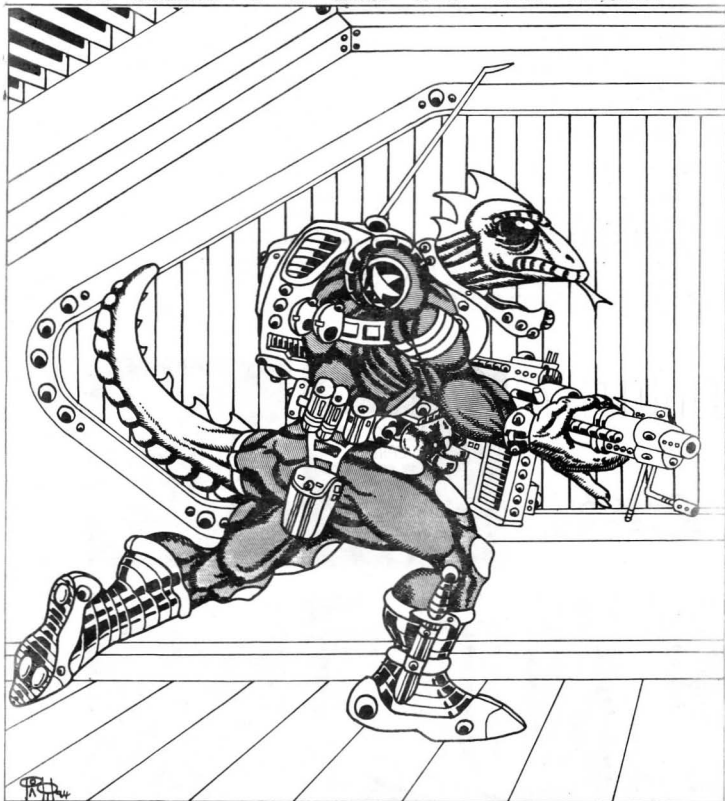


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62

THE · NEWSLETTER · OF · THE · BRITISH · SCIENCE · FICTION · ASSOCIATION



MATRIX 62 DECEMBER/JANUARY 85/86

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Don't forget the London Pub Meets - 3rd Friday of every month at the Coopers Arms, 87 Flood Street, Chelsea (off the Kings Road - nearest tube: Sloane Square).

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TIMOTHY

Story & Art
Paul RD Ward



News

UPCOMING UK PAPERBACKS.

NOVEMBER: Arrow: Marion Zimmer Bradley - Hawk Mistress (Darkover) £1.95; Graham Masterton - Family Portrait (horror) £1.95.
Hamlyn: David Drake - Cross the Stars (Hammers Slammers 2) £2.25; Guy N. Smith - Manitou Hall (horror) £1.95.
Century: Poul Anderson - Corridors of Time (new edition) £2.95.
Corgi: Nelson C Douglas - Six of Swords £2.50; George Gipe - Back to the Future (film nov'n) £1.95.
Fontana: Yevgeny Zamyatin - Islanders & The Fisher of Men (non SF) £2.50.
Putnam: Barry B. Longyear - Elephant Song £2.50.
City of Bamboo (re-issue) £2.50, Circus World (re-iss) £1.60, Manifest Destiny (re-iss) £1.75; Jack L. Chalker - River of the Dancing Gods £2.50; Parke Godwin - Firelord £2.50.
Granada: Ramsey Campbell - The Parasite (horror) £2.50; Ellis Weiner - National Lampoon's DOOM £2.50; Bob Shaw - Fire Pattern £1.95; Jack Vance - Planet of Adventure (omnibus edn) £3.95; Brian Aldiss - Starswurm (reprint) £1.95; Isaac Asimov - The Bicentennial Man (rep) £1.95, Winds of Chance (rep) £2.50; Phillip Jose Farmer - The Dark Design (rep) £2.50.
New English Library: Robert A. Heinlein - Job: A Comedy of Justice £2.95, Beyond this Horizon (rep) £1.75; Jerry Ahern - Earthfire (Survivalist) £1.95; James Herbert - Lair (horror) £2.25.
Penguin: Ambrose Bierce - The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary (new ed - non fic) £3.95.
Sphere: Robert Jordan - Conan the Triumphant £1.95; John Christopher - Death of Grass (rep) £2.25, A Wrinkle in the Skin (rep) £2.25, World in Winter (rep) £2.25.
Abacus: Christopher Priest - The Glamour £2.95.
Target: Arthur Conan Doyle - The Adventures of Professor Challenger £1.60; Terence Dicks - Dr. Who: The Krotons £1.50.
Unicorn: Cherry Wilder - A Princess of the Chameleon £2.95; Karel Capek - War With The Nests £2.95.

DECEMBER: Arrow: E. C. Tubb - Nectar of Heaven (Dumarest 24) £1.75.
Hamlyn: Gary Brandner - The Brain Eaters (horror) £2.25; H. Rider Haggard - King Solomon's Mines (new ed) £1.75.
Corgi: Megan Lindholm - The Windsingers £4.95.
New English Library: Robert A. Heinlein - Starman Jones (rep) £1.95.
Futura: 'S. F. Sontov' - Vampire Junction £2.50; Jane Gaskell - Summer Lands £2.50, The Serpent (re-iss) £2.50, The Dragon (re-iss) £1.95; Atlan (re-iss) £1.95, The City (re-iss) £1.95; Kim Stanley Robinson - Icehenge £2.50, The Wild Shore (re-iss) £2.50.
Granada: Isak Dinesen - Seven Gothic Tales (new ed) £2.95; Piers Anthony - Politician (Bio of a Space Tyrant 3) £2.50, Mercenary (Space Tyrant 1 - re-iss) £2.50, Refugee (Space Tyrant 2 - re-iss) £1.95; Sterling Lannier - Menace Under Mars Wood £1.95; Michael Shae - A Quest for Simbilis (Dying Earth) £1.95; Brian Aldiss - Space, Time and Mathaniel (rep) £1.95.
Methuen: Clifford Simak - All Flesh is Grass (rep) £1.95, Time and Time Again (rep) £1.95.
Penguin: Oscar Wilde - Picture of Dorian Gray (rep) £1.95.
Puffin: Nicholas Fisk - Space Hostages £1.50.
Sphere: Roger Zelazny - Unicorn Variations £2.50.

JANUARY: Grafton: Robert Holdstock - Mythago Wood £2.50.
Corgi: Lyndon Hardy - Seal of the Sixth Magic £2.50.
New English Library: Freda Warrington - A Blackbird in Silver £2.95.

DECEMBER US BOOKS.

Ace: Brokendown Palace - Steven Brust \$2.95; Demon-4 - David Mace \$2.75; Wizard of the Pigeons - Megan Lindholm \$2.75; Cadre One - Robert G. O'Riordan \$2.95.
Arbor House: Radio Free Albemuth - Philip K. Dick \$14.95.
Avon: Bio of a Space Tyrant 4: Executive - Piers Anthony \$3.50.
Bantam: Thieves' World: Beyond the Veil - Janet Morris \$15.95; Alien Stars Vol. 2 - Robert Silverberg, Norman Spinrad, Michael P. Kube-McDowell, edited by Elizabeth Mitchell \$2.95.
Bantam Spectra: The Planets - ed. by Byron E. Freiss \$24.95; Journey to the Flame - Richard Monaco \$3.50; Threshold - David R. Palmer \$2.95.
Berkley: Battletar Galactica # 11: The Nightmare Machine - Glen A. Larson and Robert Thurston \$2.95.
Bluejay: Tweedloot - Stanley Schmidt \$15.95 h/s \$7.95 trade-paperback.
Daw: Free Amazons of Darkover - Marion Zimmer Bradley \$3.50; In Yana, the Touch of Undying - Michael Shae \$3.50; Diana Sabtee Spaceways Agent 2: Gateway to Xenadu - Sharon Green \$3.95; Dray Prescott # 36: Omens of Kregan - E. C. Tubb \$2.95.
Del Rey: Killashandra - Anne McCaffery \$16.95; Jinx on a Terran Inheritance - Brian Daley \$3.50; The Destiny Makers Book One: With Fate Conspire - Michael Shupp \$2.95.
Doubleday: The School of Darkness - Manly Wade Wellman \$12.95.
New American Library/Signet: Isaac Asimov's Magical Worlds of Fantasy # 5: Giants - ed. by Isaac Asimov, Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh \$3.95; Jerusalem Fire - R. M. Meluch \$3.50; Where Dragons Lie - R.A.V. Salisitz \$2.95.
Pocket: Star Trek # 26: Pawns and Symbols - Majlis Larson \$3.50.
Popular Library/Questar: The Seekers and the Sword - Michael Jay Friedman \$2.95; Split Second - Gary Kilworth \$2.95.
Tor: Soul Rider Book 4: The Birth of Flux and Anchor - Jack L. Chalker \$3.50; The Time Master Trilogy # 1: The Initiate - Louise Cooper \$2.95; Magic in Ithkar 2 - ed. by Andre Norton and Robert Adams \$6.95 trade-paperback; Totentanz - Al Sarrantonio \$3.50.

