an, at first, appealing tale of a series of communications involving a space shuttle crew. Firstly the astronauts jerry-rig a transmission to a nearby Soviet spacecraft, and secondly, they receive a communication from a pair of extraterrestrials.

The aliens debate between themselves (in electronicised BBC English, naturally) the merits of the human race. They display puzzlement that while nation arms against nation, five representatives of two of those nations are breaking all the rules to hold a conversation in

space. Ultimately, the astronauts cut right through the red tape and ignore direct commands in order to carry out the instructions of the aliens, and rendezvous in orbit.

While this offering is much less po-faced than Gizmology, it has an essentially simplistic outlook; the theme of "Why can't we live together?" The astronauts actions are familiar: they will do anything to demonstrate their determined faith in the aliens. For "alien read "God", and we have one of the most overused gimmicks/themes in SF. It is promarily for this reason (and that it refuses to ring changes on the tired theme) that the play fails to live up to its initial spark.

ALMOST TIME FOR SCHOOL by Gordon McKerrow (R4, 10th November 1984) is the lightest of these three plays in its approach, but, as a result, it is by far the most impressive. The plot is slight, and has many threads; the initial premise is this: the entire sixth form has disappeared in Brussels, the headmaster has disappeared full stop, and the school is adopting a new computer-based teaching system, Comtych.

McKerrow takes the opportunity his broad cast of characters offers to explore the varying attitudes to new technology. As Comtych arrives: we see two schoolchildren assume, paranoically, that the disappearance of their peers is connected with the arrival of Comtych; we see Miss Service, who runs away to the far east to teach in a village school; we see the regress to the womb in the school boiler-room after boyishly breaking windows with a catapult; we see, perhaps most tellingly, acting- caretaker lining his boiler-room shelves with armageddon supplies and working his socks off to avoid becoming a skilled labourer- he reasons that no computer will ever pick up litter or clean out toilets.

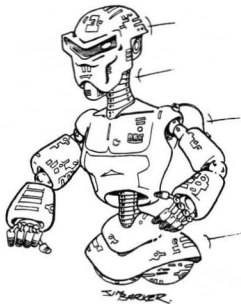
While others flee, retreat, regress, or become paranoid or Ludditic at the arrival of the machine, only Poon and the machine work normally- and naturally so: they complement each other; neither is a threat to the others job!

David Spenser was the director of this play, and is the only one of the directors of these plays worth comment. As well as pulling excellent performances from nearly all of

the cast (notably Margot Boyd and Andrew Sachs), he demonstrates tremendous technical facility. Unlike Gizmology, here we have a variety of voice tones, some effective sound perspectives, and a few excellent "set-pieces" (such as the moment when Janet and John activate one Comtych terminal after another, and the whole room fills with computerised greetings).

However, Almost time for School is not without its flaws, chief among them is its length. The lack of a main, central plot leaves the play ultimately not anti-climatic, but un-climatic. To play the situations out for nearly ninety minutes is pushing it a bit; at half the length it could have been perfect.

Reviewed by Philip Nichols.



"BRAIN THE SIZE OF A
PLANET AND THEY TELL
ME TO CLEAN OUT THE
LOO'S"

THE MEMBERS BITE BACK



Hilary Robinson
25, Princetown Rd
Bangor, Co. Down
BT20 3TA.

I'd like to thank
you (Alan Dorey)
for your apology
in the last Matrix
when you said you

didn't intend to insult me (by suggesting I was only looking for a 'vanity press'). I also appreciate your frankness in saying that the BSFA will not be starting or acquiring a fiction magazine. Naturally I'm disappointed by that, but obviously I must accept the committee's decision. My only doubt is - how does the committee know how the members feel if they don't ask them? You realise that I know nothing at all about the internal politics of the BSFA being about as far out on a limb as it's possible to be without actually leaving the UK.

You ask what you might do to help someone like me. Are you ready?

1. You might give me details of where to send stories. Focus I know, Cassandra I have discovered thanks to the latest Focus, but there is little point in reeling off a list of names of magazines I have never heard of unless you give the addresses too. You mentioned 'Something Else' and 'Granta', Peter Coleborn mentioned 'Whispers, Shayol, Fantasy Book, Time and Space, etc', but where do I find the addresses of all of these publications? I've never seen any of them.

