



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

MATRIX



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Typesetting and Production by Maureen Porter and Paul Kincaid, not necessarily in that order.

If the mystery reviewer of Joe Dante's *Explorers* would like to own up I'll give him or her a name-check next time around.



RED SHIFT

As some of you will probably have seen in the Stop Press in the last BSFA mailing, Rob Gregg, frequent contributor to the Matrix letter column, died recently after a long illness. I suspect very few of us ever met Rob, although he was well known through his prodigious output of letters. There was hardly a fanzine in which he didn't appear, and his contributions to Matrix were always lively even if one didn't happen to agree with his particular viewpoint. I was surprised to discover that he had been an active fan for a comparatively short time. He certainly made an impact in that short time. I shall miss his presence in the letter column of Matrix, and fanzines won't be quite the same without him.

Rob's sister has requested that people remove his name from their mailing lists. I think most people will have heard by now, but if you know someone who sent him a zine, would you let them know.

Moving on to magazine matters, the general consensus of opinion was that M66 wasn't bad, I hope you feel the same way about M67. This issue is mainly devoted to a round-up of convention reviews, and as thorough a listing of next year's conventions as I've been able to manage, plus a nod towards more long-term events, including a summary of the various Eastercon bids presently under way. Obviously, if you have information to add, please let me know.

Next issue is supposed to contain the great awards symposium, only problem being that very few of you seem inspired to respond to my plea for comments. Well, you have Christmas in which to put together a few thoughts, so tell me what you think about the awards, whether they mean anything to you, why you vote or don't vote, and I'll try to produce a synthesis of current feelings in the organisation.

I will also be starting a regular column designed to let you know where your nearest friendly SF bookshop might be found, and also tell you a bit about the people on the other side of the counter. The first column will contain an article about SFF Books, currently revolutionising mail order book selling with their all purpose book catalogue-cum-magazine-cum-fiction outlet.

But it wouldn't do to reveal too many future plans all at once, would it?

My appeal for artwork resulted in a flood of excellent work, some of which has been used to good advantage in this issue, and some more of which will be appearing in future issues. Thanks to all those who responded to my pleas for help.

This issue's plea for help concerns the media reviews. First of all, my apologies for not printing Mark Greener's address in last issue. It's in this time, and please note that he has moved. From now on, please send all media reviews directly to mark, who will be editing them. I think it would make life easier if you were to keep them reasonably short but don't feel too intimidated if you have a lot you want to say. I'm sure we'll manage to fit everything in one way or another.

What we do want is more people reviewing the stuff. We're working on improving the news coverage of films, and hope to be arranging chances to attend press showings of films in the future, but I'd still like to know what the average BSFA member catching the film at the local fleapit has to say, not to mention what they feel about television and radio productions.

I'd also like to do something about covering videos. There is a lot of crud available in the video shop at the moment, and it would be nice to be able to distinguish between worthwhile video

material and the timewasters. If people would like to send capsule reviews of videos we might be able to include a column on videos.

Mark has asked me to request that anyone corresponding with him enclose an SAE.

On a personal note, I would like to apologise again for the erratic state of my correspondence. Without wishing to sound like a medical bulletin, the quack has finally decided what's wrong with me and we more or less have the problem under control now, but it has sapped my energy considerably over the last two or three months and I have not been at my best. Things should improve considerably.

I'll also take advantage of a little space and say a few things about letters. First, letters to Matrix should be about Matrix, the BSFA generally, SF in general or whatever. It's pointless sending letters commenting on the content of the other three magazines as I have nothing to do with their editing. I just pass them on to the right person, so how about cutting out the middle woman and sending them to the correct magazine to start with. Addressees are in each magazine and listed at the front of this one. In the same way, requests for information go to Mike Noir (27 Hampton Road, Worcester Park, Surrey), and membership enquiries to Sandy Brown or Keith Freeman.

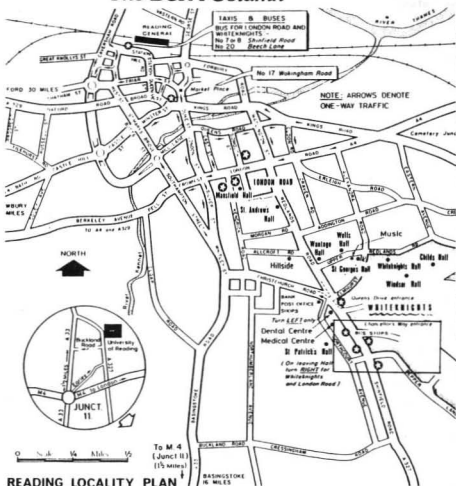
In the last six months I have been addressed as Dear Miss Porter, Ms Porter, Mrs Porter, Editor, Matrix, Writeback (mercifully not Dear BSFA), Madam, and most annoyingly as Dear Sir. I really feel like a bank manager or an insurance agent. It's a nice friendly organisation, I'm a nice friendly person, I don't bite (well, not much) so how about a nice informal Dear Maureen, or Dear Maureen Porter if you really don't like using forenames on their own. It's bad enough receiving formal letters at work without getting the same at home, so feel free to use my first name.

And all that remains is for me to wish you all a good Christmas and a peaceful New Year. 1987 is going to be a year to remember for British SF fans, the year of the Worldcon. A lot of attention is going to be paid our favourite literary genre not to mention all the other spin-off interests. I think it could be a rewarding time for all of us, so have fun and enjoy!



WALKING ON GLASS

The BSFA Column



READING LOCALITY PLAN

I had hoped to be able to provide a report on the average BSFA mailing session but unfortunately I wasn't in a fit state to do so (my doctor has some interesting theories on how to get rid of intestinal viruses). However, this should be appearing in the next edition of Matrix as I shall be helping mail out this edition. All will be revealed.

In the meantime, I have provided maps and also some directions, courtesy of Keith Freeman, who masterminds the mailing sessions. The first map shows the general layout of Reading, and the location of the WHITEKNIGHTS CAMPUS. (This is important - there are two university campuses in Reading and you wouldn't want to end up at the wrong one, would you?)

If you are arriving by train, the station is Reading General. The bus stops are just outside the station, and you are looking for a no. 7 or 8 to Shinfield Road. (Alternatively, you can take the no. 20 to Beech Lane, but it seems to dump you a long way from the main part of the campus, so I personally don't recommend it - or am I just lazy?)

Unfortunately, Keith hasn't provided any detailed instructions for bus users, so I will try to find more about this. From London I think it's Victoria Coach Station but I don't know where the bus station in Reading is so ...

By car, the M4 out of London is simplest for anyone coming from that direction, whilst for anyone else venturing into Reading by car (and it

is a genuine concrete jungle) it seems simplest to find the A4 and then the Shinfield Road. If you are coming by car, remember that the Whiteknights Campus is split in two by the lake, so make sure you are on the correct side.

Once on site, you are looking for the Blandford Lodge Annex (aka Applied Statistics).

Applied Stats can't easily be obtained on the phone out of hours but if you have problems, try ringing the main University number (875123) which will put you through to Security, who should be able to transfer the call to extension 415.

Remember to check on the Thursday or Friday evening that the mailing is going ahead, by ringing Keith on 0734-666142.

Keith also asks me to mention that everyone goes to the pub for an hour sometime between 12 and 2.

Any problems that anyone encounters in getting to Reading and to the University, please let me know and I can then refine the instructions in a future Matrix.

Lastly, don't forget that you get a free month's subscription for each collating you attend.

See you there?



THE BSFA PROFILE

PAUL KINCAID

I was born in 1952, and throughout my childhood read voraciously everything that came my way. This included a lot of science fiction and fantasy, though it wasn't until my last year or so at grammar school that the stuff began recognisably to comprise the majority of my reading. By the time I got to the New University of Ulster I was writing it (and collecting my first rejection slips), though I was a postgraduate at Warwick before I finally discovered fandom. There was, I discovered, a science fiction convention in Coventry that Easter (1975), and I decided I could stay at my campus flat over the weekend and go in every day to see what was happening. As luck would have it, that was an awful Easter. I remember traipsing through deep snow as I made my way back across the campus each evening. But the damage had been done. Before the end of the year my first book reviews were appearing in a fanzine.

From that point on, all sorts of things started overlapping. I sold a story to Ken Bulmer's *New Writings in SF*, which promptly (and probably fortuitously) folded the issue before my story was due to appear. I was writing for an increasing number of fanzines, turning into a letter-bast, critic, con-reporter, occasional humourist (failed), and so on. Around 1978, along with Mike

Scantlebury, I put out my first fanzine, with the dreadful title *Tripe Pickers Journal*, a second issue appeared as my personalzine, to be followed by sporadic appearances of *A Pauling*, and most recently one issue of *To Graunch the Kermoset*. Also around 1978 I was asked by the then editor of *Vector*, Dave Ingrove, to do some reviews for him, and have been doing so regularly throughout all the changes of editorship since.

My convention-going career, meanwhile, had continued apace. I began to be invited onto panels, then I got to see the other side of the picture when I organised the programme for Cheshamcon in 1981. Never again, I swore. So naturally when the first Mexicon came along I was a sucker to do the programme along with Chris Evans. That was such a success and such a good experience that I was happy to do the same for Mexicon 2, this time along with Colin Greenland.

In 1979 I left the advertising agency where I was working in Manchester to become copywriter for a travel company in Folkestone. After four increasingly unhappy years there, I became a freelance writer in February 1983, and precarious as it is I have survived that way until now. Most of my work is in advertising and travel, but through my work in *Vector* I have become a regular reviewer for *The Fiction Magazine* and the British Council's *British Book News*, as well as reviewing irregularly for a number of other magazines. My articles and interviews have also begun to appear in print, including one upcoming in *Interzone*, while one of my short stories has at last seen print without causing the demise of the magazine.

As for the BSFA, my involvement with *Vector* increased when Kev Smith invited me to fill the rôle of features editor, which I continued to do for his successor, Geoff Rippington, until the responsibilities of setting up my own business forced me to step down. With Geoff I also edited the two BSFA Bibliographies on Bob Shaw and Keith Roberts, contributing the monograph on Roberts. In 1985 I was persuaded by then BSFA supremo Alan Dorey to edit one issue of *Vector*, until the new editorial team could be organised and I settled back into the rôle of Reviews Editor. The most recent BSFA committee meeting, however, has added new responsibilities as BSFA Co-ordinator,

Meanwhile? Well for two years I was a member of Frank's Apa, but recently my fanish writing seems to be decreasing, though I am still a member of three apas. Upcoming, I'm administering the Hugos for the Worldcon; I am, with Mike Moir, one of the BSFA representatives on the judging panel for the new Arthur C. Clarke Award; I shall be chairing next year's Milford Writers' Conference; and it's not impossible that I'll be involved with other convention bids. Sometimes I find time to work.

Last, but very far from least, it was through Frank's Apa and a party given by Graham James that I first met Maureen Porter. Earlier this year she moved in with me, coincidentally becoming *Matrix* editor. If this is nepotism I'm all for it, but I wish she'd get her own Amstrad.

SANDY BROVE

The first SF story that I remember reading was Wells' *The War of the Worlds* at the age of eight. It impressed the hell out of me so I read the rest of the novels in *The Scientific Romances of H.G. Wells* which I'd found in our fairly skimpy bookshelf. In those days you didn't need a bookshelf when the Glasgow Public Libraries had more books than you could read in a lifetime. I immediately shot off to the library, to find that the children's section only had stuff like Angus McVicar and W. Johns - hardly in the same league. Bitterly disappointed, I had to rerun the good stuff until I found the shop that sold Curtis Warren paperbacks by Volstead Gridan etc. It was frowned upon for a nine year old to go into a dirty-bookshop which sold *Health and Efficiency*,

but I steadily built up a collection so that I was quite blasé when the other kids discovered *Journey into Space*. Then Pan and Corgi got into their stride and I was MADE! Add to this my discovery of second-hand *Astoundings*, and truly 'bliss it was'.

In 1972 I discovered an ad for the BSFA in that back of a book, immediately joined, heard about conventions and went to my first one (Cheshamcon in Chester). I was a real programme fan in those days and it wasn't until later that I found the social side of fandom. In the meantime (1974) the BSFA went into a decline (only one, but on the strength of it you will sometimes find references to several 'BSFA collapses'). According to Graham Poole, then Company Secretary and apparently responsible for organising the resurgence, we had a Membership Secretary who fell over when confronted with a large response to a free mention in *Science Fiction Monthly*, plus a Treasurer who cashed no incoming cheques. The BSFA has continued, SPFM did not.

I became active in the BSFA at the behest of Tom Jones, the first editor of *Matrix*, and then BSFA Chairman. I occasionally earned a few bob from photography and sent Tom a couple of 10 x 8s at his request. At the time I offered to 'do something' for the BSFA, it seems that there were no other takers for the job of Membership Secretary, so I took over the post in 1979, coincidentally the year that a whole pile of Council/Committee members were due to retire in three-year rotation, and few wanted to stand for re-election. This is referred to as the 'fannish takeover of the BSFA', a convenient label but, like most labels, only partially true. Time converts yesterday's Young Turks into today's boring old farts, which is a good reason for not letting anyone stay in office too long - and that's why I'm retiring as Membership Secretary in the near future.

The Membership Secretary is the first line of contact with the prospective member, and therefore gets the weird letters. "Can you please write this thesis for me on science fiction? I want to refer to certain books but don't have the time to actually read them, so I'm prepared to just accept a résumé of them from you." Or, "I want to conduct a survey of all skiffy artists. Please copy this letter and send it to all artists." Or, "I'm going to write an article on time travel. Please send me a list of all time travel stories - you needn't go back further than 1900." Or, "Why do spaceships go faster in hyperspace, and send me a cutaway drawing of a blaster, and how do planetbusters work?" These get the "Thanks but no thanks" reply.