- * Thieves' World rip-offs seem to be flavour of the month; Andre Norton and Robert Adams have sold volumes 3 and 4 of their Magic in Ithkar series to Tor Books in the states, Charles Grant recently edited a horror version called Greystone Bay, Robert Adams is to edit a similar anthology based on his own Horsecrals fantasy series and Thieves World supremos Robert Asprin and Lynn Abbey are to collaborate with Richard Pini on an Elfquest anthology based upon the twee little comic of the same name.
- * Fantasy author Manly Wade Wellman has had both legs amputated after developing gangrene. He had been bed-ridden after a nasty fall.
- * Bob Shaw's new novel for Gollancz is provisionally titled Invisible Mountains.
- * Italo Calvino, the Italian fantasist, died from the effects of a stroke in hospital in Siena on September 19th. He was 61.
- * Rob Holdstock's Mythago Wood was announced as co-winner of this year's World Fantasy Award at Novacon 14. The novel with which the award was shared was so memorable that I've forgotten it.
- * Michael Moorcock fans are in for an expensive time in 1986 with no less than three hard-cover books to be released. City in the Autumn Stars appears in April, Letters from Hollywood in June and Dragon in the Sword in September.

At a recent BSFA London Meeting, a certain Chris Bailey happened to mention in his somewhat inimitable style (i.e. drunken) that there was nothing meaty to read in Matrix these days. So if you're bored with all these speeches (all 2 that is) I keep transcribing for you, just send your letters of complaint to him. Below is a transcript of the Guest of Honour Speech given by James White at Novacon 15 (god rest it's soul), The De Vere Hotel, Coventry, 1-3 November 1985. For those of you who don't know, this was not the first time James White has been honoured by Novacon, he was GoH at the very first Novacon way back in 1971. Talk about staying power!

Eve Harvey

AT NOVACON,
THE AVERAGE
WAS F-F-
FIFTEEN

Ladies and Gentlemen, it says here, this is not the first time I have addressed you as a Guest of Honour at Novacon - the last time was the first, and the second time is the fifteenth, I missed the thirteenth altogether, and during the sixth and seventh. . . But no, if you'd wanted a statistically informative speech you would have asked Larry Wiven. Let me say only that in the intervening fifteen years, many things, and a few of the people, have changed. For example...

Before the 1971 Novacon I was told that the con organisers had immeasurable wealth at their disposal, but it turned out that their operating funds were such that they could only be measured by an electron microscope. In 1985, however, all that has changed. They have extorted enough money from the attendees to invite two, count us, two Guests of Honour. In fact, I'm surprised they passed up the once-in-a-lifetime chance of inviting three of us.

As you all know, if you are not already too sozzled to read your programmes, I am co-inhabiting the hot-seat (sounds vaguely indecent, that) with David Langford.

Let me begin by saying that Dave Langford is an honourable man, and upright even, until the bars open. He dresses well, shaves regularly if not frequently, has a beautifully articulated and cadenced voice, a fine mind which is responsible for publishing fan material of sufficiently high quality to win him a Hugo this year, and he is, to boot, a gifted professional writer. He is also, you may have noticed, inclined to be a little hard of hearing.

As for me, what can I say about myself which is not both extravagantly complimentary, and true? From my earliest days as a fan, illustrating and writing for Slant and Hyphen, convention-going, and blasting everybody in sight with my water-pistol, I rose to the dizzy, depraved heights of the professional writer. My physical and mental attributes are, of course, plain for all to see. The height, which is more average than most; the breadth of the shoulders, and gut; the high, intelligent forehead, which is rapidly joining the back of my neck; the utterly charming manner and scintillating wit. . . What big-head idiot wrote this stuff? However, I do admit to one minor imperfection - I don't see too good. All the wonders of the microcosm and macrocosm, and the medium-sized bits in between, are fuzzy round the edges. There is a marked deficiency in the light-gathering and focussing mechanisms of my visual sensors. Unless I have a glass of high magnification I have difficulty in seeing, and if I have a glass or two of best bitter, it's probable that I won't be able to see at all.

"Aw" I hear you chorus sympathetically. You were about to sympathetically chorus "Aw", weren't you? If only to drown out the noise made by that infinitive splitting? But really, I'm not looking for your sympathy, my minor impairment of vision was mentioned simply to make a point and, incidentally, to level a serious criticism of negligence at

the con committee.

So what else is new, you ask? Well, I'll tell you.

Here we have a convention with two Guests of Honour, one who is half blind and the other as deaf as a half post, and they didn't think of inviting a third, a Glasgow fan, perhaps, who couldn't speak properly. Just think, they missed the chance to make proper monkeys of us.

Next time we go to Glasgow, remind me to pack the flak jacket.

At the first Birmingham convention - I know this is Coventry, but let's not be technical - the venue was the old Imperial Centre Hotel. It was the new Imperial Centre Hotel then, but with successive Novacons it aged prematurely, shrivelled up and had to be traded in. But one of the things, I mean one of the people, who has not changed over the past fifteen years is the Chairman of Novacon 1, Vernon Brown.

I remember how he greeted me on arrival, the sombre words, the demeanour so expressive of impending doom, and the handshake which actually felt worried. As the bearer of much of the responsibility for the first con of its kind, with an untried and unpredictable Guest of Honour, I figured that he had reason to look worried. But later, when I was being moderately well-behaved, and everything was going really well, and the con was a financial and fannish success, he still looked desperately worried.

Intrigued, and sensing that I might be about to find a great, brooding, tragic character that I could use in a story, I observed him closely during subsequent conventions, when he was not weighed down by the burdens of high office, nor did he have me to worry about, and still the expression did not change. And when, in 1975, he organised a trip to Brugge for a bunch of UK fans, it was the same - even though things happened in Brugge which would have elicited belly-laughs from the Sphinx, or made it run for its life.

For example, at a most inopportune time we were on top of the clock tower overlooking the town square, and I was taking cine film of the tired, or lazy, or thirsty, or ice-cream hungry fans who had remained in the open air cafe below. Suddenly the clock went into the overture and beginning of its major production, the noon-day chimes.

Standing as we were within two yards of the works, the noise vibration shook the film spools from their spindles inside the camera. The sound was incredible, bone-shaking, mind destroying, and almost as loud as a present-day disco. Did Vernon clap hands to his ears. Quasimodo fashion and scream "The bells! The bells!" as the rest of us were doing? No, he was looking worried.

When we rejoined the others at the cafe, needing something stronger than ice-cream, I was looking worried, too, about my cine-film. Among the fans was that lovely, innocent young girl Coral Clarke. This was before she met and became happily married to Rob Jackson, and was thereby lost to the human race as we know it. She came riding like a Fair Damsel to rescue a Knight (of St Antony) in distress, by showing me her Black Hole, and explaining how I could use it.

It was a simple but ingenious arrangement, a double layer of black, closely-woven material in the form of a bag with an elasticated top. What did you think it was? She called it her Black Hole because it was completely light-proof and allowed her, and now me, to open a loaded camera without going into a dark-room. So much for the necessary technical background. But the problem wasn't disentangling my exposed film from the camera inside the Black Hole, it was the behaviour of the cafe proprietor while I was doing it.

There I was with my arms up to the elbows inside a black bag, an intent look on my face, trying to remedy the malfunction while replying to the not always helpful advice being

offered by the surrounding fans. The proprietor must have correctly identified my Irish accent, and got the strange idea that I might be assembling some kind of explosive device right there in his cafe, and he became very agitated. It required the efforts of several of the semi-multi-lingual fans, speaking broken English and seriously fractured French, in between unseemly bouts of merriment, to reassure the poor man. And what did Vernon do while all this was going on?

He was looking worried.

Another man who has not changed since Novacon 1, he said enviously, is Jack Cohen. One has the feeling that he is stuffed with those black-and-gold batteries which open and shut with a bang, or perhaps it is the clean, wholesome, exemplary life he leads. Jack has such a wide knowledge of terrestrial and extra-terrestrial life-forms that his post at the university was probably gained through prior experience in Sector General. During one Novacon he invited me to tea at the small zoo where the family lives, so that his nine-foot python could meet me - it used to just devour the Sector General books, he said. The things that python did to me would make any innocent young sci-fi fan, or even me, blush. I began to realise then that pythons were not like ordinary people, and that, being cold-blooded creatures, it was normal for them to become hot and bothered in November. Isn't that so, Jack?

There are many other people who were at the first convention, and this one, and most of those in between, that I could tell you about. But you don't want me to talk about them. Or more accurately, they don't want me to talk about them, and my silence is going to cost them dearly, at the bar.

But it isn't just the Chairpersons or the hardworking committee members, or the hardworking committee members, or the enthusiasm of the local fans who make Novacon the friendly, informal, enjoyable and often peculiar thing that it is. It's the things that happen during them, and sometimes before they even start.

Bob Shaw and I think had travelled together from Belfast to Novacon 3. I myself it was, and had arrived early in the afternoon, before anything had really started. Much to our surprise, and delight, we were accosted by a beautiful blonde lady who asked us if we could do her a big favour - but she had eyes only for Bob as she spoke.

Perhaps it was his air of worldliness, the indefinable something which makes the man who has driven a taxicab in the red light district of Toronto, and brought down a passing blue-bottle with a water-pistol at ten paces - although not, of course, at the same time - or maybe it was his eyes (bloodshot) or just the overall configuration of his body which attracted her. Anyway, she wanted to find out about his personal preferences, and she offered to ply him with booze while she was doing so.

I could come, too, she added, seeing as I was a friend of his.