2. Another thing you might do from your position as Chairman is foster a less hostile attitude to fiction. You don't have to be for it, merely not strongly against it. I may be misjudging you, but you do appear to be anti-fiction. If Focus is all you are prepared to let us

have, please let us have it more regularly, every mailing preferably. In a previous letter I said I only stay in the BSFA for Focus, so last year I paid £7 for one issue. Is this value for money?

3. I would like to hear factual accounts of what happens at conventions. Where are all these non-fiction writers? I'd like to know what is actually said and done for a whole weekend. I must say that the impression given is that a con is a drunken orgy and very disorganised at that. No account yet given would tempt me to spend the time and money travelling over, and yet I feel that I will always be on the fringe (see para. 1.) if I don't make the effort to meet other members personally. It is a terrible dilemma, Mr. Chairman. What can you and your committee do to make members like me feel less isolated? You must be aware that you have a number of members who can't get to meetings and conventions. There ARE intelligent lifeforms north of Leeds and West of Liverpool, and some of us don't ask much of the BSFA. Just a fair share of the area of print available.

Thank you for letting me have my say. I intend to stop my side of the correspondence now, as one of the things I dislike is a few members dominating the letter columns.

*** The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook is a must for all potential authors'. You'll find a list of UK journals and magazines, and their requirements, as well as countless tips on how to present work, etc, in order to gain the maximum chances of acceptance. The 1984 edition was £4.50 and available from most general bookshops, including W.H. Smith & Sons. If you have trouble finding a copy send me a letter and I'll pick you up a copy.

Two magazines I know of that are looking for specifically SF and Fantasy are White Dwarf (C/o Games Workshop, 27/29, Sunbeam Rd, London, NW10 6JP.), the best guy to contact there is assistant editor Jon Sutherland, and Imagine (C/o TSR UK Ltd., The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge, CB1 4AD.), and the editor is Keith Thomson.

I don't think the charges against Alan of being anti-fiction hold much water, after all, why does he devote so much time and energy to Interzone. The only statement he has ever made to me, and one I wholeheartedly agree with, is that

he is anti BAD fiction.

As for Focus, it will be published 3 times in 1985, but that said, nobody expects every item in every mailing to please everybody. If it did there would be nothing more to strive for and one of the things that people who contribute to organisations like the BSFA enjoy most is the challenge.

I'll be arranging an indepth overview of a con for a future issue.

Dominic Franklin Matrix 55 was a 178, Springfield Road, Brighton East Sussex.

Why do BSFA magazines change

formats and styles so regularly? Oh Well, never mind! Here are some comments on the October mailing. PI: Hooray! Good for Nik Morton. I felt that his review of "Eye of the Queen" by Philip Mann was dead on target. I bought the book some months ago and after reading it I remain convinced that it is one of the best books I have ever read. How right Nik is when he says "read What SF can be like". I would just like to echo some of the statements made by Terry Broome in M55, (on the debate about nuclear warfare). I feel that this debate should be in the Matrix letters pages because it is of such huge importance that it transcends such comparatively petty concerns like how bad Asimov's new book is or how long the "Last Dangerous Visions" is taking to appear. Or is it that fans such as Simon Ings want to form a cocoon to protect themselves against the vagaries of the outside world? Overall the October mailing was not quite as good as the previous one, but it still remained interesting and provoked some thought.

*** I must agree that such topics as the nuclear debate should be on these pages, and I'll certainly continue to carry letters on it and any other subject that are so important as to cut across all facets of everyday life.

Terry Broome Dear Mr. Hodson,
45, Hykeham Rd You're in the
Lincoln, LN6 8AA driving seat (good luck to you!) and
I can't wait to see M56 with a great cover, just like M54: What did you say? Like M55? Please, please, don't fantasise! Mine looked like it was printed on toilet paper, which was a shame considering that within it was a letter on how good I thought the

cover of M54 was.

Not that my opinion counts for anything (haven't I heard that somewhere before?), but I hope that you get on okay with the post.