A number of them are "How can I copyright this brilliant idea for a short story?" or "How do I go about getting my novel published, it won't fill TWJ jotters?" or the fellow who sent not only his novel but also his own blurb - "told with a verve and consummate skill, soon to be a major motion picture" - never referring to it as a novel, but as a "property" (several times).

It's a bit patronising to chuckle at overseas people's infelicities with the English language, but I must mention the Turkish gen who wrote "Send me many books - I wish to member you clup", and the pile of books I was sent from China, all in Chinese! Baffled I took them along to our carryout. The lad on the counter couldn't read Chinese, so he brought out the cook who could but didn't speak English. They poured over it, jabbered a bit, then the answer came, "He doesn't recognise the characters here and here, but it's called *The Man Called Something, in the Forest of Something, and other stories*. Sorry we can't do better. If you don't mind me asking, where did you get these?" "They came in the post. From Kwangtung." "Where's that? The South of England?" Collapse of stout party. So I sent it to Andy Sawyer for *Paperback Inferno*. But he hasn't reviewed it yet. Funny that.

BADGES

Sandy Brown has asked me to let you all know that BSFA badges are available, from him at present. They are 2" in diameter, and carry the BSFA logo. Cost is 25p plus a stamped addressed envelope, and that 25p can be sent in stamps. Please do not send loose coins through the post.

Contact: Sandy Brown, 11 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, G72 9NA, Scotland.

1986 BSFA AWARDS

Breakdown of Final Ballot Voting

Analysed by Mike Moir

This is the second article about 1986 BSFA awards voting. The first looked at the initial ballot, this looks at the final ballot. The article has been delayed partly due to my moving house, but mainly so that it coincides with the issue of the first ballot forms for the 1987 awards.

In total 165 people voted in the final ballot, 5 votes were disqualified as they could not be identified. Of the remaining 160, 64 voted before the convention, and 96 at the convention. This is slightly up on last year, but still not much about 10% of those eligible.

Before presenting the results, I will explain how the votes are allocated. For every 1st place vote a nominee receives, it is given 6 points, 5 points for a 2nd place and so on, down to 1 point for 6th place. 'No Award' is treated just like the other nominees until the end. Unfortunately the Albacorn committee forgot to put 'No Award' on the convention ballot forms, so its voting is lower than it should be.

For each award category I have placed the nominees in the final order, showing the total voting, and then the voting split between BSFA (Postal Votes) and Convention voters (Votes Handled In). For each of these I have shown the total number of points, the number of votes and the number of 1st place votes (abbreviated to P, V and 1). The main reason for splitting the BSFA and Convention voting is because the two groups voted in surprisingly different ways considering that there should be a considerable overlap in the two groups.

NOVEL CATEGORY

	TOTAL		
	Points	Votes	1sts
Helliconia Winter	439	94	34
Warrior who carried Life	401	84	35
Anubis Gates	378	84	28
Kitteworld	345	81	20
Free Live Free	334	78	16
No Award	105	26	10

TOTAL 2003 447 143

	BSFA			CONVENTION		
	P	V	1	P	V	1
H	439	94	34	197	43	14
W	401	84	35	165	35	17
A	378	84	28	177	38	13
K	345	81	20	143	36	5
F	334	78	16	159	36	6
NA	105	26	10	28	5	4
T	1143	255	82	860	193	61

More BSFA members vote in this category than any of the others. The two trade paperbacks came in

second and third. This new format is having some effect on the results, but there is no real sign that you are having difficulty in getting the hardbacks.

SHORT STORY CATEGORY

	TOTAL		
	Points	Votes	1sts
Langford	412	90	26
Roberts	354	82	23
Ryman	353	74	30
Watson	315	75	21
Harrison, MJ	303	71	19
No Award	125	28	15

TOTAL 1862 420 134

	BSFA			CONVENTION		
	P	V	1	P	V	1
L	218	47	11	194	43	15
R	205	47	13	149	35	10
RY	202	42	19	151	32	11
W	192	43	15	123	32	6
HMJ	160	40	9	143	31	10
NA	95	23	10	30	5	5

T 1072 242 77 * 790 178 57

Langford's *Cube Root* was only slightly in the lead after the BSFA vote, but easily won first place overall, being more popular with convention goers. It is noticeable that authors who regularly go to conventions do better with convention voters in both fiction categories. Ryman's *O Happy Day* received the most first place votes, as he usually does.

MEDIA CATEGORY

	TOTAL		
	Points	Votes	1sts
Brazil	549	107	60
Max Headroom	425	90	27
Mad Max II	377	89	14
Terminator	361	84	18
The Tripods	236	69	11
No Award	139	30	15

TOTAL 2087 469 145

	BSFA			CONVENTION		
	P	V	1	P	V	1
B	279	53	30	270	54	30
MH	187	41	10	238	49	17
MM	164	38	5	213	51	9
T	144	35	9	217	49	9
TT	118	28	8	118	41	3
NA	115	26	11	24	4	4

T 1007 221 73 * 1080 248 72

There was never really any doubt here. *Brazil* was always way out in front. It was odd to note the number of convention ballots which placed *Brazil* first, *Terminator* or *Max Headroom* second, *Mad Max II* third, and *Tripods* a resounding fifth. Of the 41 people voting for *Tripods* at the convention, 31 placed it 4th or 5th. To a certain extent, I think it was shortlisted only on a sympathy vote, due to its cancellation. Not surprisingly, convention goers tend to prefer the media category to the others.

ARTIST CATEGORY

	Points	Votes	1sts
Burns	344	73	23
Matthews	270	62	24
White	259	60	16
Miller	237	56	10
Jones	223	54	14
No Award	171	32	22

TOTAL 1504 337 109

BSFA				CONVENTION			
P	V	1		P	V	1	
B	150	34	7	* 194	39	16	
M	124	27	13	* 146	35	11	
V	123	27	9	* 136	33	7	
Mi	119	26	7	* 118	30	3	
J	106	25	8	* 117	29	6	
NA	129	25	15	* 42	7	7	
T	751	164	59	* 753	173	50	

As usual, voting was way down in this category. It is a particular shame that 'No Award' was missed off the convention ballot form as it might have scored much higher. I do not believe that the 'No Award' vote implies that anyone particularly dislikes any of the artists, more likely the award category is getting tired and needs changing.

MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

WANTED

I'm still trying to compile a complete listing of SF clubs and groups in the UK and worldwide for Conspiracy, the Worldcon in Brighton in 1987.

If you are a member of a local or university group, please GET IN TOUCH as soon as possible. **WHEN** and **WHERE** does your club meet and **WHO** should I send information to?

I am also collecting fanzines, clubzines and newszines from now until August 1987, for display in the fan room at CONSPIRACY. This is good publicity for your group or zine. Use it!

GO ON! Deluge me with mail!!!

I am Pam Wells of 24a Beech Road, Bowes Park, London, N11 2DA. Or you can phone me on 01-889-0401 after 8pm and at weekends.

I'm still looking for childrens' fantasy books, hardback or paperback. I'm particularly interested in titles by Edward Eager, Jane Louis Curry and Louise Lawrence. I am also looking for *Drowned Ammet* by Diana Wynne Jones. Or tell me what you've got and I'll let you know. I am Maureen Porter, 114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1BS. Tel 0303 52939

Good quality hardback editions of Raymond Feist's *Magician* and *A Darkness at Sedan*. Drop me a line, telling me the condition of the books and what you want for them. If everything's alright 'we'll strike a deal'. Oh, you'll want my name and address - Tony Morris, 23 Woodward Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 8TX.

I have changed the rules this year for the Art Award category, along the lines suggested in my previous article. The award will go to the best piece of artwork. To nominate for this category you will need the following information:

Name of artist (if known)
Title or Artwork (if known)
Where published (if you don't know the above two, then exactly where!)

If the artwork was a book cover, you should state title, author and publisher. If it is from a magazine, title and issue number. If I cannot trace the artwork, I cannot count it.

As usual, the artwork must have its first appearance in a 1986 UK publication. Not knowing what will be nominated, I will not as yet define rules as to where it can be published or on what subject matter. However, it should be either illustrating SF or have an overt SF content.

This is the first year of the A C Clarke Award for best novel, which is being administered jointly by the Science Fiction Foundation, the Science Fiction Council and the BSFA. As announced in earlier mailings, we have agreed to be part of the award, but have decided to continue with the BSFA Novel Award as usual, for at least this year. If there is little support for the BSFA Novel Award, and the A C Clarke Award goes well, this could be your last chance to vote on a novel award. I want to keep a 'free voting' novel award going but it is up to you.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO VOTE THIS YEAR

Spacewreck (Ghostships and Derelicts of Space) by Stewart Cowley, published by Hamlyn.

21st Century Foss by Chris Foss, published by Dragon's Dream

I am interested in buying the above books for a fair price. I am also interested in any other books containing British science fiction illustrations, dating from the 1970's to the present time, particularly work by Chris Foss, Tony Roberts, Colin Hay, Peter Elson, Tim White, & Jim Burns.

The chances are that I have already got most of them, but if you think not, then please contact me. I am Patrick Lee, 24 Ousden Drive, Cheshunt, Herts, EN8 9RL

FOR SALE

- 1 - *Life with Lancelot* by John T Phillifent & *Hunting on Kunderer* by William Barton. Ace Double in good condition. £3
- 2 - *The Santaroga Barrier* by Frank Herbert. Signed pbk mint condition undedicated. £5
- 3 - *The Worlds of Frank Herbert* by Frank Herbert. Signed pbk mint condition undedicated. £5
- 4 - 8 underground comix: *Fantagor 3* featuring Corben (seen in comic shops at £5), *Skull 5*, *Imagine 2*, 4, 5, 6. All for £7.50.
- 5 - 2000 AD prog 138 signed by Gary Leach (Judge Dredd artist) £3.
- 6 - 2000 AD prog 182 signed by Mike McMaltoy, Dave Gibbons and Brian Bolland. £4.
- 7 - *Dungeons and Dragons*, basic rules set 1, American edition. Used twice! Complete. £5.

Cheques, postal orders payable to Mark Greener, 38 Dunmow Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts. Please enclose an s.a.e.

NEWS

Compiled by Paul Kincaid and Maureen Porter
(with a little help from *Locus*, *Anisble* and other
nameless sources)

AWARDS

The 1986 Hugo Awards were announced at
Conederation, the Worldcon in Atlanta. The
results were as follows (winners in bold, other
nominations listed in their final order):

NOVEL

Ender's Game - Orson Scott Card
Cuckoo's Egg - C.J. Cherryh
The Postman - David Brin
Footfall - Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle
Blood Music - Greg Bear

NOVELLA

'24 Views of Mt. Fuji' - Roger Zelazny
'Sailing to Byzantium' - Robert Silverberg
'The Only Neat Thing to Do' - James Tiptree Jr.
'Green Mars' - Kim Stanley Robinson
'The Scapegoat' - C.J. Cherryh

NOVELETTE

'Paladin of the Lost Hour' - Harlan Ellison
'Portraits of his Children' - George R.R. Martin
'The Fringe' - Orson Scott Card
'A Gift from the Graylanders' - Michael Bishop
'Dogfight' - Michael Swanwick & William Gibson

SHORT STORY

'Fermi and Frost' - Frederik Pohl
'Flying Saucer Rock and Roll' - Howard Waldrop
'Snow' - John Crowley
'Dinner in Audoghost' - Bruce Sterling
'Hong's Bluff' - William F. Wu

NON-FICTION BOOK

Science Made Stupid - Tom Veller
Campbell Letters, Vol. 1 - Chapdelaine & Hay, Eds.
An Edge in my Voice - Harlan Ellison
Benchmarks - Algis Budrys
The Pale Shadow of Science - Brian Aldiss
Faces of Fear - Douglas Winter

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

Back to the Future
Ladyhawk
Cocoon
Brazil
Enemy Mine

PROFESSIONAL EDITOR

Judy-Lynn del Rey
Terry Carr
Shawna McCarthy
Edward L. Ferman
Stanley Schmidt

(Upon the announcement of this award a letter from
Lester del Rey was read out: "Judy-Lynn was deeply
opposed to posthumous publication of books and the
granting of posthumous awards that were not
initiated before death ... The award is
rejected.")

PROFESSIONAL ARTIST

Michael Whelan
Kelly Freas
Eowena Morrill
Don Maiz
Barclay Shaw

SEMI-PROZINE

Locus
Science Fiction Chronicle
Science Fiction Review
Fantasy Review
Interzone

PANZINE

Lan's Lantern
No Award
Anvil

Universal Translator
Holler Than Thou
GCFG Newsletter

FAN WRITER

Mike Glyer
Richard Geis
Dave Langford
Arthur Hlavaty
Don d'Amassa
Patrick Nielsen Hayden

FAN ARTIST

Joan Hanke-Woods
Brad Foster
William Roteler
Stu Shiffman
Steve Fox

JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD

Melissa Scott
Guy Gavriel Kay
Carl Sagan
Karen Joy Fowler
Tad Williams
David Zindell

The Nova Awards for 1986 were presented at
Novacon.

BEST PANZINE: *Pink Fluffy Bedsocks* - edited by
Owen Whiteoak.

BEST FAN WRITER: Owen Whiteoak

BEST FAN ARTIST: Arthur Thomson (Atom)

Also at Novacon, changes were made in the Nova
Awards rules. The administrator remains Martin
Tudor, now with a committee consisting of Paul
Kincaid, Pam Wells and Dave Wood, who will serve
for three years.

Eligibility for the BEST PANZINE category is now
to be just a single issue during the year.

Voting eligibility is also changed, and
simplified, so that the voter is now required
merely to have received and read 6 British
fanzines during the year.

Judges for the 1987 Philip K. Dick Memorial Award
have been announced. They are Raymond E. Feist,
Marta Randall, Lewis Shiner, Gary K. Wolfe, and
Tim Powers, author of the 1986 winner, *Dinner at
Deviant's Palace*. The 1987 winner will be
announced in March.