It transpired that she was a researcher for Guinness Brewery, who were seeking the opinions of likely-looking members of the public on the new blends and flavours of The Stuff they had developed before marketing it. Bob, who has always been a willing martyr to progress, cooperated in every way.

Myself, I don't like Guinness. Its primary purpose, I firmly believe, is to be mixed with hot tar to give road surfaces that funny black colour, or for painting on wooden fences to keep out dry rot. But Bob likes the stuff and, while I sat toying with a glass of ordinary, undoctored, "you-wouldn't-swap-two-for-one" type Guinness, he was talking knowledgeably about bodies, and after-tastes and somebody called Janny Sekwa, while the girl wrote down his answers with one hand and passed him more samples for testing with the other. I think she was trying to test him to

destruction, only there wasn't enough beer in her station wagon. But when we went in to register later, he was occupying that grey area between "pleasantly relaxed" and "legless" - and he wasn't even the Guest of Honour that year!

From the seventy-odd, some very odd, people who attended Novacon 1, the numbers have risen, and the select nature of the membership has fallen, to include fans from Scotland and even Wales, and from the more civilised areas of Europe and the New World. Novacon has also attracted an increasing number of famous science fiction personalities - really big people, although that is due mostly to the beer - including top authors, agents, anthologists, editors and publishers. Some of them have come wondering what it was all about, decided that it was fun, and tax deductible, and they have been coming back ever since and bringing their friends, and sometimes even their wives.

Obviously I can't talk about all of these new conventioners, but I should like to discuss one of them, chosen purely at random, of course. The man I have chosen at random to talk about is Toby Roxborough.

The reason I picked on Toby, this great, gifted but tragic publishing figure, to talk about is simple. Deep down inside I am a thoroughly nasty and vicious person, and I want to see him suffer.

Again.

Toby suffers beautifully. Sometimes I suspect him of being a sado-Marxist. (I think that should be sado-masochist). Whenever he is giving a talk on some aspect of the publishing business, we always sit in the front row so we can heckle. No matter how interesting and informative and witty the talk is, no matter how much the fans are cheering him and laughing at his jokes, he knows with a dreadful certainty that we are going to say or do something at precisely the wrong time, and the longer we behave ourselves the twitchier he gets.

Usually we start by passing remarks about his clothes.

Fans who are seeing this high executive of a big publishing company for the first time will wonder why he doesn't look sleeker, more opulent, immaculately tailored and redolent of great wealth (like Lea Flood does) and they will think to themselves that here is a big-time publisher who isn't afraid to relax and dress down, but that he may just have overdone it a little. But the truth is that Toby's personal fortune is also immeasurable. That is a slight exaggeration - his wealth can be measured, but it is on the wrong side of the decimal point. He doesn't believe in banks and prefers to keep his savings in hard currency, small denomination coins of the realm, in a ready-access piggy-bank which is actually an upturned egg-cup.

Now you will understand the reason for that green, Taiwan-tailored sweat-shirt, which has taken him to so many recent conventions, and brought him home again. But if, during this con, you should see him wearing something different, a suit perhaps, or even a shirt with arms in it, you will know that his tailor has extended him credit facilities on the strength of the six Sector General books he is bringing out next year.

Actually, my wife Peggy is very fond of Toby. They shared a very important past experience (not together), that of singing in Gilbert and Sullivan operas. She says he would make a great Pirate King. There are others who say that he is a Pirate King.

Since Toby is now my publisher, it has become necessary for me to be polite to him. I do hope that he has noticed the difference.

No doubt you are all lost in admiration at the subtle way - like drugged in screaming by the hair - I introduced my Sector General books, and Futura, their new UK publisher.

And even though I am known as the con Quest of Honour who never has any books on sale, I should say something about this mythical series of space hospital stories I am supposed to have written.

The first Sector General story, a novelette entitled, funnily enough, "Sector General", was written in 1957. This means, as the numerate as well as the literate among you will already have realised, that the characters have aged a little - but not by 28 years.

It is very hard to age one's characters in a series, they tend to remain young and vital and active, like the author. Extra-terrestrials are very difficult to age - some of them are slimy and scaly, or their skin looks like the bark of a tree, so what do a few more wrinkles, or a slightly arthritic tentacle matter. Doctor Conway, the central Earth-human character, has been allowed a touch of grey at the temples, a little more weight to go with his increased authority, and a vitamin enriched diet to keep Murchison happy. As for Prilicia, I'm not allowed to touch a tendril of its tiny, insect's head. Murchison herself has not aged either, for the simple reason that I am a gentleman, with wish-fulfillment fantasies.

The first novelette of the series, "Sector General", not to be confused with SECTOR GENERAL, the fifth book in the series, which contains four long novelettes, was originally intended to be a one-off use of the plot. But Ted Carnell, the then editor of *New Worlds*, liked the idea of a space hospital where aliens were treating, as well as being treated by, humans. Then we thought that when the five novelettes which made up the collection HOSPITAL STATION were published, that should be the end of it. After all, we agreed there were only so many kinds of alien a person could dream up, and so many ways of making them sick.

But then I got this really sick idea for a planet whose inhabitants were deliberately infected with visually repulsive but non-fatal diseases, so that the massive contributions from the kind-hearted populations of other worlds for food and medical research to help these unfortunate could be siphoned off for the benefit of the baddies responsible for the original infections. I told you I wasn't a nice person, and that wasn't a very nice sentence. Anyway, when skilled medical detective work was required to solve the problem, Sector General was only a stone's-throw, or would you believe a couple of hundred light-years away.

The result was STAR SURGEON, and the series had started and ended again.

It was Ted who was chiefly responsible for the third book, MAJOR OPERATION.

By that time he had left *New Worlds* to take up editorship of Corgi's NEW WRITINGS IN SF, a quarterly hardcover and paperback series which, he insisted, could do with a little medical help from Sector General. The five linked novelettes, which were really a five-part serial novel, became MAJOR OPERATION. Now I could go to cons and discuss the Sector General trilogy, and it had a nice, solid, final sound to it. I was free at last.

Ha-ha.

At cons people kept coming up to tell me what was wrong with the series - specifically about things, and people, I had left out. They also made suggestions, some of which were usable, and some of which were not suitable for discussion in mixed company.

For example, why didn't I use an e-t doctor who really was a leech? Or why didn't I write a story where Prilicia goes berserk and beats up the joint? Eh? And how about introducing an alien virus which gives everyone an urge towards indiscriminate, multi-species, if you'll pardon the word, gender, so that I could have a General Sexer story? And why hadn't I mentioned one of the Galactic Federation's

drink problems by having an alcoholics ward for six-legged, elephantine Tralthans who keep seeing pink human beings?

One serious criticism was that no hospital, past, present or future, would ever be able to produce test results or path lab reports as fast as Sector General did it!

It was this criticism that made me realise that the hospital was too good, that Conway might be too dependent on Sector General's medical supercience. That was the idea behind AMBULANCE SHIP and SECTOR GENERAL, the fourth and fifth books in the series, which had Conway heading a medical team of a rescue ship with limited treatment facilities, which meant that they had to use their medical ingenuity to give extraterrestrial first aid, without any prior knowledge of the extraterrestrial.

One of the four novelettes in SECTOR GENERAL was not set on the ambulance ship. It was a prequel describing how the first multi-species hospital came to be built, and it used two characters I liked, an et and an Earth-human, from an earlier story, "Tableau". Waste not, want not.

Another question was, What about the doctors' and nurses' pay? Nobody ever mentioned money in Sector General. Dedicated they all were, but not stupid. What about holiday entitlement, retirement pensions, union contributions? Was there a trade union? If I wrote an extraterrestrial shop steward into a story, would he, she or it be a good or bad guy? Was I looking for a punch in the face? (This as a result of my answer to the former.)

But the most persistent questioner, whose name and accent I shall not dare to reveal, invariably posed the same question.

What about emptying the bed-pans?

Please, let us strive for clinical objectivity in this. Any good science fiction author or, for that matter, any nasty, mean, vicious and depraved author of good science fiction stories, should not be afraid to consider a new idea, no matter how alien, or shocking, or indelicate it may be. Anyway, it is the initial gut reaction which is important in such cases, and I began to scent (?) the first, faint stirrings of a plot.

But it might be difficult to engender a sense of wonder in the readers about a story set in an extraterrestrial cesspool. They might say, and rightly, "The plot stinks!" It would have to be treated in such a way as to be rendered inoffensive - the story, I mean - by using big, technical words, a clinical approach, by ensuring that the fundamental assumptions were scientifically correct, and giving it a high, professional polish - as if I was aiming it at *Analogy*.

Regarding the scientific and technical bits, we all realise that the elimination and disposal of wastes is part and parcel of everyday hospital life, below the rank of ward sister, and so it is at Sector General.

We intelligent, warm-blooded oxygen-breathers are aware of the uses of our nitrate-rich, processed organic wastes as fertiliser, the unintelligent ones use it in car-bombs.

But in a multi-species hospital like Sector General, the variety and consistency and chemical compositions of the material would be extremely wide and, for the purposes of the story, we could postulate that the different types were mutually reactive, and productive of vast quantities of flammable gas. If we further postulate that Sector General is an intensely energy-hungry establishment, then it would be understandable that they would use this constant and continuing source of energy to augment their power generation.