As to M55 cover, it was awful, but I do recognise that the 'zine has had editor-problems (like there being one!) for some time now. Here's to seeing those good covers again (please?!)

*** It's nice to know that Matrix joined that elite group of journals such as The Times, Daily Telegraph and The Guardian by having covers printed on toilet paper. I intend to keep the newspaper style covers, but with a few modifications of my own. Tell me what you think once you've seen M57.

Andy Brewer As the question of
(P8174825 sac) a fiction 'zine
RAF Brize seems to be upper-
Norton, Oxon. most in everyone's
mind, may I put

forward an idea.

There is absolutely no need to put out a regular mag (a la Matrix/Vector), I am sure 90% of your readership would prefer a high quality mag once a year, than an inferior offering bi-monthly. Ask for submissions, then when you've received enough good material; (it may take a month, it may take a year, no matter) and I believe you will get it, say to the membership "We have enough stories, if enough people support us, we'll go to the printers.". Now comes the difficult part. I think the best way would be to ask for money in advance. Would we accept that? I don't know; ask us! If people are willing to send money, the stories are ready, collate them and you're off. Hopefully this way you'd know approximately how many copies to print, avoiding with luck- any possible loss.

Being wholly ignorant of the mechanics of publishing, what I've suggested may be impractical, if so I've wasted your time and apologise. Even so, ideas never hurt anyone, did they?

Okay, on to something else. I've been following the nuclear debate that's threatening to take over the pages of Matrix, and I fully agree that Matrix should cover it, and have decided to have a say myself. I must state here that I am a serving member of the armed forces. If that makes my points less valid, well, that is for you to judge.

I fully realise that if we could magically neutralize all nuclear weapons the world would be a safer

place. I am afraid we can't though and that is the crux of the matter. Nuclear weapons are here, and I can't see them going away. The technology is here, and I can't offhand think of any way that we can 'un-discover' it.

That's not quite true I suppose, it is ironic, and tragic, that a nuclear war probably rob us of the knowledge.

Multilateral disarmament in theory is the panacea we searching for. Unfortunately, once the agreement has been signed, how can we know that these weapons are not being manufactured? Would the superpowers trust each other? I doubt it very much.

Unilateral disarmament? In a perfect world, yes. But it's not perfect. If we believe discussion is the way to peace, then we must have some bargaining power. As a non-nuclear power, Britain need not bother turning up at the talks. God forbid the USA ever disarming, history proves over and over again that the strong do conquer the weak. Why should it change now?

It's a sad indictment on mankind, but we are a war-like race. Aggression is as natural as breathing, can we subdue millions of years of evolution that have programmed us to fight? I don't/can't offer any solutions, I only hope the negotiators can.

Think a little on the better red than dead argument. It's so easy sitting here and complaining about this and that. In Russia it isn't so simple. Look at the 'magnificent' fight of the miners; I think we are all being naive if anyone for one minute believes such a strike would have gone on for long if we were 'red'. (As an aside, I would never vote conservative, the last Labour Party conference truly terrified me, and the SDP's a bit of a cop-out. I now join the ranks of non-voters).

Looking back over the letter, even I get the impression of "Gung Ho! Get the commie bastards" mentality. It was never meant to come over like that. I have real fears about unilateral disarmament, and am ~~also~~ sure that many people who expound the virtues of communism must be from another planet.

Well, for a first letter in 4 years I reckon I'll be as popular as a ___ in a ___ (fill in the blanks).

From the gloom to lighter things. The BSFA mailings are improving all the time, keep it up! It's also good to see a fellow Middletonian as the head honcho in the BSFA. Fame for the place at last.

All this and Manchester United on their way to winning everything

bar the Oaks. There's hope for us yet.

*** The most frightening thing about the nuclear debate for me is that the NATO forces are probably the most likely to use these weapons first. They are not only vastly out numbered by the Eastern Bloc forces, but there is no standard equipment, British bullets will not fit a French gun. American shells will not fit a British field gun.

I also disagree with people that say the younger generation should be allowed a chance at running these powerful nations. A young bucks pride is a lot easier to hurt, whereas I doubt that Ronald Reagan will want to see his Grand-children die in a nuclear campaign of his own initiation, for all his bluff and bluster.