The winners of the 1986 Mythopoeic Awards are:

BEST WORK OF FICTION: *Bridge of Birds* - Barry
Hughart

BEST WORK OF SCHOLARSHIP: *Charles Williams, Poet
of Theology* - Glen Cavallaro.

The Writers of the Future Contest, originally
sponsored by L. Ron Hubbard, is now open to
British writers. The contest is only open to
people who have not had professionally published a
novel or novella, or more than three short stories
or one novelette. Entries may be either a short
story (under 10,000 words) or a novelette (under
17,000 words), and there are three cash prizes for
each contest. 1st prize: \$1,000; 2nd prize: \$750;
3rd prize: \$500. Other than these quarterly
prizes, there is also an annual prize of \$4,000.
The remaining quarterly contests have the
following deadlines: 31 December 1986, 31 March
1987, 30 June 1987, and 30 September 1987. For
writing details and entry forms contact:
Writers of the Future Contest, Dowgate, Douglas
Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2TS.

PEOPLE

Arthur C. Clarke, President of the BSFA, after
leaving Sri Lanka as reported last issue, has now
returned. The reason for his visit to London was,
it has been revealed, to undergo neurological
tests which are reported to have been negative.

Ted White, former editor of *Amazing and Fantastic*, and author of some 15 science fiction novels, in addition to being a very well known fan, has been jailed in America on charges of selling marijuana and LSD. He should be eligible for parole within a year, but meanwhile is hoping to use the time to write.

OBITUARIES

Marjorie Brunner, wife of John Brunner, died on 5 August following a stroke in April. She was 65.

Russell M. Griffin, author of four science fiction novels and numerous short stories, died of a stroke on 27 August. He was 42.

Robert F. Young, author of five science fiction novels but probably most highly respected for his short stories, died on 22 June, aged 71.

Rex Varner, classicist, translator, and author of the brilliant allegorical anti-war novel, *The Aerodrome*, which is usually ranked with *1984* and *Brave New World*, dies on 24 June, aged 81.

Rob Gregg, well known for his letters to very many fanzines over the last few years.

PUBLISHING

The Orion Anthology, tentatively titled *Other Worlds* and edited by Robert Holdstock and Chris Evans, will be published by ALLEN & UNWIN in time for Conspiracy 87. It is intended to be a showcase of contemporary British SF, and will include new stories by Brian Aldiss, Graham Charnock, Chris Evans, David Garnett, Garry Kilworth, M. John Harrison, Robert Holdstock, R.M. Lanning, Dave Langford, Tanith Lee, Michael Moorcock, Keith Roberts, Lisa Tuttle and Ian Watson.

Chris Evans will be following up his work on the *Orion Anthology* by writing a book called *How to Write Science Fiction*.

Lisa Tuttle has a novel, *Gabriel*, coming out from SPHERE and SEVERN HOUSE, and a new collection of stories, as yet untitled, from THE WOMEN'S PRESS.

Josephine Sexton is working on a sequel to *The Travails of Jane Saint* for THE WOMEN'S PRESS.

Speaking of THE WOMEN'S PRESS, their science fiction books so far announced for 1987 are: *The Incomer* - Margaret Elphinstone, *Star Rider* - Doris Pierschia, *A Door into Ocean* - Joan Slonczewski and re-issued for the first time under their science fiction imprint, *Women on the Edge of Time* - Marge Piercy.

E.C. Tubb has announced that the *Dumarest* Saga is now definitely at an end. He originally agreed with his American publisher, DAW, to write three books set upon Earth to conclude the series, but owing to a change of editor only the first of these will see print.

CENTURY HUTCHINSON have launched a new hardback imprint, Century Fantasy and Science Fiction, each with a distinctive blue spine. The first books on the list, published in November, are: *Bridge of Birds*, the multiple award winner by Barry Hughart; *The Proteus Operation* by James P. Hogan; *God Game*, a first venture into fantasy by best selling author and Catholic priest Andrew Greeley; *The War for Sternity*, first part in a trilogy by Christopher Rowley; and *Tales of Dungeons and Dragons*, edited by Peter Eisinger, introduced by Ray Bradbury which despite its title is a collection of classic horror, supernatural and fantasy stories by such writers as Bram Stoker, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Bloch, John Wyndham, Stephen King, M.R. James, Sheridan LeFanu, T.H. White, Olaf Stapledon, Fritz Leiber, William Morris, Lord Dunsany, H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard.

Forthcoming from CENTURY are a book by John R. Maxim in December, while 1987 sees *Speaker for the Dead* by Orson Scott Card, second part of a trilogy that began with Hugo and Nebula Award winner *Ender's Game*; *The Labyrinth*, sixth of the *Night Hunter* books by Robert Holdstock under the name Robert Paulson, as well as a re-issue of the other five books in two volumes. Ramsey Campbell and David Gimmell are also on the list.

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN have merged with BELL & HYMAN to form Britain's largest independent publishing company, UNWIN HYMAN LTD. Jane Johnson, who continues as fiction editor, promises that neither the UNICORN fantasy list nor the new GRION SF list will be affected. Nor will plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, more commonly associated with books on Physical Science and Astronomy, is to publish a book called *Living on Other Worlds* late in 1987.

KEROSINA BOOKS have issued their second title, *Shades of Darkness* by Richard Cowper, though the limited special edition was slightly delayed. Their plans for 1987 include *Grainne*, a new novel by Keith Roberts to be published at Becon where he is Guest of Honour; and a new book by Brian Aldiss to be published at Conspiracy 87 where he is Toastmaster.

Also looking ahead to 1987, BANTAM PRESS are planning to publish *Merika's Story & The Coalura*, two novellas by Anne McCaffrey, and her novel, *First Landing*, which returns once more to Pern. They are also publishing *Guardians of the West* by David Eddings, first part of The Mallorean, a five-part sequel to the five books of The Belgariad. *The Hounds of God* is the third volume in Judith Tarr's *The Hound and The Falcon* trilogy. And *The Coming of the King* by Count Nikolai Tolstoy is the first part of yet another Arthurian trilogy.

VIKING's spring list, meanwhile, offers us another novel by the extraordinary Robert Irwin, author of *The Limits of Vision*. His new book is *The Arabian Nights*, described as "a dazzling and deeply disturbing Baroque fantasy: a dream without waking, a flight without escape, a tale without end." The list also includes *Nowhere of an Invisible Man* by H.F. Saint, about a "minor scientific mishap" in which a spherical chunk of New Jersey, and one man, are rendered invisible. It may also be worth keeping an eye out for *In the Dutch Mountains* by Cees Nooteboom, which certainly looks fantastical, if not strictly SF.

Horror comes to France! EDITIONS GARANCIERE have launched a new imprint, *Cauchemars (Nightmares)*, of contemporary 'Dark Fantasy'. Their first list for 1987 includes *The Face That Must Die* by Ramsey Campbell, *Cast a Cold Eye* by Alan Ryan, *Womads* by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, and the first of an annual anthology series, *Cauchemars 1987*, which includes stories by Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Charles L. Grant and Karl Edward Wagner.

And finally some film news. *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* opens in America in December, and will be opening in this country in April. The tie in novel by Vonda N. McIntyre will be published at the same time, though the magazine of the film is reported to be available in this country already.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

ARROW: *Camber the Heretic* - Katherine Kurtz, *The Continent of Lies* - James Morrow.

BANTAM: *Artifact* - Gregory Benford.

CORGI: *The Wizards and the Warriors* - Hugh Cook (also published in hardback by COLIN SMYTHE), *The Chronicles of Narnia Manyshaped* - Sheri S. Tepper.

CORONET: *Kindspell* - Kay Wolte Smith.

DENT: *The Vindictive Physician* - Jorge de Sena.

GOLLANCE: *Buyman's Pets* - Kate Wilhelm, *The Venus Hunters* - J.G. Ballard. And forthcoming in January is *The Fall of the Families* - Phillip Mann the sequel to *The Master of Paxxax*.

GRAFTON: *Silverthorn* - Raymond E. Feist, second volume in the series that began with *Magician*, *Fine Tomorrows* - Isaac Asimov, *Double Star* - Robert Heinlein, *The Swords of Lankhmar and Swords and Ice Magic* - Fritz Leiber, *Anthology* - Pierre Anthony, *Options* - Robert Sheckley, *The Beasts of Valhalla* - George C. Chesbro, *The Doubleman* - C.J. Koch.

GREENHILL: *Planetoid 127* - Edgar Wallace, *Tourmalin's Time Cheques* - F. Anstey.

FUTURA: *Golem in the Gears* - Pierre Anthony, *Sovereign* - R.M. Meluch, *Doomsday Warrior 3: The Last American* - Ryder Stacy, *Cards of Grief* - Jane Yolen, *Skinner* - Richard S. McEneaney, *The Vampire Lestat* - Anne Rice, *The Third Book of Swords* - Fred Saberhagen. In January these are followed by *The Power of the Serpent* - Peter Valentine Timlett, *The Memory of Whiteness* - Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Twilight of the Gods 2: Gaea's Other Eye* - Dennis Schmidt.

METHVEN: *Little, Big* - John Crowley (in a B-format at last, which should make it much more legible), *Eclipse* - John Shirley, *Time is the Simplest Thing* - Clifford D. Simak.

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY: *The Cat who Walks through Walls*, *Job: A Comedy of Justice*, and *Waldo and Magic Inc* - Robert Heinlein, *The Phoenix Legacy 2: House of the Wolf* - M.K. Vren, *For Love of Audrey Rose and Golgotha Falls* - Frank de Felitta, *Snakes* - Guy W. Smith, *Survivalist 12: The Rebellion* - Jerry Ahern.

PALADIN: *The Naked Lunch*, *The Soft Machine* - William S. Burroughs, to be followed in January by *The Ticket that Exploded*.

PAN: *A Maggot* - John Fowles.

PICADOR: *Black Venus* - Angela Carter.

SPHERE: *Fledgling* - Nicholas Barrett, *Night Warriors* - Graham Masterson, *Brightness Falls from the Air* - James Tiptree Jr.

STAR: *The Star Bumper Horror Book One and The Star Bumper Horror Book Two* - Ed. Kurt Singer.

UNICORN: *The Ladies of Mandrign* - Barbara Hambly.



THE PERIODIC TABLE

CONVENTION ROUNDUP

Before we start the conlisting roundup, a few words about the terms being used (with apologies to *Anisble* for cribbing from its neat little explanation).

Supporting membership means that you will receive all progress reports of the convention, the programme book, badge and the other bits and pieces handed out. A progress report is just that, something which gives you information on how the con is developing, how to get there, and the current list of members. The more sophisticated ones will often contain articles or pieces of original work by guests, and so on. The programme book is basically something which tells you about the convention, supplies a timetable of events, introductions to the guests, and, and, and. The most elaborate productions are almost zines in their own right, and well worth hanging on to.

Attending membership means that you can go to the convention as well. It is possible to convert from supporting to attending membership, generally by paying the balance between the two.

While I'm here, I might as well have a crack at explaining pre-supporting memberships and convention bidding. If you pay pre-supporting membership you are showing your support for that convention in its attempt to win the bid to put on a convention. You're also providing finance to get the bid on the road, for publicity and bidding parties. If the convention you support wins, you'll find that your pre-supporting membership is deducted from the supporting/attending membership. You may occasionally find that even if your bid lost, the winning team are feeling generous and will do the same, but this is not a general rule. Not all conventions involve bidding. It occurs for such things as Eastercons and Worldcons, which are annual and peripatetic, and also for Unicorns.

Any questions? Send them in. I'm thinking of devoting an article to what to expect from a convention but I need some idea of what people want to know before I start putting it together.

1987 CONVENTIONS

CONCEPTION

A celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first ever SF convention, held in Leeds in 1937.

13th-15th February, Queen's Hotel, Leeds

Membership: Attending £6.00

Send cheques/POs/etc, payable to "Conception", to 12 Fearville Terrace, Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 3DU

CORFLU 4

20th-22nd February, Cincinnati, Ohio

Information from Bill Bowers, 2468 Harrison Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45211, USA

A con for fanzine fans, nearest approximation might be a combination of Mexicon and the now defunct Silicons.

ORICON

6th-8th March, Essex (anywhere in particular?)

Membership: £12.00 plus 3 SASEs

Send cheques/POs/etc to 66 Burdett Avenue,
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, SS) 7JW

An Irwin Allen cum General Media Convention.

3rd INTERNATIONAL NICE SF CONFERENCE

23 April - 7, Nice, France

An academic conference with the theme: Edgar Allan Poe and Visionary Reason

Queries and proposals for papers to: Mrs Denise Terrel, director, Centre d'étude de la Métaphore, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Nice, 98 bd Edouard Herriot, BP 369, 06007 Nice Cedex, France

CAPCON

1987 Australian National SF Convention

18th-20th April (MOVED from 25th-27th April)

Queanbeyan, ACT, Australia

Guests of Honour: Robert Asprin & Lynn Abbey
Fan Guest of Honour: John Newman

Membership: Attending: A\$25 in advance, A\$30 at the door, Supporting: A\$5

Information from Capcon, PO Box 312, Fyshwick, 2609 ACT, Australia

BECCON '87

The 1987 Eastercon

25th-27th April, Metropole Hotel, NEC, Birmingham

Guest of Honour: Keith Roberts
Fan Guests of Honour: Malcolm Edwards & Chris Atkinson

Membership: Attending £11, Supporting £6

Send cheques/POs/etc, payable to "Beccon", to Beccon '87, 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex.

SOL III '87

Star Trek con

May 1-4, Liverpool

Information: Jean Barron, 39 Dersingham Avenue, London E12 5QF

RUBICON 2

29 May-1 June, Newbury

Membership: £5

Contact: Krystyna Oborn, Bishop's Cottage, Park House Lane, reading, Berks, RG3 2AH. Cheques payable to 'Rubicon'.