The climax of the plot would come when there was a catastrophic malfunction in the system and the stuff, hit the air circulation system. The choice of characters for this story is difficult. Who do we land in it? Not Conway,

or Murchison, or Prilicla, or any of the other good guys. O'Mara maybe, or the senior shop steward? In this story I can't afford to put a foot wrong, if it is going to be in the best possible taste, and I think this might be one where Toby would want to see two chapters and an outline before committing himself.

However, all this may be academic, because the sixth book was planned and written to be the last in the series. In it Doctor Conway, after long and meritorious service with the hospital, is elevated to the status of Diagnostician - for a probationary period. As a member of the medical elite he plays a greater part in the decision-making and administration of the establishment, has responsibility for many wards, and is called on to make really difficult medical/ethical decisions regarding large numbers of patients, instead of just one at a time.

There are also serious personal, psychological and emotional problems, which were dealt with briefly in STAR SURGEON, as he is forced to adapt to and live with the mind recordings of several extraterrestrial entities who are apparently sharing, and at times trying to control, his mind. This is the price a Diagnostician must pay in Sector General, and Conway has to prove that he can remain sane and stable and essentially himself, while several really difficult medical problems are coming to the boil at the same time.

My own title for the novel was DIAGNOSTICIAN, but Judy-Lynn del Rey suggested I think of something grabbier, which was STAR HEALER.

With Diagnostician Conway promoted to the top of the hospital's professional tree, and with him together at last with the gorgeous Murchison - they made honest persons of each other - and with the professional futures of Doctor Prilicla and the other principal characters mapped out, this should rightly be the last book in the series.

However, I have tried to do the series on previous occasions, and the extra-terrestrial affluvia plot outlined earlier is not to be taken seriously, Toby will be relieved to know. But people are assuming that there will be more. In a recent *Analogue* review, Tom Easton was very complimentary about STAR HEALER, but said that I had left the Gogleskan problem unresolved, no doubt for solution in the next book, and he suggested a possible answer to the problem and was looking forward to the seventh book to see whether he had guessed right!

Never before have I encountered a reviewer so helpful and constructive in his criticism. You are a good man, Tom Easton.

However, the plight of the poor, benighted denizens of Glasgow - I mean Goglesk - was deliberately left unresolved, for two reasons. In STAR HEALER I wanted to treat the overall hospital background more realistically, by showing that it had its hopeless cases as well as its successes. The other reason was that Tom Easton wasn't available then for a second opinion.

I have already discussed the case history of the Gogleskans, including the strange urge towards self-destruction which periodically overtakes them, in some detail at Albacon a few years back. (Since then we have not been back to Glasgow). So you wouldn't want me to go over this tragic case-history again. Even with Doctor Easton as a consultant, their case is clearly hopeless, and the series has, should have, might be, at an end.

My own insoluble problem is that I want to go on writing about extraterrestrials, their alien viewpoints, their exotic biologies, and the problems of communication and understanding they represent. In the Sector General stories I do not try to preach, sermons are for the pulpit, but peaceful co-existence is implicit in the whole set-up, and in the hospital situation, in any hospital situation, the minor differences of politics and skin pigmentation and religion which so bedevil our society can be viewed in

proper perspective.

But my problem is that when I dream up a new, bigger and even more alien alien, it promptly takes sick, or gets itself bashed-up in a space accident, and it then becomes a problem for Sector General, which is just down the road.

Terrible, isn't it? But don't worry, this is the last page.

It only remains for me to thank the convention committee for inviting me to be a Guest of Honour once again - it took them fifteen years to recover from last time - and to thank all of you for listening. If you have any questions, serious, medical, meaningful, even embarrassing questions, I shall try to answer them.

Thank you.

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!THE COMIC REVIEW!

NEWS...compiled by Dave Hodson.

Howard Chaykin, creator of American Flagg, is to update the Walter Gibson created '30's pulp anti-hero The Shadow for DC Comics. Most of the other Flagg staff will also work on the book. after this will be a graphic novel for Marvel featuring Nick Fury and Wolverine provisionally titled 'The Scorpion Connection' and the first of three 48 page graphic novels for First Comics called 'Times'.

***Matt Wagner of Mage fame is to do a four part mini-series for DC based upon Jack Kirby creation The Demon. *** Steve Gerber, ex- Man-Thing writer at Marvel and creator of early seventies comics fandom favourite Howard the Duck is to write a four part mini-series featuring The Spectre for DC. *** Barry Windsor-Smith, the original Conan comic artist, is to draw another issue of the X-Men, number 205. *** Will Eisner's colour Spirit comic has reverted to black and white with issue 12 and had its cover price dropped by \$1.00 (about 70p). December sees the release of a new album of Eisner's work entitled Big City: this is reprints of the strips that have been running in the Spirit Magazine and Eisner's Quarterly looking at life in a large American city. It will cost about \$8.95. *** John Byrne, the artist who aided writer Chris Claremont in making the X-Men the most popular comic of all time, is to write and draw the classic comics character Superman for DC as of July 1986. *** Love and Rockets numbers 1 and 2 are to be released as a square bound Graphic Novel in January 1986, there will be a hard-back limited edition. *** Following on from the recently released Rocketeer graphic novel is a six issue series from Eclipse comic, Dave Stevens continues to write and draw the strip. *** A fifth collection of Bloom County newspaper strips is released in December of this year. *** DC are to release a comic in aid of famine relief to be titled 'A Song of Pain and Sorrow'. *** Following on from the Elric comic, First are to release comics based upon other incarnations of Moorcock's Eternal Champion. The first is Hawkmoon and the cover to issue number 1 is reproduced to the right of this column. *** Heavy Metal magazine goes quarterly as of January 1986, although the will be a higher page count per issue. It will no longer feature continuing strips or review sections. *** Marvel have cancelled Epic Illustrated. *** Timespirits has been cancelled by Marvels Epic Comics line, as has Astec Ace by Eclipse. *** Upcoming DC graphic novels include 'Demon with a Glass Hand' by Harlan Ellison and adaptations of novels by Ray Bradbury and Robert Silverberg. *** A role-playing game based on the 2000AD character Judge Dredd has just been released, it is accompanied by lead figurines of Dredd himself and psi-Judge Anderson. *** A new 2000AD monthly comic produced for the States features Alan Moore's Skizz. *** The Hernandez brothers have left Mister X and number 5 is drawn by Klaus Schonefeld. *** Alan Moore has just finished writing a Batman graphic novel to be illustrated by Brian Bolland. Moore and artist David Lloyd have received contracts from DC for V for Vendette, to be reprinted and eventually continued from the strips that originally appeared in the British anthology comic Warrior.



MINI REVIEWS SECTION...

Mister X # 5: The story continues to snake around getting constantly more complicated. Note quite in the American Flagg league of convolution but close. Writer Dean Motter is trying to tie the book in with other Vortex comics hence the appearance of Kelvin Mace in this issue.

Mechanics # 3: The final part of Love and the Rocket reprinted in colour from the extremely hard to find Love and Rockets # 2. Jaime's new splash page for this segment is printed above. The Hernandez brothers are similar to Eisner in that their material transcends the need for colouring and, in some cases, distracts from the fine artwork.

Cerebus the Aardvark # 1's 77 & 78: Dave Sim continues to develop past his original Barry Smith influenced art style. Story-wise he seems to be floundering about a bit in the wake of the mammoth 'high Society', both of these issues only take about 45 seconds to read due to an extreme lack of dialogue but in relation to the preceding stories take about an hour to think about. Cerebus Jam # 2 should be out this side of Christmas.



unconventional!

Beccon 85

I enjoyed Beccon '85 immensely, regarding it as a highlight of my summer, but equally I must be honest and say that the organised event actually contributed very little to this in comparison with the pleasure of spending time with a group of friends in relatively pleasant and comfortable surroundings. I might as easily have been at Novacon or Albacon for all the impact that Beccon had upon me. As a convention I found it competently organised but, on the whole, remarkably unimaginative as if the committee, having hit upon a winning formula, were willing to stick by it without any alteration. All weekend I was plagued by a curious feeling of *deja-vu*, not simply attributable to it being the same hotel, the same familiar faces, and checking my 1983 programme book later, I was only mildly surprised to find that the 1985 programme was almost identical to its predecessor, given the transposition of a game and panel here and there, and the similar subject matter in panels two years apart, in which case it puzzles me that the committee has taken two years to organise what amounts to the same convention, with little evidence of fresh creative input, an influx of new or original ideas, at the very least a novel approach to hoary programme standards. Beccon is acknowledged to be a well-organised con, held only biannually in order to give ample attention to the details, but I would agree that the smoothest run con of all is of no use at all, no matter how well the programme runs to time, no matter how few technical hitches occur, if the programme offered is basically dull, unadventurous and available at any number of other conventions. Whilst I don't deny that lots of hard work may have gone into individual items this is wasted if all it achieves nothing but to keep a group speculating the meaning of an item title without feeling the slightest inclination to actually see it.

Presumably the creative input must be regarded as embodied by the production of *Spook in Manacles*, apparently a roaring success from all I heard. I didn't go, mainly because I was already very tired of the way in which the whole convention was starting to revolve around this one item, even to rumours, so far unconfirmed, that some people had come specifically for this and nothing else, which is not something a con should be proud of. And anyway, by Sunday I was half convinced I'd seen it already, I'd been bombarded by, and thus become accustomed to, the sight of the cast trailing to and fro from endless dress rehearsals. They worked really hard, that lot - the organisation was again superb - but I wonder how much spontaneity was lost in the endless grind for perfection. Spontaneity is something that Beccon lacks, with even the charades organised into a programme event instead of being conducted in corners of the bar and other inconvenient places, half the fun as I used to understand it, and Beccon is surely the only con where all mealtimes are programmed into the schedule. Luckily there was a sufficiency of birthdays and anniversaries to be celebrated for those of us who like our fun a little more impromptu.