Unfortunately, both Alan and I have to disagree with you on one of your points- we're both Spurs fans, you see.

Matthew Shackle 111, Woodmansterne Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, SM5 4EG.	Matthew Shackle would like it to be known that, in the review of The Invisible Man in Matrix 55, he did
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not write the phrases 'although one does keep going back to the 1933 movie version', 'The locational detail' or 'an interesting television event'. He apologises to anyone who may have suffered in any way by re-reading the review, which in his view was edited to its detriment. It is not the TV programme he is worried about but defence of the English language. Further he has never, ever watched as much as a single second of "To Serve Them All My Days". Frank Middlemass's role in this series cannot have matched that of the wizard Radox the Green in the epic radio fantasy "Hordes of the Things".

If you want to mention to readers that the two paragraphs on page 8 are a continuation of Simon Ings review of "Seconds", then do, but I don't think it important. Since the series was not important and the review short (as well as haven been written with the last three episodes still to be seen) it is not earth-shattering to see it rewritten. It is just annoying that in shortening it and editing it you used such bad English. Would you describe 'West of Eden' as an "interesting literatural event"? I had written a much longer letter than this going through all the errors and re-interpretations you made, but since

Dave Hodson is taking over Matrix I do not think you would want to read all my comments or be interested in my carping.

BNFs in general seem totally uninterested in media SF and some of the reviews published (eg. Ros Calverley's irrelevant review of Star Trek 111) seem to suggest reviewers do not know what attitude to take. Since the BSFA poll suggested people want to read reviews, even if they do write them, and that they would like news, perhaps we could find out if people want their reviews to be serious and erudite, like Simon Ings' "Seconds", or to consider subject matter rather than success as a film (Star Trek 111) or tongue in cheek (My reviews in M53)?

Anyway I know the amount of work editors have to do so no hard feelings this end. It's just that I get the feeling I am in the wrong fandom.

Rereading Media News I think you are being too condescending and flippant. It may interest you to know that two episodes of "V" got into the ITV Top Ten programmes for its week, but I certainly do not care.

Please, please could you remind people in the BSFA to look through their old Matrices and brains for nominations for the media award (not just films). Isn't there any way we can prevent nuclear war dramatised documentaries from pushing real SF radio and television plays and series off the nomination lists? Come on you guys, let's hear it for "Bill, the Galactic Hero", "1984", even "Dune".

Finally a big hello to Dave Hodson.

*** I've printed your letter nearly completely unedited (actually, nearly all the letters are completely unedited due to lack of time) and, to be quite honest, I don't really think that you, or any of us, can totally claim to be defending the English language when we cry out for a greater or lesser degree of editing. English is a skill, just like playing the guitar or model-making, it takes a lot of practice and what looks right to one person doesn't to another. Just put it down to experience and, if you've got a copy of the original manuscript you sent Alan, see if you can spot why he edited what he did. If you ever disagree with anything I ever omit or change just write and ask why and I'll give you an honest answer, but I'm not really qualified to comment on others' doings.

Charles Stross
C/o 31, Honeywell
Road, London
SW11 6EQ.

I have an axe to grind. That said, here it is. In Matrix 55 you suggest, enthusiast-

ically, switching all the BSFA mags into a single super-thingy along the same lines-quality wise-as Interzone. Okay, fine. Likewise you debunk the idea of a fiction magazine; again, fine. But then you go on to suggest the fact that it would be worth even considering some bookshop sales, insofar as you repeat Chris Hughes' proposals. Right; big question. Who the hell is going to buy this hybrid magazine? An SF 'zine is one thing-the fact that Interzone is still going and that Bernard Smith reckons that Cassandra may even break 500 copies this issue and might even go professional tends to support the view that there's an opening for one. OMNI(UK) only confirms that opinion. But an SF magazine without fiction? Who would buy the Radio Times if it didn't give any program details whatsoever, merely a chain of features about directors/producers/reviews of past shows?