CONNOTES

Unicon 8

3-5 July, New Hall, Cambridge

GOR Geraldine Harris

Membership: Attending £8, supporting £4

ALBACON 87

Glasgow's 10th Summer SF Convention



19-22 June, Central Hotel, Glasgow

G.O.H. Brian Stableford

Membership: Supporting £4.00, Attending £8.00

Contact: Albacon '87, c/o Mark Meenan, 'Burnawn', Stirling Road, Dumbarton, G82 2PJ

MYTHCON XVIII

Mythopoeic Society Conference. Theme: Tolkien Retrospective

14-27 July, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Write for further information to Mythcon XVIII, c/o John D Ratcliff, Conference Secretary, 628 N 117th Street #2, Milwaukee, WI 53233, USA.

CONSPIRACY '87

The 45th World SF Convention (the first in Britain since 1979)

22 August - 1 September, Metropole Hotel & Brighton Centre, Brighton

Guests of Honour: Doris Lessing, Alfred Bester, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, Jim Burns

Fan Guests of Honour: Ken and Joyce Slater, Dave Langford

Toastmaster: Brian Aldiss

Membership: Attending £25 (children 8-14 £12.50), Supporting £10

Contact: Conspiracy '87, PO Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ

WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION '87

30 October-1 November, Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Guest of Honour: Piers Antony
Fan Guest of Honour: Frank Kelly Freas

Information from World Fantasy Convention '87, Box 3251, Darlington Branch PO, Pawtucket, RI 02861, USA

1988 and onwards

CONGREGATE

10-12 June, 1988, Peterborough

G.O.H - to be arranged

Membership: Supporting £5, Attending £11.00

Information from Chris Ayres, 67 Ayres Drive, Stanground, Peterborough.

ALBACON '88

tentatively July 1988
Central Hotel, Glasgow, Scotland

Guest of Honour: C J Cherryh

This was a Eurocon bid but will apparently go ahead regardless.

Information from Albacon '88, 105 Craigton Road, Govan, Glasgow, Scotland, G51 3RQ.

The 1988 Eurocon will be in Hungary, rather controversially as apparently, the con should have rotated to the West that year anyway.

HUNGAROCON

10-14 August, 1988, Budapest.

Contact: Hungarian SF Society, Eurocon Committee, Budapest, Hungary, H-1078



EASTERCON BIDS

You may know already that it was decided at Albacon this year to go over to bidding for Eastercons two years in advance, so at Becon next Easter, we will be bidding for 1988 and 1989's conventions. Below is a roundup of current bids. If you know of another one, please let me know as soon as possible, and take advantage of the publicity Matrix provides.

There are two definite bids for Eastercon 1988.

Follycon is offering a convention in Liverpool at the Adelphi Hotel. Bid Report 2 is now available, and I quote from this.

'One of fandom's greatest strengths is its diversity, and Follycon is going to exploit this to the full. We aim to reflect as many different facets of fandom as we can, and attract those looking for something a little outside their usual range. There will be a special emphasis on producing programme items that shed light on two or more different interests (and that is not a misprint. Ed.); similarly, we will choose guests with a wide appeal whenever possible. This will also be helped by our site; this has an excellent layout, with major rooms for all aspects of fandom leading directly off a central lounge which will always be open. This will focus the convention and make sure people can meet socially as well as at programme items.

Why this? Why now? Because people may be missing out on some of the things they don't know about. This will apply especially after the Worldcon, only six months before Follycon. This will leave a great many newcomers wandering round, and we hope to show them some of the possibilities available.'

COMMITTEE

Michael Abbott	Dave Brown
Pat Brown	Colin Fine
Steve Linton	Ian Maughan
Karen Naylor	Gytha North
Joan Paterson	Richard Rampant
Alison Scott	Michael Scott

Pre-supporting membership is £1, available from 104 Pretoria Street, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 5P2

Opposition comes in the form of Norwescon 88, which is offering a convention at the Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. Progress Report 0 is available, and I quote from this.

'We firmly believe that the programme will be the make or break of Norwescon. That's not to say that we won't be having all the usual events, happenings and Bar Hours but simply that, as Norwescon has so ably demonstrated, a good solid, planned programme can work wonders.

We're going to borrow some of their philosophy - quite unashamedly. Let's retain a good concept, and help make an Eastercon work as a revitalised event, rather than as More of the Same. We're going to aim for quality and variety - a sound mix of Science Fiction and Fannish events.

The Programme will be thematic; we shall be concentrating on SF as written literature, serious witty or both. We will bring in a number of carefully selected special guests and inviting people to prepare presentations within the overall theme. We will be promoting SF in all its written forms, and we'll even be touching on some fringe areas as well. We'll show films - not 24 hours a day however. We prefer to concentrate our resources on a sprinkling of blockbusters but also the unusual, the rare, esoteric and downright odd. The same applies to videos.

There will be alternative programming - some planned, some spontaneous. Rooms will be made available - you just turn up and do something fun, or serious. The Fan programme will be packed with original events and the best of the more popular events from years gone by. Involvement and interaction will be our watchwords.

The look of programme, the actual physical design and appearance of the staging and lighting will follow our desire to promote SF. We'll have proper lighting rigs, staging, nice comfy chairs and decent tables. There will be enough mikes to go round, we'll have artwork and poster displays, and scenery flats. We want to impress you, but also to involve you and give you your money's worth.

COMMITTEE

Ramsey Campbell	Alan Dorey
Robbie Dorsey	Ron Gensley
Henry Newton	Bob Shaw
Margaret Toot	John Weston

Pre-supporting membership is £2, available from Norwescon '88, 16 Ambleside Close, Walton-le-Dale, Preston, Lancashire, PR5 4RS

I've only seen one bid for 1989, and this is for Contravention. I don't actually know much about this convention beyond the fact that there are three possible sites, one in West London, one in Jersey, and the good old Metropole in Brighton.

COMMITTEE

Chris Cooper	John Dallman
Steve Davies	Paul Dormer
Gwen Funnell	Martin Hoare
Tim Illingworth	Roger Perkins
Peter Wareham	

Pre-supporting membership is £1, available from Tim Illingworth, 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey.

I also know of one bid for 1990, named Contravention. I can't tell you very much about this one at all, mainly because we have only just got the bid off the ground.

COMMITTEE

Chris Donaldson	John Fairley
Jan Huxley	Rob Jackson
Paul Kincaid	Paul Oldroyd
Christie Pearson	Maureen Porter

Information from 35 Buller Road, London N17

MANORCON 11th-13th July. Birmingham University.

Being short of money, we only registered the Monday before, and never received any information beyond the convention being at the University of Birmingham. We didn't expect any problems. However, the security guards patrolling the campus hadn't heard of the con, and there was a porter's office in every building. Finding others on the same quest, we got into convoy and asked until we found it.

Feeling very much the neo, I was glad to sit in the bar with Trevor Mendham and friends until I felt more confident. Like SF fandom, there are the sercon and fannish sides, the fannish sitting in the bar, hardly touching a board all convention, whilst the sercon never left the gamesroom. I stayed in the bar all evening.

The con exists to run the University's Diplomacy tournament, so everything is arranged around this. Anyone wanting to play anything else had to move to the bar. I don't play Diplomacy so I didn't take much notice, spending most of the day watching various games and reading fanzines. Later, walking past the Railway Rivals room, I was dragged in by David Watts, creator of the game, to play in his tournament. I came 2nd in the first round and went through to the next, to be played on Sunday morning.

The final was in two parts, and the first started promptly at 10am, whilst the Diplomacy final went on in the next room. Playing on the London and Southeast map I won! As various finalists were taking part in the football tournament later (there were also American football and croquet tournaments) we held the other part of the final immediately, and I got thoroughly clobbered.

I also watched an interesting game based on the German political system, and was disappointed to find that that 'Der Machen' is practically unobtainable in Britain, and difficult to obtain in Germany. If anyone has a copy they don't want, please let me know. We helped David Watts playtest his latest game, the idea being to land on hexes representing areas of interest in Wales and collect more cards representing these areas than anyone else. Unfortunately, David had to leave just as it was getting comprehensible.

The whole convention was to be thrown out of the building at 6pm so there was an open air closing ceremony, before everyone went home.

Criticisms - the number of people wanting vegetarian breakfasts caused problems. I would have thought it sensible to have a space on the booking form for special requirements. However, I am informed by one of the committee that they are too busy to bother with such things. My other complaint is that the bar closed when they ran out of beer, apparently because the bar staff weren't being paid. Sadly, the committee's idea of sorting it out is to find somewhere else to hold the next con rather than offering the bar staff some money. This is a pity as the place was just the right size for the con, the only disadvantage being the distance between the games room and the bar.

Joy Hibbert

CONCEPT - 8th-10th August, Guildford.

Concept, the seventh Unicon, took place on place on 8th-10th August at the University of Surrey in Guildford. Tanith Lee was an entertaining guest of honour, who in a welcome innovation was interviewed by Anne Page instead of giving the usual guest speech, and who managed both in the interview and throughout the convention to be both interesting and amusing. She also won several fannish hearts by staying up till dawn on both the Friday and Saturday nights at the excellent Dutch 'Worldcon in 1990' bid parties.

These parties, hosted by Larry van der Putte, were the entire nightlife of the con. This was probably the result of the layout of the site - like most Unicons, Concept suffered unavoidably from the way the accommodation, the bar and the main hall were all a good long hike away from each other. This kind of layout prevents there being a focus to the convention, and defuses the atmosphere. However, no-one seemed to feel that this spoiled the con for them, as the programme was interesting and varied.

It also ran practically on time throughout, with almost no changes - a remarkable feat by an energetic and efficient committee. The food tasting competition was as popular as ever, and other notable events included the Alien Encounter, devised by Brian Ameringer (this will reappear at Beacon), a Lewis Carroll discussion, and a fiendish game called Pathfinder, devised by Peter Vaneham and Gwen Funnell. One rumour said that the first team to understand the rules would be the winners.

The bid for Unicon 8 was won by Mike Abbott and associates - it will be held in Cambridge on July 3rd-5th July 1987. Presupporting memberships for Concept, sold last year, will automatically become full supporting memberships. Otherwise rates are £8.00 attending, £4.00 supporting from Connote8, Trinity College, Cambridge.

Mike Christie

KOANCON - 22th-24th August. Warwick University.

Nobody seemed to know what to expect of this 'games convention with a difference' - not the 100 or so members, not the awesome President (our very own Trev Mendham), nor the guests of honour (Pete Tansly and myself). It was a conscious effort to break away from horrible gaming traditions of a) massive emphasis on dealers selling things; b) vast organised Dungeons and Dragons competitions; c) bar and socialising very much an afterthought. An effort, in fact, to be more like SF conventions. When people did play games there was a definitely unserious atmosphere: I saveddressed on a group playing the black-humour SF game *Paranoia*, and suspected that nasty-minded BSFA members might like it a lot. My worst fears evaporated when even hardened players abandoned their multi-sided dice to attend a scatter of quite good programme items, plus a speech by me.

'Some of you may be wondering what a person who last toyed with a role-playing game in 1976 is doing up here. I wonder this a lot myself. Pete Tansly explained it to me in the bar last night: "I'm just a humble fan," he said, "a mere boil on the vast buttock which is gaming. But you, Dave, because of your *White Dwarf* column, you're a colossal professional megastar just like ... Isaac Asimov." As you see, Tansly is good at well-turned, graceful insults.

'The committee then explained to me that I represent The Industry. Having heard all about the awe and reverence with which everyone regards Games Workshop, I suspect this is rather like attending a CND rally as the representative of Margaret Thatcher ...'

Subsequent revelations included my closest professional contact with gaming ('An obscure fan of those days, called Ian Livingstone explained his wonderful new idea. It was called "making money"',), which years later led to a conversation with Rob Holdstock. 'He gloated to me about how he'd received several thousand quid' worth of royalties for writing the story book for a computer game (*Elite*). "You did something like that once, Dave," he said, twisting the knife in the wound. "What sort of royalties did you get?" "One free copy of the bloody game", I mentioned before changing the subject.'

Maureen informs me that *Matrix* listing this as Koancon is all Charlie Brown's fault. Anyone who trusts Locus before *Ansible* deserves all they get ... Koancon was fun.

Dave Langford

OLAF STAPLEDON CENTENARY COLLOQUIUM - 26th-28th September. Liverpool University.

1966 is the centenary year of the birth of Olaf Stapledon, arguably the most imaginative SF writer ever. To mark this, Liverpool University, where Stapledon taught in the extra-mural department and which houses the Stapledon archives, organised this conference. I attended on three counts: first, as a science fiction fan who thinks that Stapledon is a most underrated writer; second, as a librarian from the Wirral, where Stapledon was born, and lived for most of his life; and third, as someone who has just finished five years of doing a part-time higher degree at Liverpool University. What follows is not a detailed report, as I was unable to be present for all the papers, but more a series of impressions from a mixture of those three stances.

Waiting for the first paper, I entered into conversation with a couple who knew Stapledon well, and was shown some fascinating photographs of him on holiday in the Shetlands. Professor Robert Crossley read an interesting paper on the literary apprenticeship of Olaf Stapledon, with reference to the letters he wrote his fiancée between 1914 and 1919. These, it seemed, contain much speculation which later appears in the novels, 'rough drafts for his future literary experiments'. The Cullens (Stapledon's friends) very kindly gave me a lift home, telling me more about Stapledon, who came across as a private but essentially decent man. I was asked to give a message of appreciation to Robert Crossley, which next day I managed to deliver to the wrong person - another US academic who looks almost but not entirely completely different from him. This is probably one of the reasons I don't go to cons.

Saturday saw Professor Stephen Clark's paper on Stapledon's philosophy, aspects of which he finds distasteful (particularly a tendency to 'Superman' worship, and approval of collectivist philosophies), but which is saved by a powerful speculative imagination and an overall undogmatic ambiguity. Afterwards we inspected the exhibition of archive material in the library before going onto the second paper of the morning. This was Brian Stableford's survey of Stapledon as perhaps one of the most important figures of what Wells called 'The Age of Frustration' of the 1930s, setting him in the context of the 'future war' and 'superman' stories popular in the scientific romances of the time, and suggesting that today's world is fertile ground for an equal 'Age of Frustration'. He quoted some really distasteful superman worship from Claude Houghton.