Despite this it cannot be denied that Beccon works, and I'd be the first to admit that it does. Its most loyal followers are vociferous in their praise and will hear no word against it,

witness the person who seemed ready to flatten me when I voiced dissatisfaction recently. What Beccon does succeed in is achieving that elusive relaxed and informal atmosphere so many cons strive for, and too frequently fail to find, except that Beccon seems to manage it more by accident, though the intention is undoubtedly built into the Beccon charter. 'Informality - that's an order' it said in the 1983 programme book, a joke I think, but perilously near the truth, despite which people relax, get on with enjoying themselves whilst the committee get on with the organising of the con. It's a pity they couldn't have done something about the food, however, which underlines the problems of having a con in a hotel which is miles from shops or restaurants. For a con run by a committee renowned for its love of good food, to the extent of producing its own cook book, what was on offer during the weekend was a disgrace - inedible. The cheap food downstairs, for which we paid grossly inflated prices, was mostly overcooked and not to be faced on a weak stomach, whilst for those who could afford the hotel restaurant there was the small problem of the hotel restaurant manager who seemed more inclined to commit financial suicide rather than let in members of the con, bearing in mind that many of them were hotel residents. In the normal way, we would have headed for the nearest takeaway, but as the hotel is inconveniently situated in the middle of an industrial estate some way from the town centre, and Basildon is not exactly overburdened with eating places anyway, it was starvation or indigestion. This is simply not good enough. We should not be held to ransom by hunger and forced to eat such culinary horrors at such appalling physical and financial cost. It is frankly intolerable. Perhaps the committee should start working on the menu for next time now.

Which brings me to the Beccon bid for the 1987 Eastercon. At a risk of repeating Pam Wells' comments on Albacon I have to ask whether Beccon is in a position to make the bid. At present it's a convivial but undemanding little summer convention, and with 300 attendees it's comfortable, no one complaining about programming deficiencies as they're quite capable of making their own amusement, but an Eastercon is altogether a different proposition, with a much greater number of people, ranging from the most specialised media fan to the most fannish fanzine fan, and it is going to take much more than the usual Beccon programme to keep such a diversity of tastes happy, especially those who rely on a constant flow of organised entertainment to keep them occupied. On their present showing Beccon will have to work hard to convince me that they can do it, though I very much hope that they can succeed in that.

A standard Beccon has but one stream of programming with nothing in the way of extras, and I wonder whether they will be able to expand what is basically a diet of silly games into a multi-tracked programme designed to appeal to everyone, and including all those vital trimmings like video shows and a disco, indeed whether they have the creative expertise to do this, given the fact that the convention pool shows a remarkable homogeneity of taste in creaky films, bad SF and puns, something of limited appeal even to 300 people let alone perhaps 1500. Obviously they will have to employ outside assistance, and they are already doing so one hopes, in order to revitalise an apparently stale committee, and to create an attractive and viable Eastercon bid, though there is no other bid as yet, and to compete with the Worldcon later that year. And given that they are planning this con for another out-of-town site, I hope that they liaise with the caterers well in advance. I am not at all happy with this idea of cons, especially one as large as the Eastercon, being held in isolated locations. I accept that a body of opinion believes that the con should fill all one's needs for the weekend but materially and spiritually it so

frequently doesn't and I, for one, would welcome an opportunity to get away for awhile without undertaking a major expedition to find civilisation. BR will be laughing if Beccon gets this bid.

Undoubtedly Beccon will succeed - it always does - seeming to lead something of a charmed existence, relying on incredible luck and the goodwill of those involved. I'd hate to see this proved otherwise simply because they are thinking too big without the appropriate resources, and I very much look forward to them proving me wrong about the Eastercon, though I promise not to say 'told you so' should I be proved right. You see, I do like Beccon, I'll probably even sign up for the Eastercon. but I can't help the fact that the con itself does little for me, though I love the atmosphere.

Maureen Porter

NOVACON Fifteen

Since becoming seriously involved in all this fanstuff, which was only in April of this year, I've been to four conventions of which Novacon was the latest. All around me people were criticising the organisation of the con and various other things but on the whole seemed to be enjoying themselves, a collective frame of mind similar to that of Beccon seemed to exist - regardless of what's happening around us let's just enjoy ourselves seemed to be the unwritten law.

Despite a multitude of problems, and in some cases because of them, Novacon was hugely enjoyable. Take for example the fan room item 'Is fandom cyclic - or just sick?'; despite the non-appearance of Pete Weston to defend the statement on which this item was based and the fact that everyone else on the panel disagreed with it, an extremely interesting talk took place. Immediately following this were John and Eve who, together with Jim Barker, told us of their adventures in Australia and Sweden respectively. A pity this last item wasn't better attended as more than one extremely funny story came out and John was determined to do his Australian geography lesson complete with corked hat of Hong Kong manufacturer. Both guests of honour - Jim White and Dave Langford - gave interesting and, at times, hilarious speeches although Dave found himself upstaged at the awards ceremony by Novacon Chairman Phil Probert's clearly stage-managed 'wobbly'.

In the wake of all the problems experienced at this years Novacon such mud-slinging seems to be brewing in the Birmingham SF Group Newsletter and 'one-sided views' of the con will probably start springing up all over the place. The two committee members that made this a really enjoyable con for me were Martin Tudor and Tony Berry. Martin ended up trudging the hotel all through the night after some fool stole a gilt framed menu from one of the lifts and demanded some kind of security patrol and Tony ran a fine fan room which, one got the impression, would have been notable if he'd received a little more help from other sources.

Dave Hodson

CONVENTIONS.

MEXICON III. 7 - 9 February 1986.

Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. Attending membership costs £9 - write to Pam Wells, 21a Beech Road, London, N11 2DA.

ALBAICON III. 28 - 31 March 1986.

The 37th British Annual Science Fiction Convention to be held at the Central Hotel, Glasgow.

GoH Joe Haldeman, FGoH John Jarrold. Attending membership costs £9 up to 1/3/86 and £12 thereafter. Write to Albacon III, c/o Vince Docherty, 20 Hillington Gardens, Glasgow, G52 1PR.

NOVACON 16.

Bookings are already being taken for the 1986 Novacon to be held at the De Vere Hotel, Coventry. Membership is £8 - write to Graham Poole, 86 Berwood Farm Road, Wyde Green, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B72 1AG.

CONSPIRACY '87. 27 August - 2 September 1987.

The 45th World Science Fiction Convention to be held at Metropole Hotel and Conference Centre, Brighton. UK Professional GoH - Doris Leasing, Alfred Bester. FGoH - Joyce and Ken Slater. Special Fan GoH - Dave Langford. Write to 28 Duckett Road, London, N4 1BN for further information.

WORLDCON BIDS.

ST. LOUIS IN '88.

5 proposed guests of honour, the names to be announced at ConFederation. \$5 pre-supporting membership gets you a periodic bid-progress newsletter and a matching reduction in membership if you vote in the site selection at the '86 Worldcon and St. Louis wins the bid. Contact: St. Louis in '88 Worldcon Bid, PO Box 1058, St. Louis, MO 63188, USA.

BOSTON IN 1989.

This bunch claim to have more than 200 years of convention running experience between them. \$3 pre-supporting membership, \$3 for 4 issues of The Mad 3 Party progress report, \$6 pre-opposing membership and \$7 for a Cheshire Cat T-Shirt (the official bid T-shirt). Contact: BOSTON IN '89, PO Box 46, MIT Branch Station, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA.

THE NETHERLANDS IN 1990.

Another European Worldcon in the offing. Pre-supporting membership is £4 and should be sent to Colin Fine.

*** THE MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD is a free advertising service for all BSPA members who wish to sell, exchange or buy items or info, make contacts, publicise fanish events or ventures, etc. Just send your advertisement to the editor via the editorial address...

Wanted: Paperbacks by Ellison, Asprin, Paxson, Lynn Abbey, Sheekley, Shaw, Joanna Russ, Andrew J. Offutt. Please inform me of titles/contents. Reasonable prices please. Also P/back Dangerous Visions ed by Ellison. Kevin McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria.

Wanted: Flying Buffalo's Nuclear War, CHEAP. Kevin Chettle International House, Brookhill Road, Woolwich, London, SE18 6R2.

Wanted: April 1985 edition of OMNI in mint or near mint condition. For sale: Ringworld role-playing game in excellent condition (never used) plus Ringworld Companion (additional info) £20. Stephen Ealey, 9 Glasven Road, Northwood, Kirkby, Merseyside, L33 6UA.

Wanted Urgently: Copy of short story "Double Summer Time" from New Writings in SF 29. Will buy or borrow h/c/pb. Cherry Wilder, 19 Egelsbacher Str, 6070 Langen/Hessen, West Germany.

For Sale: Books by Cherryh, Ellison, Priest, Simak, Zelazny. All in excellent condition, hardcover editions. For list, write enclosing SSAE to John Peters, 299 Southway Drive, Southway, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 5QN.