Okay, you may well argue that Focus provides a market for stories (not, heaven forbid, a commercial market); issue 9 showed signs of breaking out in fiction (Short the space between friends: Hilary Robinson), and Sue Thomason has asked me to re-do one of my pet thingies for inclusion. But Focus isn't exactly a frequent publisher of fiction - three submissions in six months leading up to ish. 9! Wonderful! One issue of Cassandra shoves out more fiction than Focus is ever given to chew over in a year. If it wasn't for my misgivings about the advisability of putting all the BSFA eggs in one basket (the super-zine) I'd seriously consider proposing that you ask Bernard Smith if he'd be interested in getting Cassandra to funnel stuff through the workshop to the superzine, as a means of improving the general interest/saleability of the thing for the public. Cassandra tend to go for stories that are of a totally different bent to the radical SF of Interzone - two professionally finished magazines, showing such a fascinating contrast of fiction styles, would be well worth seeing. But having seen the acrimony generated over the proposal that Cassandra become an official BSFA fiction-zine, I doubt that this suggestion will get any consideration; it may even be counter-productive in this intensive atmosphere of back-biting.

I'd love to see a BSFA magazine with fiction, criticism, articles on writing, - in other words, the works - that could also hold its head above water in bookstore sales; but I'm afraid that it seems to be a pipe-dream, and I don't smoke.

In any event - one very good way of sidestepping the 'vanity publishing accusations and boosting the quality of submissions if such a pipe-dream magazine with fiction were ever to emerge. Offer to pay the authors! A nominal sum, say £10 per thousand words for a max. of 20,000 words fiction per issue, would cost up to £200, but would mean (a) contributors would be at least aware that they'd have to satisfy a minimal editorial standard to justify a pay-out, (b) more people might buy the thing over the counter because of the 'professional' fiction content, thus hope-fully making up the balance of the £200, and (c) you'll at least be able to keep Interzone company on the shelves in Forbidden Planet. Doubtless there's some very telling reason why none of these points hold true - if you find them, please tell me.

*** Shortly after being given the go-ahead to take over Matrix, I wrote to Alan with my views on how the BSFA magazines should be formatted. In that letter I said it would be a good idea to release a mega-zine as such, if everyone was to go along with the idea, to tie in with the 1987 World Con if held in Britain. Such publications are not entered into lightly. The same reason would prohibit paying for fiction in the near future, all the BSFA's finances would have to be on a very sound footing first. That having been said, it is a good idea. As to who would buy a magazine without any fiction content, Locus, Chronicle, Starlog, Starburst and many others do well enough, and anybody publishing any sort of magazine on a professional, or even semi-professional basis, would be looking to write off the cost of paying for contributions with decent ad space sales.

Roy Gray 17, Ullswater Macclesfield Cheshire SK11 7YN.	Good fiction can usually find a market. Good articles on SF, auth- or interviews, debates, etc, will
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not find publication in other than fanzines and BSFA type publications hence the BSFA should look first to non-fiction.

Secondly - sending fiction to a fan publication is too much of a cop-out. We all know that writers just have to keep on submitting. Exhaust all possibilities. To tempt them with a BSFA publication would do them no favours.

New writers, like new personnel in any job, must conform until they have established themselves. Then they have the freedom they desire. There are very few short cuts or easy answers in any job. Relying on luck is not recommended.

I did quite like TANGENT and don't object to a fiction magazine.

You might like to consider the BSFA commissioning a single fan fiction anthology from a fan fiction publisher once a year. Use a different publisher each time and give them a sub and let them do their stuff. Some years will be winners, others losers, but at least the commitment is kept at a low level, also you might sell a few copies.

Martin Smith Two ideas on BSFA 64, Purleybury publications have Avenue, Purley, appeared recently. Surrey, CR2 1JD. The first, a fiction magazine, I like. Orbiter is not for publishing fiction, how many people get to read a story in Orbiter? Nor is Focus; that is for writers. The idea of a fiction magazine is that it would be for the reader, not aspiring writers. I don't believe that Cassandra and Interzone exhaust the supply of decent SF writing around. An anthology type magazine published maybe once once or twice a year would be a valuable addition to the BSFAs range of magazines.