During lunch I found myself sitting between Robert Crossley and Stephen Clark, promising to check out our local history collection for possible Stapledon material for the former, and discovering that the latter is a knowledgeable SF reader. I regretted not having brought BSFA membership forms.

The afternoon's papers were K V Bailey on 'Time Scales and Culture Cycles', examining the influence and use of 'cyclic' theories of history and ending with parallels with such 'cosmic' holistic writers as Joyce, Dante and Milton. Ken Bailey being a paperback *Inferno* reviewer, I made a comment referring to a pulp SF novel, to wonder later if that just made me look a smartass. Perhaps another reason why I don't go to cons? Finally, Alec Yearling looked at *Sirius*, which he characterised as one of Stapledon's books with immediate appeal to readers but which is maimed by

a certain evasion of plot problems and unfocused characterisation of all except the dog *Sirius*.

We wound down with something called 'University Reception' which appeared to involve bottles of wine. I discussed V H Hodgson with Brian Stableford and then conversed with some of the philosophy department about SF, trying to explain why we read it. Then it was back home to the bosom of the family (yet another reason why I etc, etc!) and for me, although not for everyone else, the conference was over. Partly because of the difficulty of getting from Neston to Liverpool on a Sunday morning, and because of complicated domestic arrangements, I missed a paper entitled 'Stapledon and Modernism', and the evaluation session.

This has to be an incomplete conclusion, but on a personal level I met a few people I'd wanted to meet (it was particularly good to meet Ken Bailey, who told me interesting things about local government in Alderney), and on another level I learned a great deal about Olaf Stapledon. Interestingly enough, although the organisation of the conference was centred upon the philosophy department - Stapledon's field as a teacher - much of the emphasis was literary, the reason being probably that Stapledon is decidedly unfashionable as a philosopher. It would help if he were more fashionable as a writer. The lack of editions of his work available in the UK is scandalous, considering that SF writers such as Arthur C Clarke have cited him as the great influence.

Andy Sawyer

OLAF STAPLEDON CENTENARY COLLOQUIUM

For several reasons Liverpool University was the perfect venue for the Olaf Stapledon Centenary Colloquium. Not only was that estuarine/Irish Sea landscape the jumping-off ground for his transgalactic journeyings, but the whole Merseyside ambience, as it is today, seems somehow symbolic of much that his imagination encountered in their course. The University Precinct itself, leafy squares, gracious architecture of past and present, is expressive of civilisation 'peaking'. Walk from it down hill by way of Mount Pleasant and you are conscious of the instability and impermanence of life and artefact - shuttered shops, broken windows, a sad dereliction giving a feel almost of that world in decline of *Darkness and the Light* when the rats are about to take over. Between the two environments towers the Metropolitan Cathedral. On the first evening of the Colloquium I spent so long straying around that cathedral's interior that I almost missed the initial drinks party by getting shut in for the night - just escaping in time. The vast building's iconography brought to mind those ages of Stapledon's Neptunian Man in which "the movement of thought ranged again and again through all the possible worlds of the spirit, ever discerning new significance in ancient themes." Add to all this the presence at the Colloquium of members of the Stapledon family, and a marvellous exhibition drawn from the Stapledon Archive in the Sydney Jones Library, and the equation spells out that the time, place and occasion were all exactly right.

The exhibition in the university library was unique: manuscripts, letters, rare editions, memorabilia and, best of all, large and complex coloured time-charts annotated in Stapledon's meticulous hand (piquant to note how in the 'thirties *Pitdown Man* was an accepted anthropological milestone). These charts, ancestors of those appended to *Star Maker* and detailed blueprints for the author's cosmic visionings, had a special fascination for me because they related closely to my contributed paper on Stapledonian 'history'. Formal sessions were held in a large and rather gloomy lecture theatre where a small audience seemed at first lost; but as the week-end progressed a common focus of interest engaged attention so well that the

surroundings seemed merely neutral. By contrast, the bar, furnishings, food and comfort of the Staff House were far from neutral in the warming influence they suffused through the gathering's informal and social occasions which so regularly and pleasantly counterpointed the sessions in the Arts Lecture Room.

In the main sessions Stephen Clark who occupies the Chair of Philosophy at Liverpool, in addition to giving what was perhaps the most intellectually sophisticated of all the papers, held proceedings together urbanely, eruditely and wittily, so one had a continuing sense of conference identity and cohesion. Papers reviewed Stapledon's fiction, life and philosophy, obviously within so small a compass not comprehensively, but illuminatingly and with approaches from many angles. American scholarship was well-represented, and particularly expert in the areas of bibliographical and biographical research. Brian Stableford considered Stapledon in the context of between-wars history and politics, and in relation to the genre of 'scientific romance'. Several papers probed the interweavings of Stapledon's life and fictions, but wisely avoided indulgence in psycho-analytical speculation. What I carried from the Colloquium was an enhanced appreciation of Stapledon as a man and writer of integrity, and a deeper understanding of the continuing relevance of his fictions, by no means as 'prophecies', but as imaginative insights into the relationship of microcosm to macrocosm, of individual to community, and of consciousness to all that seems alien or exterior to it.

By Sunday mid-day the participants remaining found the Staff House and bar closed, but rounded matters off over coffee in a tiny common room, concerning themselves chiefly with thoughts about the future of Stapledon studies ('transatlantically very much alive'), regrets that no publisher in this centenary year had seen fit to reprint him, and hopes for the eventual publication of what had been said and thought at Liverpool.

K V Bailey

FANTASYCON XI - 26th-28th September. Birmingham.

Fantasy fans are not like the average SF/fannish fan. They don't particularly seem to participate in conventions, instead sitting passively in programme items or else spending a great deal of money. Fantasy fandom is noticeably about consumption. The active fans are few, and almost without exception semi-professional small press publishers.

Fantasycon seems distressingly eager to reinforce this image. It is supposedly the annual convention of the British Fantasy Society yet it billed itself as the professionals convention. And indeed they were there in great numbers, though one would never have guessed from the programme which drew heavily on the services of a small group of people familiar to anyone who has attended several of these conventions. It was also extremely unimaginative, falling prey to such clichés as the token 'women's panel'. Strangely enough, the female participants seemed impressed that they had a panel even when challenged from the audience to explain why there were no women on any other panels. This underlines another feature of Fantasycon, namely a lack of active, independent female attendees. I counted five of us.

Fantasy fans apparently do not socialise either, and do not seem to expect to talk to the writers. The line between producer and consumer was at all times subtly apparent. Authors huddled together in groups in the bars, and seemed surprised if fans spoke to them, even the fans they already knew. As for what the fans did in between times, well your guess is as good as mine. There was no bar set aside for con attendees, and all hotel bars were

open to the general public, very crowded and kept standard licensing hours. The only lounge area open to us was not available until after it had finished being used as a dining room, shortly before midnight, when the bar prices went up. There was no cheap convention food, and the hotel also operated a no-jeans policy, from which we were exempted, but only just - the bouncers were very big, and not very friendly.

To be honest, I was bored. I go to conventions to meet people, to talk, maybe take in a programme item. I knew very few people to start with, the rest seemed more or less invisible, and the programme had not improved markedly since my first Fantasycon in 1980. The endless trek to find anyone, to find a drink or to find somewhere to sit down became a chore I was willing to forgo. I spent a lot of time out. In fact the most exciting thing that happened all weekend was finding that the Morris Dance Federation was also meeting in Birmingham. I know where I ought to have been.

I went to Fantasycon because I heard such good things about last year's convention. I shall not be going next year.

Maureen Porter

THE MILFORD SF WRITERS CONFERENCE - 26th September-5th October. Milford-on-Sea, Hants.

I have never been to a writers' conference before. Furthermore, I have a travel jinx which caused a group of us who drove down from Fantasycon to get lost on the way to Milford. Furthermore, I left my purse behind in Birmingham, which had the key of my suitcase in it, which had the typescript in it that I was supposed to submit for discussion. Furthermore, I instantly went down with flu, which Mary Gentle instantly caught, and as if that wasn't enough, Bruce Sterling and Neil Gaiman arrived boozing and yapping in an argument that seemed likely to come to blows.

Yes, Mrs Lincoln, but did you enjoy the play?

Yes, enormously, because Milford was not to do with any of those things. It was about writing and ideas. The weather was marvellous, the bar was always open and Colin Greenland (who will probably deny this) managed rather well as Chairman. David Barrett picked the lock of my suitcase, saying apologetically, "I'm used to bigger locks than this". I was able to lay the three chapters of the book I was stuck in on the table with all the other stories. Most people read everything there at least twice.

Next afternoon, supplied with beer, Kleenex, coffee and cold-cures from almost everyone, I sat in a circle of sixteen and discovered what Milford is all about. We dissected stories by Paul Kincaid, Colin Greenland and Judy Blish. It is startling how much ground gets covered when fifteen assorted writers spend three minutes each saying what they think. First, Lisa Tuttle, thinking as she talks, gesturing, building towards a theory for her dissatisfaction. "Time", says the Chairman. "But I want to say I did like the girl's attitude!" Lisa protests, and passes the script to David Garnett, who passes it straight on saying he can't think of anything to say about this sort of writing. Ow! To Gwyneth Jones, who also thinks as she talks, only she smiles and harpoons all the faults as if they surprise her. Then onto Neil Gaiman, who is lying on the floor drawing cartoons, and he announces he disagrees entirely. After him, Garry Kilworth and Mary Gentle have both written down what they want to say, so they can really get to grips with the faults of structure, and David Barrett follows with a meditation on the same faults. Then Bruce Sterling, whose resemblance to a youthful Mao Tse Tung increases when he opens a small red book. "I urge you never to attempt this outworn genre," booms the Texan voice.

By this stage, Paul Kincaid was sweating and trying to retreat through the back of his chair. Colin Greenland was white. And they still had to withstand the quiet sanity of Scott Baker and Rachel Pollack's wacky wisdom, not to speak of further points Alex Stewart had spiked in his notes. Right at the end, Paul Barnett (John Grant) raises his poll of curls and speaks swift, witty words. I croak that I agree.

Judy Blish, for all she helped found Milford, got treated the same. Perhaps I shouldn't have taken all the cold-cures and drunk beer as well, but I have a muzzy impression that the sessions got more constructive after that. People suggested ways to improve stories. Garry, Rachel and Neil were simply told why their stories were so good. Bruce Sterling was not so lucky. "Gee, hat was tough!" he said after we'd done him.

Around this time, the running row between Bruce and Neil escalated. Bruce was in England as the apostle of Cyberpunk (read *Neuromancer* if you want to know what that is) and boomed constantly that this was the New Way since all the other genres of SF were worked out. "Nonsense!" said Neil (I bowdlerise). Colin had the Chairmanky notion of holding an evening discussion to defuse the row - or Gwyneth threatened to go out to a disco if he didn't. Unfortunately, this just made the whole thing harder into American dogma from Bruce versus British protest led by Neil, with Rachel, Scott and Lisa as expatriate Americans uneasily in the middle. Two days later, Neil wrote down what he thought as rudely as he could, showed the note to everyone and then passed it to Bruce. Explosion. And a tableau with Scott Baker sitting in the middle quietly saying "Phooey!" Ope! we all thought, sliding for cover. But nothing else happened. I still don't know why.

Perhaps it was because it was all about ideas. Ideas are an occupational hazard to all writers, particularly at Milford. Other, less violent ones flew all the time, as people sat in pub gardens among wasps or took greasy fish and chips to eat on the beach. There was the one about sex among aliens, out of which Alex took the notion of a collection of alien sex stories. There was the Great Accelerated Pizza idea too. That started as a joke in the chip shop, where they advertised Faster Than Light Pizza. Just take that literally ... Neil did, and began drawing cartoons urgently.

Rachel Pollack started a whole crop of ideas. One caused David Barrett to be seen running around with a jug shaped like a breast, crying the mystic word "Spung!" Another, Rachel's account of the Jewish male's Heaven, caused a fairly strong remark from me to Lisa. Ten minutes later I went out of the door and ran into Lisa rushing the other way to ask if I minded her using my idea for a story that had sprung into her head as I spoke. "Feel free," I said. This is how ideas are.

But I really shouldn't have taken all those cold-cures. I have uncertain, sun-soaked, flu-sodden memories of pages of smutty verse and drawings from a game, stolen by someone. Of long talk with Mary Gentle, whom I'd been longing to meet ever

since my publisher sent me proofs of *Golden Witchbreed*. Of myself singing football songs to encourage pool players, or doing a thing called 'the witchy dance' in order to win. Of being too shy to ask Gwyneth Jones to sign my copy of *Divine Endurance*. Of Bruce and Neil spending half the last night asking one another, "And have you read ...?", and of Bruce the prophet of Cyberpunk mending the hotel lavatory while I passed him tools - no, that seems even more unlikely than the football songs, but then Bruce had mellowed by that time. Towards the end, when he opened the little red book, he didn't exactly urge people to burn their typewriters. He said, "I urge you strongly to rethink the situation you have there."

That was me he was urging. So did everybody when my three chapters came up for scrutiny. Gee, that was tough. But helpful. I am at the moment in the middle of strongly rethinking the situation I have there ...

I ought to add that I did get my purse back. And my travel jinx struck again on the way home. It got Paul Barnett too, because we travelled home on the same train and the engine broke.

Diana Wynne Jones

THUNDERBIRDS' 21st BIRTHDAY CONVENTION - 4th October, London.