MEDIA REVIEWS

PHENOMENA by PHENOMENA. (Bronze Records PM 1)

Reviewed by Kevin McVeigh.

I'm not sure which I should be writing this for - MATRIX or NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS. Anyway, for the unenlightened amongst you, Phenomena marks the return of a 1970's dinosaur (no, it's not the new Deep Purple LP); the 'concept' album.

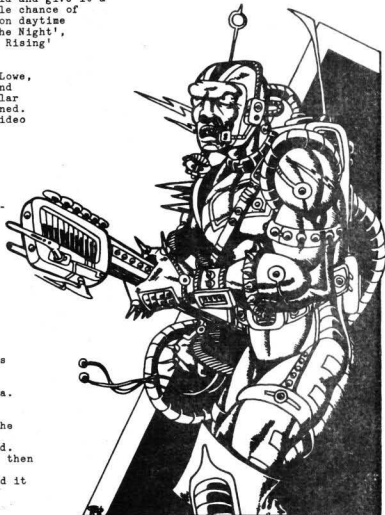
Behind this project is producer/writer Tom Galley. Basically the story is the same old one of a mad scientist whose experiment goes terribly wrong; a girl is trapped in a coma, and her father (who will probably be changed into her lover should this ever become a film) must enter THE machine which apparently uses psychic energies in an attempt to create a telepathic communication device. In order to rescue her? - a bit thin plot wise... The music is supposed to represent his adventures and the phantom creatures he encounters in the imaginary world created by the machine.

Included with the record is a 12-page booklet outlining the story and containing the lyrics to the songs. A painting accompanies each song and details of the musicians involved are also included. The latter includes such heavy metal luminaries as Glenn Hughes, Cozy Powell, John Thomas and Whitesnake members Don Airey, Neil Murray and Mel Galley. As you would expect of this Phenomena is a heavy rock album along the lines of Budgie, Whitesnake and Hughes-Thrall with an American edge (or lack of same depending upon your point of view). If you like this type of music then Phenomena is an album worth dipping into your pocket for, however the production lets the album down and in terms of a concept it is miles behind something like Robert Calvert's Captain Lockheed and the Starfighters. The strange thing is that one gets the feeling that the album should be liked more than it actually can be. Even if you don't like heavy rock and wouldn't buy such an album find someone who does and would and give it a listen. Unfortunately there is little chance of anything like this getting airplay on daytime radio, which is a shame as 'Still the Night', 'Dance with the Devil' and 'Phoenix Rising' would probably benefit from it.

As for the artwork, which is by Ian Lowe, 'Dance with the Devil', 'Believe' and 'Kiss of Fire' stand out in particular as far as my inexpert eye is concerned. From what I hear either a film or video is planned as a spin-off from the Phenomena concept, and the release, in poster form, of several of the paintings is likely at some point. This of course depends upon the commercial success of the album.

The big but comes with the consideration of the SF/fantasy aspect of the project; for instance 'Kiss of Fire' is about vampires, 'Dance with the Devil' is about possession and 'Phoenix Rising' deals with Spontaneous Human Combustion. It is supposed to be a fantasy/SF concept album but could, just as easily, be a collection of songs without a central theme - much like any Wham! album. 'Dance with the Devil' is especially guilty of this lack of intended direction. Indeed, much of Alice Cooper's material and odd bits and pieces by the likes of Rainbow, Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple work far better as fantasy than Phenomena.

This is an example of rock dabbling in SF/fantasy and failing to fuse the two media. It really is doubtful if it ever can be done, many have tried. If you want a reasonable rock album then try this, if you want SF on records played to music - try DEVO, they did it unintentionally...





SCIENCE FICTION: THE 100 BEST NOVELS

What criteria can be used for selecting the '100 best' Science Fiction novels? Are these works literary masterpieces? What are the parameters of the genre? BRIAN ALDISSE, whose *Deliverance* Walter has just appeared, CHRISTOPHER PRIEST, author of *The Grassman* and NICK AUSTIN of *Grassroots* both share the history of the art of Science Fiction writing and give their own views on the selection of the '100 best' by DAVID PRINGLE, PETER NICHOLLS, BBC Science Fiction editor of *Fantastic China*, shares. Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels is published by Tor.

WEDNESDAY 13th November 1985 at The ICA, The Mall, London.

Reviewed by Dave Hodson.

This is the sort of event I would usually not even consider attending; there is usually far too much hot air being spouted and a pitiful lack of common sense and this seemed to be running true to form for the first half-hour. Chris Priest, as marvellous writer as he is, waffled on about nought very much, Nick Austin, said just as little but managed to be a little less verbose about it, Brian Aldiss cracked a few funnies which at least livened up the proceedings a little bit, and chairman Peter Nichols asked a few over long and inane questions.

I didn't feel the least bit guilty about being the first person to get up in the middle of all this to go to the loo, but when Dave Pringle took the stage and starting getting asked to justify inclusions and omissions from the list things got a wee bit more interesting - "Why are there no Asimov's or Van Vogt's?" was one question, "Don't you feel that the list is a bit too British orientated?" was another.

I guess the word interesting would best sum up the discussion; nothing of earth-shattering importance emerged, there wasn't even one heated difference of opinion. Everything just meandered along. Of course, outside in the bar afterwards things did liven up a bit; I had a long conversation with Chris Priest and Asimov's contributor Jennifer Swift about William Gibson and Chris was in his element taunting me with the knowledge that he had a couple of proof copies of Gibson's new novel that he wasn't going to lend out for love nor money. Pringle seemed quite pleased that everyone thought Intersone had got more interesting with the last few issues and Josephine Saxton seemed to be the life and soul of the party on the next table. Oh well, at least I got a few drinks out of it, I certainly didn't learn anything new about Science Fiction...

LADYHAWKE. Directed by Richard Donner, starring Rutger Hauer, Michelle Pfeiffer and Matthew Broderick. Reviewed by someone who doesn't put their name at the top of the sheet.

As I settled back into my seat for the beginning of this film, I must confess to have had high hopes of seeing a class fantasy production. I knew that special effects had been spurned in favour of an attempt to create a sphere with more traditional techniques. I was aware that the film featured two rising Hollywood stars, Matthew Broderick and Michelle Pfeiffer, in addition to trusted character actors like Leo McKern (better known as Rumpole of the Bailey). I am also aware that two hours later I came out of the cinema dissatisfied - why? I'm still not sure.

The basic premise of *Ladyhawke* is simple, and has a certain charm, although the emotions captured on film rarely convey the desperate situation implied by the posters and radio hype. The Bishop of Aquila becomes obsessed with a young woman who, in turn, is in love with Navarre, the Captain of the Guard. In his jealousy, the Bishop curses the lovers to be forever apart, yet together - during the day Isabeau is a hawk, whilst at night Navarre is transformed into a black wolf. As directed by Richard Donner, the film tries to be evocative (one critic used the term 'elegiac'), with the wildlife and scenic photography particularly well executed. Here we begin to approach what I believe is the basic problem with the film. Donner has tried too hard to escape from the effects dominated world of *Superman*, and has reached the other extreme where a lack of the fantastic makes the supernatural curse seem out of place in an otherwise normal world. The near incessant use of coloured filters cannot alone evoke the atmosphere where unnatural occurrences may be accepted as a reasonable part of the world, an atmosphere that I find exemplified in better tellings of the Arthurian legends.

To return to the plot, the bulk of the film consists of Navarre's preparations for the Bishop's murder, to which end he enlists the help of a young thief (Broderick) who has escaped from Aquila's dungeons. The thief provides some light relief, in addition to intervals of near narrative, through his monologues with the Almighty, a device that I found the major failing of the film. Meanwhile, the Bishop, fearing for his life, makes various attempts to have Navarre killed. I shall make no reference to the rest of the plot (such as it is) as it draws to a conclusion that must have been apparent to most of the audience some time in advance (especially to those familiar with Mark Twain or Bing Crosby).

Despite my criticisms, I enjoyed the film. It had worthy objectives, and did not bow to the current trends towards without characterisation or, in particular, atmosphere. Neither can I really criticise any of the performers, although we saw too little of Pfeiffer and not enough depth from Broderick or Hauer. No, my dissatisfaction lies in a feeling that in producing a competent film, a chance was missed for a great one. I note in passing that the book ends slightly differently from the film, and, in my view, captures the desired atmosphere better - this perhaps illustrates the understanding Joan Vinge has of fantasy compared to Richard Donner. Nevertheless, if you get a chance, see this film before the torrent of schoolkid heroes hits us in *Explorers*, *Hired Science* et al.



Numbers 1 and 2.

Released July and October 1985, priced 45p and 50p respectively.

Reviewed by Dave Hodson.

That was the question put to me by a friend upon seeing that Shock Xpress 2 had been published. Issue 1 had contained material like 'Thrilling to Drilling', an article about film director Abel Ferrara who made that epic of good taste 'Hillier Killer'; 'Torn Free', sub-titled the 'Ilsa story' and about a series of films in the mid-seventies with titles like 'Ilsa, She-wolf of the SS', and 'Ilsa, Harem keeper of the Oil Sheiks'; and reviews of films like 'Worm Eaters' and 'Incredibly Strange Creatures who stopped living and became Mixed-up Zombies'.