The range of the magazines is the second point. Here I like things just the way they are. A MEGA-zine would be a megamess. Matrix, Vector and Focus each have something of an individual air. This would be lost in one mag. Moreover, you would have the most bitter editorial disputes. Chris Hughes in his editorial (M54) said "Matrix can't be all things to all people", so don't try to make it that way. I just don't like the idea of something like the Encyclopaedia Britannica (or even Dr. West's anthology) falling out of the envelope every couple of months. What do you want, a fannish Omni.

*** I like the idea of an annual fiction publication so long as the material is at least up to the quality of anthologies published by

the likes of Granada or Sphere. When I buy fiction I demand a certain quality from it and, seeing as such a publication would be financed by my annual subscription as well all of yours', it would have to reach those same standards.

Sandy Brown Having read the
BSFA Membership correspondence
Secretary between Bernard
18, Gordon Terrace Smith of CASS-
Blantyre, G72 9NA. ANDRA WORKSHOP
 and Alan Dorey,
as a member of the committee so
attacked I feel I have to put my
position on record.

As a Committee, we delegate the running of the BSFA's magazines to their editors, including the sorting of wheat from chaff. Having given them this power, we trust them not to make the magazines into a "vanity press". However, to retain control by the BSFA, and to implement what we believe are the members' wishes, the council has the power to remove the editors of any publication. This is why, historically, the editorships of our magazines are not positions to which people are specifically voted at the AGM.

This is the reason for the demise of TANGENT several years ago - it was turning into a vanity magazine, and the then-Committee was urged by some of the membership (including me) to remove the editor from that post. They did so, and because there was no-one prepared to take it over, it folded.

And it was due to the precise lack of such BSFA Council and Committee control in the case of CASS-ANDRA ANTHOLOGY that I voted in committee against the acceptance of Bernard's proposals. I do not accuse him of running a vanity magazine. In his words "The anthology could either be printed in Northampton and bought by the BSFA, or the original manuscripts could be produced here and printed by your own means." To me, this means as much control as if we decided to raise the membership subscription and give every member a regular copy of a selected pro magazine, whether they wanted it or not: i.e. it could be stopped, but not controlled by the Council, Committee, or general membership.

Having been at the AGM, I understood that what the proposed ballot of the membership was about was:

"Does the BSFA membership want a fiction magazine?", not: "Does the BSFA membership want CASSANDRA magazine?" Whatever the outcome of the ballot, I, from conviction, would still have to vote in council that CASSANDRA ANTHOLOGY not become the BSFA Fiction Magazine.

Bernard Smith states "Alan Dorey and associates have simply decided that they do not want (a fiction magazine)." I resent his assumption and refute it entirely. I do not make BSFA decisions lightly or willfully.

Turning to the amount of fiction contained in FOCUS, we have it on record that the first editors (Rob Holdstock and Chris Evans) and the second editors (Dave Swinden, Allan Sutherland, and Chris Bailey) did not get vast amounts of suitable (for which, if you wish, read 'good enough') material to run as much fiction as they desired. These are people whose judgement I trust. Perhaps we will also see the present editors, Dorothy and Sue, voice the same complaint. Perhaps too, Bernard should consider himself fortunate not to suffer from the same complaint.

Bernard Smith With regards to
8, Wansford Walk Dave Langfords
Northampton little piece in
NN3 4YF. Matrix 55, I

fully admit my mistake in expecting him to recognise the obvious. Perhaps his insistence on making two and two equal five may go some way to explaining his problems with Barclaycard...

However, there are a number of points which need to be corrected in the chairmen's 'reply' to my letter. It is stated that the ballot was dropped due to our withdrawal of the offer. Perhaps Alan Dorey would like to explain the fact that I have on file a letter from him, dated 19th June 1984, which refers to our telephone conversation of that day and states the intention to publish the letter in August and give us a decision in October (made by the committee) with the ballot being dropped. My reply, dated 24th June 1984, makes clear that this offhand junking of the ballot was one of the prime reasons for withdrawing the offer. I can only assume that in his efforts to evade any responsibility for this fiasco he is attempting to make time go in reverse. Had I, as his comments try to sug-