As I write, International Rescue are on their way to El Salvador to help the relief operation following that country's recent devastating earthquake, and their Honorary President Gerry Anderson was at the airport to see them off. But there was no sign of Scott, Virgil, Gordon, Alan, John or even Zeinas, let alone Thunderbirds 1 and 2. For is a curious example of life imitating art, this International Rescue is the real thing - an independent charitable organisation established three years ago to assist with disaster management around the world. By chance, a week before on 4th October, the Thunderbirds' 21st Birthday Convention was held at Conway Hall in London, with proceeds going to this commendable group.

The one day convention, opened by Anderson and organised by his Official Appreciation Society, drew a pretty wide age range. But on the whole the majority seemed too young to remember the original transmission of the series (and surely they can't have been attracted by his most recent effort, the bland and disappointing *Terrahawks*?) Of course there were plenty of wide-eyed True Believers, and the inevitable clutch of matronly ladies in the first flush of menopause loudly proclaiming that being a grandmother was no bar to attending dressed as Lady Penelope. Or whatever. (In one case as what appeared to be a turnip, but I may have been mistaken). In fact there were lots of people in costume - not all Thunderbirds characters either; I counted three Joe 90s. Though to my great regret none of them was heard to exclaim "The well is going to glow giving five minutes!" through fixed, insensible grins. Nor could I find anyone to answer a question that has been puzzling me for years: where did the Tracy family get the money to run International Rescue? It costs NASA around \$15 million every time they launch the Shuttle, and here's this outfit throwing around hardware with gay abandon.

Gerry Anderson admits to being bemused by the continuing enthusiasm for his creations - "I would have to be a fairly conceited person to accept all the adulation. In fact for years I wouldn't turn up at these events. Frankly I don't really understand it ..." He thinks the show conveyed "messages of hope", dressed as blood and thunder because kids like destruction. But, he says, at least Thunderbirds was about saving life, as opposed to, say, war movies with their emphasis on "negative" destruction. This view was echoed by Helen McCarthy, Chairperson of the Appreciation Society, who maintains the series embodied "...



the magic of innocence. It celebrated the marvels of technology in an innocent age. The show was not without social significance according to at least one attendee: "Lady Penelope was the first liberated lady on TV", and certainly preferable to *Dr Who's* female assistants at the time, characterised as "clinging little wimps". Whatever the truth of a statement like that, it reflects a wider hostility toward other single-interest groups I find quite surprising. It would be unfair to say that the myriad sub-groups that have grown up around the SF and fantasy fields in recent times actually hate each other, but there appears to be precious little love lost between them.

And if mutual exclusivity is one trait of the Anderson tribe, (an understandable one perhaps; SF fandom can still be accused of the same thing) another is a depressing lack of humour. Which is a much more serious matter. How can you parade in public dressed as a puppet, for god's sake, or spend £65 on a *Stingray* toy originally costing 13/9d, without the ability to laugh at yourself?

I wouldn't like my reservations about the earnestness of the marionette fanciers to give the impression that the *Thunderbirds* convention was a totally dismal experience - after all, the series was fun in its own terms and its birthday worthy of celebration. And fortunately there were enough people in attendance with a healthy regard for the potential absurdity of the situation to save the day. In this respect special guest Matt Zimmerman, the actor who provided the voice of Alan Tracey, was a welcome addition. He's done a lot since the sixties but is still remembered for *Thunderbirds*. The fact that he turned up, quite apart from his wry, philosophical attitude toward a piece of typecasting that would have infuriated most serious actors, is a testament to his professionalism. But then, he's got a sense of humour.

For details of Fanderson - The Official Gerry Anderson Appreciation Society, send a case to Lorraine Malby, 11 Woodrifle Road, Leytonstone, London E11 1AR

Stan Nicholls

NOVACON 16 - 31st October-2nd November. Coventry.

So how do I start a report on my first con. Do I tell you about the drunken parties? or list the famous writers I talked to? How about the programme itself? Hmm, there's a novel idea. I met my friends at the De Vere Hotel on Friday evening and we immediately headed for the bar to read the programme book and the rest of the package.

Eventually we moved down to the main programme to see Ted Tubb reminiscing on early conventions and Bob Shaw talking about the worlds he's invented. These were both interesting but at this stage we felt a little awkward amongst these fans who all seemed to know each other. However, bumping into Dave Langford at the bar, and then getting into conversation with Iain Banks meant that I felt comfortable enough to enjoy myself from then on.

Saturday was the busy day. Jim Barker's SEFF interview with Maths Claessen was informative, particularly as I knew nothing of SEFF before. The Cyberpunk debate was also interesting though somewhat desultory. David Brin and Kim Stanley Robinson avoided names whenever they said anything controversial, and finally the debate drifted on to the success (or lack of it?) of the hippy era. Yes, it was interesting but it wasn't really relevant to its title much of the time.

More accurate and informative was the discussion of a novel's progress from writer (Iain Banks) through agent, publisher to publicity. Also on Saturday was the BSFA EGM, I was there, were you?

Again on Sunday there were several interesting panels; Neil Gaiman's Breakfast Show was quite

amusing with its contributions from Terry Pratchett, Jim White and Iain Banks discussing 'silly ideas'. In the end it turned out that most people considered the silliest idea to be the Sinclair C-5. Iain Banks was back again later with Lisa Tuttle, Gwyneth Jones and David Brin on the subject of classics, and early favourites. Chris Evans produced a reasonable Special Guest talk but seemed quite nervous at times.

Well, those were the programme highlights but I also enjoyed the films *Repo Man*, and *Dougal* and the *Blue Cat*/ I spent too much money in the book room and too much at the bar, but I had a great time at my first con.

Kevin McVeigh



CASSANDRA

THE CASSANDRA WORKSHOP 1986

Two days before the workshop was due to begin, I reread the story I was submitting. Glaring mistakes stood out, as though lit by neon lights. I decided that I wouldn't go to the workshop. How could I after submitting such trash? But if I didn't go, how would I learn anything? And it wouldn't be fair on the other members if I didn't. So despite everything I arrived at the Angel Hotel, Northampton on the Friday evening. Most of the other members hadn't yet appeared, and the only person I recognised was the guest author, Garry Kilworth. I presumed, correctly, that the man standing next to him was the organiser, Bernard Smith.

Bernard introduced me to everybody else as they arrived, as I had met only one of the group before, whereas most of them knew one another from previous meetings. However, during the evening most of them came over to chat so by the time we left I felt I was among friends, and was looking forward to the workshop.

The workshop itself took place in a conference room at the Angel Hotel, over Saturday and Sunday, and was quite informal. Garry would start by reading his views of a story before the discussion was opened up for comments from other people, and reactions from the author. This would carry on until a natural conclusion was reached, then we moved on to the next story. By the end of the day we had done eleven out of the twelve stories.

Sunday began with considering the last story, before a general discussion and early lunch. In the afternoon, Chris Kloet, the children's publisher from Gollancz, came to talk about publishing in general and to answer questions. She also brought examples of the different stages in producing a book.

So, what did I think of it all? After my initial doubts, I enjoyed every minute. I learned more about my story than I had expected, and about SF and publishing in general. I am glad I decided to go, and I'm looking forward to another workshop.

U.E.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CASSANDRA?

An update on the Cassandra Science Fiction Workshop 30.6.86

By Bernard Smith

Quite a lot. Since the article *Guiding the Dream in FOCUS 9*, the workshop has extended its range of activity and has continued to produce regular anthologies, eleven having been published so far.

Star Wine is our magazine of SF poetry and artwork, produced in the same format as the anthology. The first issue was experimental, in that we had no idea how such a specialised magazine would go down. Happily, work is flooding in, from the workshop and also from many other groups and individuals. The second issue was published some time ago and *Star Wine* has now gone onto a subscription basis. We have obtained the services of an American distributor based in New York, and it will be very interesting to see how this develops.

On the subject of poetry, *Moon on Water* is a cassette tape of poetry set to specially composed music. Again, this was experimental but seems to

have gone down well. We hope that more will be produced, but as the light behind it - Stephen Austin - is on a visit to Israel we'll just have to wait. It was an interesting and challenging idea, involving a number of disciplines, and seems to have paid off. It is, though, a lot more work than most people would think.

Dreamscape is the magazine for SF and fantasy writers. We've produced one issue at the time of writing and are working on the second. The contents are geared to giving practical help and information to the potential writer. It contains information and articles on such topics as contracts, reference material, titles, writing poetry, writing for children, proof reading marks and self-editing. There is information on various literary groups throughout the country, and also up to date market information, and welcome contributions from Ian Watson, Bob Shaw, Malcolm Edwards and George Hay.

One thing we are particularly keen on is getting across to children - the next generation of SF readers. It's a massive area, not too well tapped at present. We are in the process of producing *Crystal Egg*, an anthology of short SF and artwork for the 11-16 age range, this will be produced in such a way as to be of use in the classroom (it contains a work booklet) as well as being a straight fiction magazine. We are also involved in a thing called *Adventure Learning*, a concept using stories linked with videos to promote SF/fantasy in the classroom, and we feel that this could prove constructive and fascinating for all concerned. Apart from beating the printing press to death, what else are we up to? *Mercury* is the internal review system, similar to *Orbit*, and we are also getting involved with a project, based in London, that is producing SF and fantasy tapes for the blind. This was one of our original aims but lack of know-how and facilities caused it to be put into cold storage until now.

In 1984 we held our first Weekend Workshop in Northampton (at John Brunner's suggestion) and chaired by Ian Watson. In 1985 we were delighted to have Bob Shaw along as guest author, and this year the workshop will be chaired by Garry Kilworth. Workshops are a pleasant mix of hard work and socialising, where the ideas flow as easily as the wine.

We've also held exhibitions, live poetry readings and music performances, sometimes combined, attended small press fairs and writing weekends, given lectures to schools and other varied groups and generally managed to get out to the public as much as possible, promoting SF over as wide a field as we can. It's a lot of hard work but the feeling when you gain a convert ...

And the future? Who knows. We have just joined a Community Association which has just about every facility imaginable, including print room, theatre, cinema, exhibition areas and bar. This has opened up all kinds of possibilities, and you can be sure that we'll take advantage of them.

If anyone is interested in joining Cassandra and getting involved in any of these activities, then don't hesitate to drop me a linear ring me, the more the better.

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MEDIA REVIEWS

ALIENS - Richard Cameron, starring Sigourney Weaver.

Reviewed by Roy Gray

The 1979 film *Alien* was an original film in SF terms. H R Geiger's depiction of a non-human starship and his concept of the alien itself underpinned the whole and gave some vigour to a clever fusion of two standard movie genres - SF and horror. *Aliens* is a sequel set some 60 years later. Ripley, excellently played by Sigourney Weaver, is discovered still in suspended animation, after escaping from the alien. The 'Company' refuses to accept her story, she is demoted to the loading bays until contact is lost with the colonists on Acheron. She is then persuaded to return there with troops. After the reasonably quiet start, the action commences and doesn't stop until she climbs into the suspension tank again.

The plot is much more a fusion of horror themes and an SF milieu than its predecessor. Even when you know what's about to happen, it still shocks. However, there is no sense of creativity nor originality in the story. In many ways it is virtually an exact copy of *Alien*. The internal logic is also somewhat inconsistent. However, such things as the hardware, special effects and characterisations, and the overall look of the film are excellent. It is worth seeing.

DAY OF THE DEAD - George Romero

Reviewed by Colin Bird

The trilogy of "dead" films represents an atheist's vision of hell, the emphasis is on the rotting mortal remains rather than an abstract spiritual journey of descent. The standard elements of the horror genre feature in abundance. The characters are uneven stereotypes and the violence is either excessive or in poor taste. So what is the attraction to George Romero's idiosyncratic slices of black social critique?

Day of the Dead is no ordinary excursion into horror. This is clear from the carefully constructed opening sequence, in which a seemingly deserted city is seen to be the new home of a race of zombies. The hordes of living dead inhabit the shell of civilisation without understanding its value. They wander aimlessly amongst the examples of redundant technology in an obvious, but powerfully symbolic image. With the introduction of the film's living characters, the clichés begin to appear but its most sympathetic character turns out to be a zombie.

The film is set in an underground military installation where a small group of scientists are attempting to find a solution to the increasingly desperate problem. They are aided, initially, by a military unit but mounting friction between the two groups ultimately leads to violence. The central relationship between Science and the Military is the motivating factor for all the key events. Romero is showing us that, even when facing impending doom, men cannot unite. The zombies appear as a peripheral threat until the final sequences, when they invade the base and deal out appropriately brutal punishment to the remaining soldiers.

In the last half hour, *Day of the Dead* almost becomes another film altogether. Tom Savini is given full reign to shock the viewer with several scenes of remarkably realistic make-up. The gore is truly disgusting but it is a important feature of the film. The escalating violence provides a hard edge to the climax and allows Romero to increase the pace of the narrative, just when the film begins to sink under the weight of too much

overt philosophising. He also uses the gore for a rare moment of explicit black humour. As the military commander is caught by the zombies and ripped in half, he shouts 'Choke on it' to the zombies who chew his entrails - a delightful pistake of macho arrogance.

The major flaw in this film must surely be the inconclusive ending. Romero has written himself into a corner, as he did in *Dawn of the Dead* and has not yet found a way out. This may be an inherent flaw in a film of this type, offering no solution and therefore no end, but it does not allow the film to stand separately from the body of George Romero's work. The director has, however, stated that he sees definite possibilities for a fourth film - *Afternoon of the Dead* perhaps?

Black comedy, serious social comment or grotesque hackwork? The argument over the critical evaluation of Romero's films will continue. For all its faults and ambiguities this is an example of provocative film making of the highest quality. Romero is one of the few truly experimental directors making films for major release rather than for the art-house circuit. He deserves the patronage of anyone who appreciates the chance to take their brain to the cinema.

EXPLORERS - Joe Dante

Reviewed by ?