I had somehow realised after reading issue 1 that I was not going to appreciate this publication but, like a fool, I wasted 50p on issue 2 just to confirm the suspicion and was greeted with more of the same - a Wes Craven interview, a review of 'Nightmare on Elm Street', an article called 'The Fifty Most Boring Films of all Time' which would have been better titled 'Most Boring Gory Films', and various film reviews. Now, when it comes to the quality of writing I have no complaints, the people involved include Dave Reader (ex-editor of Halls of Horror), Stephen Jones (BFS highlight and co-editor of Fantasy Tales), Kim Newman, Neil Gaiman, and Stefan Jaworzyn, so there really are no worries there, but why do they want to waste their talents on such tasteless material; why waste all that energy on producing a very handsome magazine when the subject matter is garbage.

I, along with many other people, feel that these films insult my intelligence; do the editors and contributors to Shock Xpress not feel the same? I'm not going to bother with issue 3.

Gothique

20th Anniversary Issue

Reviewed by Dave Hodson.

This is the anniversary issue of a magazine from the sixties, co-produced with the British Fantasy Society. The same publishers in the sixties also produced Stardock, an SF magazine, before vanishing due to lack of money. The man responsible for bringing Gothique back from the grave for one issue is Stan Nicholls, ex-manager of Forbidden Planet, and he has pulled together some nice material.

Included herein are a previously unpublished Lon Chaney interview from 1969 by Alan White, an article called 2005 in which Ramsey Campbell, Martin Lock and David Sutton look at what horror fiction may be like in twenty years time, and another titled Certain Disturbing Tendencies in which Ernest Harris airs some personal views about current trends in horror movies. Fine artwork is also included from David Griffiths, Alan Hunter, Moy, Jim Cawthorn, and Dave Baldock (see below).

A fine production that concentrates on quality material and nostalgia as opposed to the blood and guts of Shock Xpress, it really is a shame that the time and money is not there to produce Gothique on a regular basis, although the film society based around the magazine is supposedly going quite well.

Gothique is available from Stan Nicholls, Flat 2, Allison Court, 43 Parkhill Road, London, NW3 2YD. The price is 60p plus 20p postage and packing.



INKY FINGERS

As promised a couple of issues ago, I'm going to have a brief look at photocopying as a method of getting your fanzine duplicated.

Well, we all know what photocopying is - don't we? Of course, it's what Xerox do. All you have to do is prepare your mastercopies and hand them into your local copyshop. Come back some time later, pay your money and collect your masterpiece. End of story? Not quite...

For many years using photocopying to 'pub your izz' was considered very 'fannish'. A point of view no doubt generated by the low standards of print produced by early photocopying machines. These used special sensitised paper, some even ended up smelling of ammonia. The final copies had an appearance of grey print on grey paper and were invariably single sided. These factors contributed to the unattractive appearance of the finished zine and, as a consequence did little credit to the editor. No wonder photocopying had a bad name.

This attitude has persisted for many years and it is only with the advent of high quality electrostatic copiers - mainly from Japan - that opinions have been forced to change.

At this point I must confess to finding the inner workings of this printing process something of a mystery. So I'm afraid what follows will be rather vague. Still for what it's worth here's my understanding of the principles.

At the heart of the machine is a polished metal cylinder which carries an electrostatic charge on its surface. The image from your carefully prepared master is then used to discharge the drum to form a corresponding electrostatic 'picture' - exactly how this minor miracle is achieved I am not clear but let's assume it has been done. Now all you have to do is spray the drum with black 'toner' powder and roll this onto your paper. Hey presto! a photocopy of the original. Great until you rub your finger across the paper and the copy comes off. So before the paper leaves the machine it passes through a 'fuser' which heats up the page and fuses the image onto it.

Well if you believe that lot you'll believe anything! Can anybody out there explain the process in a clearer way? However a lack of knowledge doesn't stop you from using photocopy. What does stop its use is the cost.

Let's look at a typical zine of say 12 sides, which is not exactly large, and a print run of 100 copies, which is fairly average by fanzine standards. Using a price list I acquired from a local high street copy shop this would cost you £36. Not particularly cheap when you consider that you've yet to collate and staple each copy and don't forget the £12 postage bill. Did anybody say that being a fanzine editor was a cheap hobby?

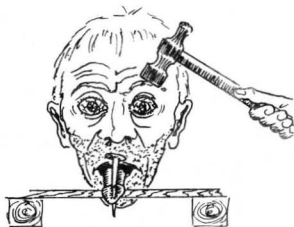
At this stage let me draw your attention to a firm called ENJAY REPROGRAPHICS whose 'Non-commercial rates' list has come my way from a number of sources recently. This company have set out specifically to cater to limited circulation magazines, comics and Society Newsletters. Their full list of services is far too long for me to repeat here but by way of an example the price for the above fanzine would be £19.73 plus postage and packing. So if you are interested in using photocopying I suggest you get their list and don't forget to say who sent you. Their address is:

ENJAY, 17 LAMBANK AVENUE, RISE PARK, NOTTINGHAM N65 5BU

As a parting shot let me suggest one way to cut your printing (and postage) bill in half. Reduce the print to A5 and have it copied on A4 sheets for folding to an A5 booklet.

That's all for now, next time round it'll be the turn of the most time honoured fanzine production method - stencil duplication.

John Harvey



Nail em down...

Hussain Mohamed
41 Fontenoy Road
London SW12 9LX.

It was nice to see Tom Jones paying due respect to the excellent work of John Harvey,

but the options he outlines seem very backward looking and I wonder why. There seem to be an inordinate number of unanswered questions in the air these days. Certainly all does not seem as well as it might be in the state of the association these days. I would never have guessed that our membership is less than a thousand (correct me if I am wrong). As a newly recruited pair of hands on the Vector team I still cannot see what if any purpose the Association has in wanting the publications to physically look better than they do. In terms of production quality (I leave literary quality for wiser heads to judge) Vector has moved away from Matrix and PI. Mr. Jones may disapprove of this but if it makes it easier to read and presents a more professional face to the world how can it be bad? Personally I get a little tired of sheets of paper in the mailing covered in filled in o's and e's. Perhaps this is what fannish publications are supposed to look like; but I am not a fannish type, at least not in the usual sense, and frankly I have not the time or patience to wade through that form of presentation just to glean nuggets from beneath. I am simply an SF fan who would like, every two months, to receive a package that is neat and clean, where the effort to produce does not hamper that which has been produced. I am sure duplicated, edge-stapled zines are the Real Thing but I am afraid I lost interest long ago. Matter of choice I suppose. I choose to be happier receiving magazines that look like Vector; others may choose Matrix (even on its less wonderful days) and that is fair enough. I would be happy to let Vector revert to its old format if that is what members desire. The problem is, to make slick publications that get noticed and have influence takes a lot of effort - to sell them involves more effort and aggressive marketing as well. If there is a limited market for Vector why does Foundation (erudition as well) continue nervilly on its way? If Vector failed before as Mr. Jones says, was it the magazine or the methods that were used to sell it that were at fault? Our ambitions should either remain minor and produce all publications on a correspondingly minor scale, or the entire package must be recast in a more professional mould, meaning a consistent and competitive look, and a thorough and determined campaign to sell. In other words a corporate plan, and I will believe that when I see it! It really is pointless trying to do better in bits. I would rather take my membership fee and buy a good book (half a book these days?).

*** The real shame of the matter is that

a lot people seem to have found their niches within the BSFA these days: the Vector team - Paul Kincaid, Dave Barrett, Hussain and Ann Morris - are doing a wonderful job; Andy Sawyer is getting to grips with PI and helping me enormously by sending huge wads of news items regarding new books which, allied to the gossip I pick up at Forbidden Planet, has meant a big improvement in book news and we have had 4 applications to do Focus. We've also got more professional people involved than I've ever noticed - Hussain, Paul Ward, who is a free-lance artist/illustrator and thus has marketing skills that we can utilise, Ann Morris, and Phil Knight. The nucleus for something really exciting is there, and when allied to offers of help from the likes of Bernard Smith who, love him or hate him, is well-qualified to help after two years of administrating and editing the main publication of Cassandra Workshop, it really is now or never. Letters like the one from Ken Lake a couple of issues back are no help at all as all they do is blur the central issues and losing the likes of Dorothy Davies is nothing to mourn over.

Something else that the membership as a whole should think upon is what sort of scope do they require of BSFA publications. I've tried to introduce a couple of columns that have been greeted with vitriol; if we try to push the BSFA to the outside world things like comics and games must be embraced - it need only be one page per mailing - in order to try and catch as large a readership as possible. Money spinning off-shots must be tried such as offering Interzone or Cassandra to the membership (subscriptions as such) as part of their mailings. If we go for these sorts of project we can make approximately 30% profit per issue sold. We must also get things like our advertising rates in line with rates for magazines with a comparable readership - we charge far too low a rate at the moment - and raise the membership rate to something that will at least cover a proportion of the effort involved in producing the magazines. Of course we can only investigate such changes with the backing of the membership so maybe a few more of you ought to consider attending the AGM at Albacon next Easter - if you're not willing to at least do that you never know, you might even enjoy yourselves at the convention) then you've no cause to moan about the state of the Association...

Ken Lake
115 Monkhouse Ave
London E17 8AY.