Explorers has sneaked apologetically onto the video shelves after failing to get a theatrical release over here - largely due to a less than positive response in the U.S. Directed by Joe Dante (previously of *The Howling* and *Gremlins*) the film tells the story of three American kids who, finding that they are sharing a dream which is a message from 'out there', create a force field 'bubble' which can transport them round the skies. They head into deep space, where they encounter the senders of the dream, not sophisticated aliens but mafia junkies who wanted to meet a representative of T.V. land. Exit our heroes, disappointed but enlightened, and no doubt wondering whether TV is quite such a good thing.

Zero out of ten for originality - but even the derivative plot and the bad acting are not sufficient to explain the film's poor reception in the States. I think this can be ascribed to two main reasons, one of which is the film's length; it runs for nigh on two hours, and there is insufficient story to merit this. The original storyline was submitted as an episode of Spielberg's *Amazing Stories*, rescued as too good to waste but not expanded sufficiently. More significantly, it sends up several mainstays of American culture, not least TV, so mercilessly that our transatlantic cousins may well have found it a little close to the bone.

What does the film have to offer the British temperament? Quite a lot, more so if the viewer is an SF cinema buff, as the film will then take on a whole new dimension, being crammed with references to other movies, from the low-budget B pictures of the fifties, right up to *Star Wars* and *E.T.* (another sacred American institution which receives short shrift). The aliens are wonderfully comical, designed by Rob Bottin, and played with great vigour, despite the restrictions of working inside a rubber suit.

Dante has created a film which seeks to poke fun at both SF and the 'wish-fulfilment' fantasy which makes up a large part of current SF cinema. The main message seems to be that dreams don't always turn out as expected. *E.T.* might be friendly but he isn't going to reveal the secrets of the universe over tea and biscuits.

As Science Fiction in its own right, *Explorers* doesn't work, but it succeeds as a parody of the genre. It's worth seeing if only for the endless

parade of in-jokes, the stunning visual effects by Industrial Light and Magic - and those wonderful aliens.

STARLIGHT EXPRESS - Apollo Victoria theatre, London. Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, Lyrics by Richard Stilgoe, Directed by Trevor Nunn.

Reviewed by Roy Gray

This is an oddity, a light fantasy very loosely based on the Reverend Awdry's railway stories (Thomas the Tank Engine etc.).

Technology dominates. The theatre is laid out with tracks through the stalls and around the walls, climbing through three levels. Hydraulically raised barriers prevent accidents as roller-skating actors portray high speed trains. A large bridge above the stage, suspended from a robot, connects various sections of the track as and when needed. As part of the audience loses sight of the action at times, large video screens are also deployed. The mechanics weren't overpowering and several scenes were effectively staged and lighted. The concept was impressive.

The libretto is little more than an excuse to play with this gigantic Hornby set, racing the 'trains' around, and for exuberant singing and dancing, all on roller skates. The melodies were not particularly impressive, I found only one at all memorable, and the lyrics ranged from trite to amusingly clever. The characterisations, choreography and rollerskating were often witty and cannot be faulted, although the might have set the Reverend a-spinning.

I thought the show delightful and the rest of the audience seemed equally appreciative. The elaborate stage setting means that the best view is obtained from the front stalls and 'paddock' but for your £18.00 or so, you should have an enjoyable evening, and see, once again, that high-tech settings on stage are purely a matter of cost.

THE TWILIGHT ZONE. Vols 3 & 4. (CBS/Fox Video)

Reviewed by Phil Nichols

Fantasy anthology series have become fashionable again on American television; Spielberg's *Amazing Stories*, the revived *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, the cable series *Tales from the Dark Side* and *Ray Bradbury Theatre*, and the new *Twilight Zone* have each in their own way attempted to revive the spirit of early 1960s TV. For some unknown reason little of this new product has reached British screens, but thanks to video we can at least get a taste of what we may have been missing.

This new series of TZ has no connection with the Spielberg films of a few years ago. That hyperthyroid production seemingly working on the false premise that big is better, took a few tales from the original series and blew them out of proportion. It looked good, but didn't feel right. The aim of this series is to bring back the old *Zone*, to popularise it anew. Does it work? Well...

Volume 3 collects four stories from the show. *If She Dies* is a mawkish tale in which Tony Lo Bianco sheds crocodile tears over the near-death of his young daughter; this tale is illogical, and without structure - not a very promising start. With *Ye Gods* things begin to look up: this is a crisply directed piece of fluff in which a mortal yuppie sorts out Cupid's love life; it's comedy which mostly works, but which is empty of meaning. *Examination Day* is an SF story of a rite-of-passage intelligence test with a difference. It's short, sharp, with a neat punchline.

The final story is a lengthy piece entitled *A Message from Charity*, in which a 20th century boy and a 17th century girl become mindlinked,

enabling them to experience one another's perceptions; the girl's telling of her telepathic ability is interpreted by her contemporaries as witchcraft - this is a curate's egg, fluctuating between stiff archaic dialogue and telepathic romanticism, something of a noble failure.

Volume 4 has five stories. *Teacher's Aide*, the worst segment from these tapes, appears to be a teacher's power fantasy although it resolves itself into quite the opposite - for which it should, I suppose, be commended - but never once is it made clear precisely what is happening. It has something to do with a gargoyles which is repeatedly flashed onto the screen, but where the gargoyle is located is beyond me.

Act Break is another comedy, sharply directed by Ted Flicker (of *The President's Analyst* fame), and with James Coco as a frustrated writer of off-off-Broadway shows, who finds himself stuck in the past as Shakespeare's silent partner. *Dealer's Choice* brings the devil himself to New Jersey where, via a game of cards, he hopes to pick up the odd soul; an amusing piece directed by Wes Craven on an off day.

So far, so fair, but the best is yet to come. Volume 4 also contains Harlan Ellison's *Paladin* of the *Lost Hour*, his first script to be filmed in over ten years, and an impressive adaptation of Ray Bradbury's *The Burning Man*, by J D Feigelson. All I will say of *Paladin* is that the production is old-fashioned, oh-so-sweet, and undoubtedly the finest original work on these two tapes. Danny Kaye, believe it or not, is the star, playing (nearly over-playing) an aged guardian of mankind who must pass on a precious hour of time to a worthy successor.

The Burning Man is surprising only in that it must be one of the most faithful adaptations of a Ray Bradbury story, and as such has all the strengths and weaknesses of its source. Feigelson has succeeded where many have failed, in taking a Bradbury story, stuffing it into the camera, and making it work. If you like Bradbury you'll love this; if you don't, you won't.

This is *The Twilight Zone* reborn. Even in the worst episodes, an intelligence is at work, and unlike Spielberg's picture, this series brings TZ back to its proper scale - simple dramas played by a small cast, special effects being minimal. Rod Serling, you can stop turning in your grave.



WRITE BACK

The Letter Column

I was surprised by the minuscule postbag I received this time. What does it mean, I wonder? You're totally satisfied with what I'm doing? There was nothing to tempt a response in the letter column. Or was it the short period of time between the appearance of the last mailing and the deadline for this one? We shall never know, but I'd like to see a better turnout next time. Perhaps it was the lack of a promise of a free book? I've decided to institute this on a regular basis, so first one back gets a choice of an interesting little list of goodies, lovingly compiled by yours truly. And in case you think I'm using up the BSFA's hard earned cash, I'm not. I have a lot of spare review copies around here, which I use as prizes.

Whilst we're talking about editorial matters, I have been taken to task for saying that I don't want to make a habit of withholding addresses of correspondents. I admit that I didn't make my reasons clear last time, and should have done. I will withhold your address if it isn't on the BSFA list obviously. The reason I don't want to make a habit of withholding addresses, always assuming that those wishing to reply directly rather than through the letter columns haven't realised that addresses are on the list, is that I don't really want to end up acting as an intermediate post office box. I don't want that responsibility. This is a fairly standard newspaper/journal policy, as is a refusal to use pseudonyms unless there is a very good reason. I now know that P T Ross has an excellent reason for keeping his address private, and I shall respect that.

I hope that Simon Nicholson is satisfied with the explanation, as he took me to task. He also had something to say about the Profile series on the BSFA page.

Simon Nicholson
290 London Rd, Langley, Slough, Berkshire, SL3 7HT

The BSFA Profile is a lovely idea but it seems to me that it will take about two years to cover the major personalities, by which time it may well be out of date. I would very much like to see something which brings the power-wielders of the BSFA closer to the general membership, outlining the positions and responsibilities of these generously industrious people in particular.

I must admit I'm a little puzzled by your request. The whole idea of the Profiles is to do just what you ask for. Short of arranging face-to-face meetings, I can't think of any other way of achieving this. Each committee member is required to give an outline of his or her responsibilities as part of their profile. I can certainly provide a list of each person's responsibilities, but I thought this would be a more palatable way of providing the information. Perhaps you could expand a little on what it is you want.

I'm also puzzled by the phrase 'power-wielders', with its underlying implication that there are people behind the Committee who really run the show. I have encountered this belief several times, and I must assure everyone again that the running of the BSFA is in the hands of the Committee you already know about, including the magazine editors. Me, among others.

While we are on suggestions, Cy Chauvin, our American agent, laments the loss of the photopage.

Cy Chauvin
14245 Wilfred, Detroit, Michigan 48213, USA

One feature I would enjoy seeing is a photopage, both photos from conventions, and of those who write for *Matrix*. Ten years or more ago, photopages were a common feature of British fanzines, and it almost seemed as though I knew the faces of British fans better than those of other American fans. Now I have to wait until the rare photo-display at a Worldcon to find out if Paul Kincaid has a beard, how Linda Pickersgill has dyed her hair, and whether Arthur Thomson looks anything like his cartoons. Sad really.

Several people have asked about photos. Well, I would like to - after all, if *Locus* can, etc - and intend to in the future. It's mostly a matter of learning the production processes necessary. I believe something called screening is involved, and once I have picked Hussein's brains on this one they will hopefully appear. On the other hand, I can't take on too many new things immediately as I would only get in a muddle, and mess up more than I intended.

In the meantime, Cy, Paul Kincaid still has a beard (certainly, up to a few moments ago), Linda Pickersgill is still predominantly blonde, and I couldn't really comment on Arthur's resemblance to his cartoons. And very few people know what I look like, which is probably a good thing.

Springing to the defence of the media reviews is

Jon Wallace
21 Charleston Street, Dundee, DD2 4RG

I notice that young fans are just the same as when I was a young fan (I still am!) and still have a tendency to scream about the inclusion of this pet hate or that ('what are media reviews doing here?') but are not so quick to praise. Well, I like media reviews. I don't get to the pictures often these days, and I like to accumulate as much information as possible on the current films before I decide whether it's worth arranging babysitters etc.

Besides, the cinema has an important rôle in SF today. At the basic level, films like the *Star Wars* series can introduce new readers to the field and more intellectual offerings (*Blade Runner* or *Solaris*, take your choice) offer new viewpoints.

Moving on to the various religious topics that have arisen recently, we start with Scientology, once again.

Kevin McVeigh
39 Coundon Road, Coventry, CV1 4AR

I must bow to Joy Hibbert and accept that L Ron Hubbard was not 'undoubtedly evil', though some would point to his being human as proof of evil.

However, in pure organisational terms Scientology is a religion and it is with all organised religions that I have my quarrel. I know of no major religion/movement that has not produced evil or atrocity in its name including current extremes in Ireland, the Middle East and South Africa.

As a result of Hubbard surrendering his organisation to his followers a good deal of evil was (is) perpetrated which he may have been able to restrict. This points to the question of 'guilt through inaction', and I don't feel able to comment on this. Though I am not a fan of Hubbard's writing or a supporter of Scientology, I was still saddened to hear of his death.

Paul D Morris's letter has also generated some response.

P T Ross (address withheld)

Paul D Morris asks 'Is there any Christian SF?' Indeed there is, and not just Dante's *Divine Comedy* - C S Lewis's *Ransom* trilogy for example. *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) considers 'What if

by travelling to another world, men could leave the sphere of total influence of the fallen Lucifer and meet unfallen creatures?' *Perelandra* (1943) continues 'What if a convinced Christian were present at the temptation of an extra-terrestrial Eve, and could present God's case in debate with her and the Devil?' (Both are exactly the sort of theme Paul is hoping for.) *That Hideous Strength* (1945) returns to Earth and 'What if higher creatures than Man - angels both fallen and unfallen - were to intervene directly in the growth of a nazi-like scientific-atheist party in England?' Also from 1945 come *The Great Divorce*, a vision of the soul's eternally-irrevocable choice between God and self.

Lewis wrote as a Christian convert. James Blish, an agnostic, gives us in *A Case of Conscience* (1958) a Jesuit scientist confronting a race whose nature he believes to be a literally diabolic trap for mankind. The related *Doctor Mirabilis* (1964), *Black Easter* (1968) and *The Day after Judgement* (1972) look from other angles at the God/Devil situation.

Charles Williams (a friend of C S Lewis, a Christian and an initiate of the Order of the Golden Dawn) published between 1930 and 1945 seven novels on the fantasy side of SF, whose themes included the Holy Grail, the tarot, archetypes and the Stone of Suleiman.

Tolkien, the greatest of that circle, was a Roman Catholic. His Middle Earth cycle is set in the geologically remote past, long before the incarnation, but reflects a Christian pattern of appealing for help to angelic powers, renouncing temptation or yielding to it though I'm not sure that his that portrayal of demigods (sub-creators, to use his word) isn't strictly speaking heretical. You could base a pretty good religion on the *Annals* and *Leaf by Niggle* ... or has California done so already?

Closer to today, Morris West's *The Clowns of God* (1981) considers the problem of a Pope in the 1990's who is given a special revelation of the imminent Second Coming and nuclear Armageddon. The mainstream probably claims it as theirs - I'd call it high-grade SF.

Whether one believes in Christianity or suspends disbelief, it can certainly be used as the basis for solid speculative writing. I hope other readers' letters will throw up titles I have not yet encountered myself.

Cy Chauvin

Probably the two best SF novels about religion are *A Case of Conscience* by James Blish and *A Gestic for Leibowitz* by Walter M Miller. Paul might also want to read the chapter in *The Issue at Hand* by W Atheling called 'Cathedrals in Space' which is a rather good discussion of religion in SF and gives more examples of books he might wish to read. But SF isn't limiting, and religion in SF isn't always Christianity.

We next have a letter from a gentleman who wishes to remain anonymous because of his other letter-writing activities which are described below. It contains some very useful advice and information for those of you planning to write to Eduard Markov. You will hopefully recall the appeal I ran in my first issue of Matrix about Eduard's difficulties in leaving the USSR.

(address withheld but I will forward letters in this instance, if necessary)

From my experience with appeals with Amnesty International and Keeton College (which works mainly on behalf of people imprisoned for religious reasons - mainly Christian, but also Jewish) a letter-writing campaign is a long hard haul. But people do get sprung from prison Irina Ratushinskaya, a poet and samizdat publisher, was

freed as a conciliatory gesture just before the Iceland Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev.

Be prepared for a lot of patient letter writing. Organise your volunteers to write every two or three months, better still monthly. Send letters and also cards to Eduard - find out when his birthday is, for instance, and send him greetings.

Be sure NEVER to mention politics, STRESS that you are a group of private individuals who have formed a club (the BSFA) to read, write and discuss science fiction stories. When writing to the Soviet authorities, if you mention the BSFA, STRESS that it is a non-political organisation, and write its name out in full.

Even better, write as private citizens and then you won't get Eduard into trouble for corresponding with anti-Soviet groups.

Changing tack completely, our next letter refers back to the item in M66, p. 6 about the importing of British books into America.

Ken Slater
Fantast (Medway) Ltd, PO Box 23, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambs, PE14 9BU

The item omitted an important point ... the prohibition is books to which an American publisher holds rights. A book which is 'open' can be legally imported and sold - the same is also true with regard to American editions of books which are published, or to which the rights have been sold, in Britain. Such editions should not be imported for resale - to do so is both contrary to the Copyright law, and to the Net Book Agreement. Very simple statement of what is really a much more complex matter.

In neither case is there any restriction on a person purchasing and importing a book for his or her own use, although on occasion I have known people fall foul of laws outside the various copyright agreements. At some stage or other both *Animal Farm* and *Alice* were found to be subversive by Australian customs officials, and one entire issue of *Operation Fantast* mailed out to Roger Dard for distribution down under was confiscated as 'obscene' because it had a review - derogatory - of Ralph L. Pinn's *Captive on a Flying Saucer* (Gaywood 1952, I think). Incidentally, I should mention that that R.L. Pinn should not be confused with the romantic novelist of the same name. Some years ago I was in touch with the Romantic Novelist Mr Pinn, and managed to provide him with a copy of the work that some people thought he'd written ... He was somewhat shattered when he received it.

Personally I try not to import a title from the States as I know the British rights have been sold. Bulk importing only destroys a part of the British publishers' sales, and in the long run can make him wary of buying rights to other titles.

And moving on again, the perennial topic of wither the BSFA.

MICHAEL R.A. COBLEY
18 Athole Gardens, Hillhead, Glasgow G12 9BA

Now that the dust is settling and the Association's main publications have attained a coherent format, the time has come, I think, for the management committee to set forth for the members a clear statement of Association policy. Perhaps the following areas of 'difficulty' should be carefully considered:

- 1) The passivity of the large majority of Association members.
- 2) The absence of regional coverage by the Association's publications and the corresponding concentration of the organisation in the Home Counties.

3) The redundancy of Focus in its current format.

The reason why most of the BSFA membership lacks verve is because they see the Association as little more than an information conduit - that's okay, that's fair enough, but the result was, until recently, that the organisation seemed content to provide nothing more than such. That there has been deep and vocal dissatisfaction with the Association's *modus operandi* is a healthy sign and the upgrading of Matrix and PI is promising, but no more.

Why? - because the membership listing thus far shows that there are less than 40 Scottish BSFA members. Yet the Glasgow SF group, FOKT, numbers more than that in total, so where are all the Scots SF fans? The reason, it seems, is the London-centric nature of the BSFA - certainly the general opinion of FOKT is that the BSFA shows no interest in Scottish SF or indeed any of the regions. This is a serious charge and one not difficult to substantiate since regional coverage by PI and particularly Matrix is at best minimal and inaccurate, or even non-existent.

The solution that I would suggest is for the Association to appoint regional representatives. There would be two obvious advantages to this: (1) Better national coverage, and (2) The ability to fine tune any membership campaign - both of these due to the reps being closer to regional events like clubs, university and college societies, workshops, meetings and lectures. Giving the reps their own columns in Matrix might not be a bad idea either.

Finally, just what is the function of Focus? What can it achieve that hasn't been done in more depth and possibly better before? I know that Paul Grunwell's editorial covered forums for discussion, dissemination and marketing and the printing of stories, but I would say that publication and marketing are the most crucial problems facing unknown British writers today - the BSFA really should be printing far more fiction - as well as articles on publishing houses and their editors (Tom Jones' article in Vector 134 was well-directed). After all, if 'How to' advice is needed, there are many books available throughout the libraries, as well as the wealth of wisdom contained in Cassandra's *Dreamscape* magazine.

Outlets are what grassroots SF is starved of at the moment, more especially paying outlets. Perhaps the BSFA could do its bit to alleviate this situation.

The BSFA Co-ordinator will be responding to this letter in the next issue, but it would be interesting to see what other people think about Michael's suggestions, although I do feel that this ground has already been very well-trodden recently.

I resent your accusations about a lack of regional coverage in Matrix. This is only my third issue of the zine and I am trying to expand regional coverage as fast as I can. Unfortunately I can't do it single-handed, and help arrives slowly. A little more patience on your part would assist a good deal whilst I try to develop this side of things. Re-structuring a magazine is a slow and painstaking business, and I really cannot do everything at once. Perhaps if you were to send me information about Scottish events, I could include it. Unless people do, I can't expand coverage at all. I would refer you to my initial statement of intent, which clearly said that I wanted to develop a better nationwide coverage, but that I needed the help of members. This takes time.

Incidentally, you obviously have not realised that Paperback Inferno is a book reviews magazine, not a news magazine. Therefore accusations of a lack of regional coverage are completely unfounded, not to mention ridiculous.

Finally, a brief comment on Mark Gittins' Soapbox

Trevor Bone

The Jentry, 46 Norfolk Way, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CE23 3PV

Mark Gittins sums up exactly what I feel about censorship and the do-gooders. People have got on-off switches on that little box in the corner and as for censorship in books, well the morons who would be 'affected' by it are probably too thick to know the difference between a hardcover and a paperback, let alone what the funny squiggles inside mean.

And that is all from the lettercolumn this time. Don't forget to write in. You could always try writing a letter during Christmas, once the festive spirit has worn off. I will look forward to hearing from a lot more of you than this time.

SOAPBOX RESPONSE

Replies to Back to 1984? by Mark Gittings

TV is a very powerful medium. Companies do not spending millions advertising products and sponsoring events on a medium which has no effect. The question of censorship is very complex. 20 years ago I was against it. I am not so sure now that the advent of video recorders has made almost anything on TV accessible.

One point of view is that we don't really lose a lot if TV is limited, so long as the theatre, newspapers and magazines, film and literature are left reasonably free to make up for this. Soon DBS, coded cable channels etc will add to the variety and possibly expand the limits in a more secure way.

I am not particularly talking about sex on TV in the above but an example from the continental pornography trade may help. Initially, many companies used the freedom to produce and sell pornography in Scandinavia to be fairly harmless. However, it became big business, companies' survival depended on selling it. Hence, after a few years, when the 'you've seen one, you've seen them all' syndrome set in, the complexity and violence increased. The progression in ideas to keep up the flow of customers possibly went: a simple posed nude adult to explicit nude to two simple posed adults to explicit scenes with several adults, then onto adults and animals, adults subjected to violence and eventually through the same progression with children. They weren't Scandinavian children of course, but children from Asia, so market forces in Europe resulted, not for the first time in pretty nasty happenings in less controlled countries.

the moral of many TV programmes is that all problems can be resolved with violence. This is not true and a few limits to ensure that such a message is not received would do no harm.

Roy Gray

I am opposed to censorship of any kind, an extreme position which can be explained by explaining the crucial role played by censorship within society. The economic system called capitalism is based on the exploitation of the majority by a relatively tiny minority. How can such a small number of capitalists maintain their privileged position in the face of such odds?

Obviously force is one method; witness the great Miner's Strike of 1984/5, the current Wapping dispute and the treatment of Irish Republicans. But regimes based entirely on force are notoriously unstable. In fact, rule is maintained by a compromise between force and fraud.

The fraud consists of convincing the majority that the capitalist system is the best that there could possibly be, and that the ruling classes are the

natural rulers. Thus open, and popularly accepted, censorship of imitation sex and violence on TV and cinema helps to promote the idea that the (superior) ruling classes know what is best for the (inferior) lower classes, that somehow our children need protecting from the full horrors of the world.

But censorship is a double-edged sword. It does not merely mean the removal of a few four-letter words lest our innocence be spoiled. Any hint of a subversive thought or idea is also expunged. For example, a QED film on the results of a nuclear bomb on London due to be shown during the Falklands War was postponed. Programmes depicting successful strikes or mutinies are frowned upon; look at the recent attempts to discredit *The Monocled Mutineer*. When censorship fails, the lie machine swings into action.

It is important to see censorship as a means of control, and of ensuring that the ideas of the ruling classes are promoted. The present Tory government's obsession (mirrored by Mark Gittins in *M66*) is also used to justify censorship. Thus serious discussion of sexuality is replaced with

propaganda about 'normal' family life and attacks on so-called 'abnormal' behaviour, such as homosexuality and one-parent families, this could have serious consequences for the spread of AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and other miseries.

Gratuituous sex and violence on TV and film is merely a reflection of a violent, repressive society. It is also a very lucrative part of it. When the driving force behind the economic system is competition and the need to make profits, so-called 'morality' falls by the wayside. After all, what are the lives of a few Ethiopians when we are considering the importance of keeping up the price of grain so as to ensure profitability?

The presentation of women as sex objects, and gratuitous violence, will remain as long as the class-divided capitalist system remains. Only the complete destruction of that system will remove it. In fact, support for censorship will prolong it, since censorship is one of the tools by which capitalist rule is maintained. Forward to the day when production is based on need, not greed!

Keith Hodgson

SOAPBOX

WHY ARE YOU READING THIS RATHER THAN WATCHING IT?

by Philip Collins

"Books, books? oh yes, funny squiggly lines on paper. People use them for entertainment before they invented movies." John Sayles from his film *Lianna*.

For an organisation that is supposedly dealing with, and looking towards the future the BSFA is still largely dealing with/pandering to a dinosaur media. Paper and printing have been with us for hundreds of years and it's long past time to discard these implements for the new age of film and video.

Why has print dominated for so long? For a start, it was largely because there was nothing around to replace it. Word of mouth is all very well and news can travel surprisingly quickly this way, but information equally quickly becomes distorted. Even after the invention of the camera print still remains the 'common' medium due to the large expense which buying film stock and equipment causes. Whatever you may say about paper it is very cheap.

With the new lightweight video technology which is currently being developed these disadvantages are rapidly diminishing. The film maker Derek Jarman recently made a short, 45 minute film called *Angelic Conversation* on Super 8 for just a few thousand pounds. Most of that budget was taken up in wages for the actors and blowing the film up to 35mm for commercial distribution, problems which would not encumber your average fan.

I can see the day where, instead of fanzines, Super 8 will be used for fanish communication. Film is a much more immediate medium than the written word, and by utilising it properly one can produce startling scenes simply by pointing the camera in the right direction. Film also communicates personality and style far more clearly than the written word. I'm sure we've all met fans whose real personalities are totally different to their 'paper personalities'. This is decidedly less likely to happen with the camera's ability to seemingly read the mind behind the eyes. As Jean Luc Godard once said "Film is truth 24 times a second."

Some people reading this might not be terribly clear as to what I mean by personal expression on film, steeped as they perhaps are in the Hollywood mainstream tradition. However, work is being done

in this area and is being publicly shown at places such as the London Film Co-operative and the ICA, as well as on late night slots on Channel 4. It is there and it is accessible.

The clearest example of film as personal expression that I can think of is Jon Jost's film, *Speaking Directly*. In an hour and a half Jost presents a fully-documented picture of himself, his lifestyle, his friends (and even finds time for them to reply, giving their opinions of him, his thoughts and beliefs on sex, religion and then-current political situations, such as the Vietnam War. If this had been presented in written form it would have come across as a dry and dull, academic exercise in self-indulgence. With the enhancing effect of the visual image, it is exciting and stimulating.

This not only applies to looking at ourselves on film, but also to looking at other people and subjects as well. After all, what better way of expressing your feelings than by showing them? And we need no longer be tied down by the barriers of language. Film is an international language. It is primarily a visual medium, and should be used and developed as such. Words too often weigh down the flow of the visuals. Surely, if we ever meet up with beings from another world we will communicate with them through pictures, not through the slow and elaborate process of language.

Of course, I'm not saying that the written medium will become totally obsolete. Theatre and radio still exist, albeit as minority interests, and for the special properties and advantages that these media inherently possess. The same applies to the written word. Factual, biographical, and statistical-type data can be presented far quicker through the written word. Emotion, personality, persuasion and discussion, all the personal aspects of communication (rather than lectures), are more purely and directly expressed through visual material.

As I said before, cost is still the big drawback with film at present, but this should not prevent us from making a start. I feel that what the BSFA and we, as science fiction fans, should be doing is to put more emphasis on studying film and video, its uses and abuses, in order to prepare ourselves for the giant leap towards generally available technology that will soon go to take place. Otherwise too many of us will be left behind in our own little ghetto, thumbing through our yellowing discarded pieces of the past.