I think it appalling that anyone was so insensitive as to print John Harvey's APOLOGY on the front page of M61. John and Eve have nothing to apologise for, and as Tom A. Jones indicates in his letter in the same ish we all owe this marvellous couple more than I'm sure we - singly or collectively - can ever repay.

Having said that, let's figure out just what we can repay. We sent them to Aussiecon - and now we expect thousands of words of reportage on their trip, not to mention already having had Eve's superb transcription of Bob Shaw's GOSH speech there. That's all, Eve will tell you, part of being a fan.

Maybe; but there are fen...and fen, and I personally know of none who have so devoted themselves to the BSFA and to fandom in general than this couple, and I think it's long past time we damn well gave them something back.

Surely there are funds available, surely there are weird fanish conventions capable of coping with this? If not, how about a totally new HARVEYFUND? I reckon some inventive fan can come with a really attractive gimmick (no, not like COFF) that will enable us all to contrib-

ute to the Harvey's overheads and show our appreciation of their sterling devotion to fandom?

*** The people responsible for that crass lack of sensitivity were none other than John and Eve themselves - open mouth, insert foot - other than that I couldn't agree more than with the sentiments of your letter. Unfortunately, the people who would most argue against everything you say are John and Eve although I don't see what that should have to do with it. It is a shame though that in amongst all the griping letters there weren't a few that just said wasn't that a nicely printed issue of Matrix/PI/Vector/Focus that was now and again - funny how little things like appreciation make difficult times easier to bear...

NAHF: Bernard Smith, who voiced concern about the direction in which the Association could find itself going if the membership takes everything Tom Jones said in his letter in the last Matrix as 'gospel'; Peter Ellis, who has just rejoined the BSFA after several years away and sees that not a lot has changed; David (S. crossed out makes it less formal) Garnett, who was just a little tongue-in-cheek about a few of the news items; Ron Gemmill, asking what went wrong - usual things; new job, baby, do-it-yourself repair job on the typewriter (I'll have a new word-processor for the next issue). In reply to your last paragraph, we had a 7lb little girl on November 26th and we're calling her Elisabeth; Benedict S. Cullum, who likes the way things are going with the magazines anyway; Margaret Hall, who confirmed suspicions that Sue Thomason was essentially left with no help from her ex-co-editor on Focus and also praised John and Eve; Phil Nichols, no I can't promise that I won't foul-up on an issue of Matrix again and anyone that demands such a promise obviously has no commitments outside of themselves and thus is living in cloud cuckoo land; John Fraser, expect a personal reply in the post; Steven Tew, interesting letter but echoing others sentiments; Jack D. Stephen, who goes through BSFA mailings with a fine tooth comb looking for grammatical cock-ups and criticises two neologisms without fully comprehending why they are used; Trevor Jones, I'm trying to get a chart of paperback sales from specialist shops together; and Phil Spencer, who talks from experience with the Tolkien Society and the BPS when examining the problems of the BSFA.

Alright, a task for all you maners and grippers out there (and all the other members - all 90% of you); write in and tell us exactly what direction the BSFA should be taking, go back and re-read my editorial, re-read Hussain's letter and my reply, telephone me if you want to (01-801 4574), but talk to us. Tell us what you think a fair membership fee would be, what would you want to get for it? and I mean exactly (ie. How many mailings a year, how many Vectors/Pis/etc, special offers - how and what?), WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I apologise in advance if anyone feels I've taken an overly caustic tone on this letters page, lack of sleep and a sick son have made me just a wee bit ratty, but then again maybe you should also tell me whether I should stop trying to take things softly, softly and be more aggressive every issue - that would help as well.

Before I forget -
Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year.
See you 10 Feb 1986
Dave

Billion Year

Crossword No. 4

Simon Walker &
Chris Carne.

ACROSS

1. A tower, and fish which proved the non-existence of God. (5)
5. Archivist of Canopus in Argos. (7)
10. Asteroid made into a 'Captive Universe'. (4)
11. Critic, author of 'The Alteration'. (4)
12. Doctrine or practice. (Well can you think of an SF word to fit here?) (3)
13. Author, 'Colossus'. (1,1,5)
15. According to himself, The worlds greatest SF writer. (6)
17. The Ship Who Sang. (5)
19. 15 across's 'pulp hero'. (5)
21. Water-conservation garment of the Freemen. (9)
22. Astronomical body, can't think of an SF clue. (5)
23. Really amazingly together guy, (townspeak). (5)
27. Czech SF playwright. (5)
29. Female writer of juvenile SF. (6)
30. One of Lord Foul's ancient henchmen. (5)
31. 48 down +1, computer. (3)
33. Creature of folk myth. (3)
34. SF jargon for computer + machine + organism. (5)
36. Astronomical distance. (6)
38. US editor, writer, responsible for 'Logan's Run'. (5)
39. Pseudonym of early 20thC. Belgian writer J H Bone. (5)
41. 15 across has won several. (5)
42. Spaceship used by Blake. (9)

47. Director, 'Dune'. (5)
49. Truncated protagonist of 'The Godshale'. (5)
51. Aristocrat, specialist in confusing pictures. (6)
53. Woody's SF film. (7)
55. Computer of 48 across. (3)
56. They returned after the empire struck back. (4)
58. Last earthman, wandering the galaxy with a man from Betelgeuse. (4)
59. US writer, built a fabulous riverboat. (7)
57. The shade of the departed in classical mythology. (5)

DOWN

1. As a critic, Atheling. As a writer... (5)
2. Acronym for all those marauding aliens. (3)
3. Protagonist of 'Dragonflight'. (5)
4. 'Venus Equilateral' creator. (1,1,5)
6. Herra Jortice. (anag.). writer. (1,1,7)
7. Successor to 46 across. (7)
8.-eat Roger Cornam film of hippy SF. (3)
9. 'Meat' author, revealed as Alice Sheldon. (7)
14. Goddess of dawn. (3)
15. Home and burial place of King Arthur. (6)
16. Planetary home of a very logical race. (6)
18. For this is a very long time. (6)
20. The Way, of Toth? (3)
22. Hero of Barsoom. (6)
23. Villain of 'Foundation' trilogy. (4)
24. Film, accidental fusion of man and insect. (3,3)
25. US writer and editor of Gamma. (6,5)
26. Enigmatic girl found by Severian, in the Bow of the New Sun. (6)
27. Gathering of witches. (5)
28. Author of 'I, Lucifer', influenced Aldiss. (5)
29. Emperor of Mongo. (4)
35. Aristocrat, 'Tea' covers and 'Views'. (5,4)
36. Classic alternate history novel. (6)
37. Writer, 'Profundia', 'Clone'. (6)
40. Number of Sauron's Nazguli henchmen. (4)
42. Hero of the Odyssey. (7)
43. 'Nasty' in Tolkien, related to goblin. (3)
44. Kate, won a Hugo in '77. (7)
45. Critic, fan, author, wrote SF and detective novels and founded F&SF. (7)
48. Homicidal computer of The Discovery. (3)
49. Holm's doctor, has his own island. (5)
50. Fantasy speak for writing or character. (5)
52. (-), calling attention to form of quote. (3)
53. Gnomes' exterminator in 'Zardoz'. (3)

COMPETITION CORNER

By ELIZABETH SOURBUT

There were eight entrants for the M60 competition. Things are looking up. You folks had better hurry and join in before this column gets popular and the chances of winning goes down! Entrants this time were: K.V.BAILEY, A.P.MILLS, KEV MCVEIGH, BRIAN ROLLS, CHARLES STROSS, STEVEN TEN, WILLIAM WALKER and DAVE WOOD. Amongst the novels brought into the SF canon were 'Persuasion', 'Treasure Island', 'The Bible' and the works of James Herriot, while 'Man Plus' was excluded.

The winner this time is Steven Trew for (almost) convincing me about 'Brideshead Revisited'.

"Wough shows a speculative interest in the developments of human society, and embodies this in Hooper ('the advance of the Hoopers') a 'symbol of Young England' who 'savourously looked human'.... a truly alien character, observing the world from Somewhere Else....

Brideshead is, of course, a space/time machine, its room transport to other times and places. Oxford sits on a time rift, 'starting the New Year in Autumn'...."

Steven will be receiving a £5 book token for his entry.

Now we come to.....

THE MATRIX 62 COMPETITION.

It is the year of Our Lord 1889. Through the streets of London swirls the fog, a yellow sulphurous blanket, a pea-souper so dense that it is folding the fabric of space and time about itself. The thickening spirals of this almost-living smog centre on the hurrying figure of a man, curling tendrils of otherness lap about him. The rolling cloud swirls faster, creating a vortex, a time portal opening into infinity. When the fog clears, the man is gone.

Aboard a starship far away in space and time warning lights begin to blink, loudspeakers blare: 'Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!'. Deep in the hold of the ship, a swirling yellow cloud is materialising, and at its centre the figure of a man. As the mist clears, he shivers inside his Inverness cape and stares about him with piercing, intelligent eyes.

Flanked by two security guards, the ship's Science Officer comes racing towards him. As he sees the tall, thin intruder he skids to a halt, and one sloping eyebrow twitches. "Fascinating," he murmurs, staring at the other's deerstalker.

The two men eye another in silence for a moment, and then.....

What happens next? Your task this month is to describe for me this momentous meeting. Send your entries, by the next mailing deadline please, to: ELIZABETH SOURBUT, 8 Petersfield Rise, Roehampton, London SW15 4AE.

Billion Year Crossword No 3

