

95p *Matrix* 92

The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association

Conventions

Delphic Poll
Concert II:
cuddles and coffee

Soapbox

What's Wrong with
Science Fiction?

Clubs

Strategies for
new members

SF Radio

SF leisure

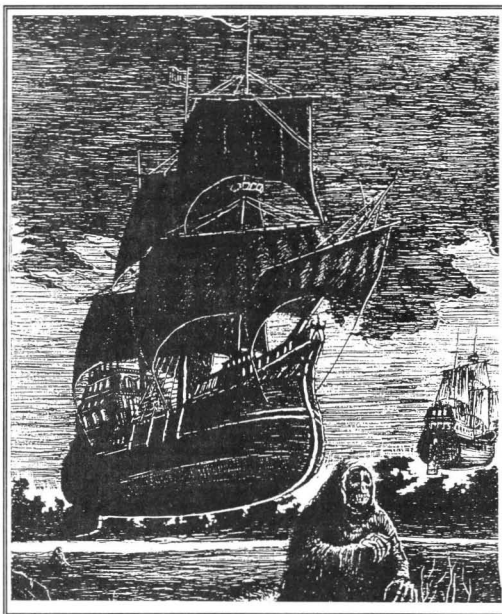
Cruise
Courses
Days Out

Cry "Fanac"

The Single Kudo
Gazette

BSFA Survey:

The representative
member



Reviews of: *Flatliners*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Dan Dire*,
Hardware & Child's Play 2, *The Silver Chair*, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Plus Competition Corner and Fanzine Listing.

February-March 1991

BSFA membership costs £12(UK & EC), £15 (non-EC Europe), £18/\$25air Australia, \$25/\$40air US from:

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Jo Raine, who deals with new members, reports that 193 new members joined the BSFA in 1990, 19 of whom came from outside the UK.

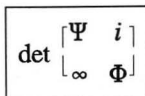
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The cover art is by Andrzej Dobrzynski.
and J. Toivonen (p 22) and Kevin Cullen (p 24).
Advertising
Cover (back, ibc, ifc) £40; full page £35; Half page £20; quarter page £15. Rates for multiple insertions are negotiable. Distribution of loose flyers with BSFA mailings and booklets are also negotiable. Requests for advertising and flyer distribution should be sent to Brett Cockrell.
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ISSN: 0307 3335
Production by Steve and Jenny Glover
Printed by PDC Copyright, 11 Jeffries Passage, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4AP
British Science Fiction Association Ltd
Company No. 921500. Registered in England.
Registered Address - 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ.

Limited by Guarantee
This issue of *Matrix* set in 8pt Times Roman, with 12pt or 18pt Helvetica Bold for headings.

DEADLINE
13th March



DETERMINANTS

As I write, snug in a warm circle of light, disturbed only by the predatory cats falling in the outside gutter and complaining, I can hear the World Service on the radio. The programme

mostly consists of US journalists in Baghdad, excited and frightened, marvelling at the coruscating fireworks and the lambent glare of the Tomahawk exhausts (with apologies to E.E. "Doc" Smith here). Occasionally there would be radio time for the far more scared and definitely far less euphoric journalists in Israel, their voices so distorted by bouncing off satellites, or bad telephone lines, that it seemed they were already wearing their ever ready gas masks. And the linking material was provided by calmer voices, confident that no matter how gargantuan the Iraqi guns were, they wouldn't quite get to London.

Like they say, it is a time of change. An unsettling variation of change, by which events are not merely proceeding from one system to another, but vibrating and swinging, like Foucault's Pendulum, from one extreme to another, so rapidly that the end points of freedom or liberty or love for mankind are shown to be illusions of intense fragility.

The news teams seem incapable of focusing on more than one disaster at a time, they stare, like a Dark Lord, searching for gruesome copy, and the other, equally valid news, of long distance balloons or the horrific events in the USSR, slip further from the headlines as all eyes are glued to the Gulf. And as for South America or Africa - they might as well not exist, even for the internationally minded "World" Service.

Besides euphoria, change brings with it fear and doubt. As the pilots play their live action computer games over Iraq, as power games go sour in the USSR and where, even in Britain, the Prime Minister talks of a "just" war, there are millions of irritated ordinary families whose lives have been shaken up, randomised, and who do not know the reason why.

The BSFA is by no means immune from change, nor are the members. There is the member in the Sultanate of Oman, nearest of all to the fighting (barring the possibility of the BFPO members having been transferred or reservists sent), there is a member whose holiday in Luxor was cut short as panic stricken tour operators decided to shepherd all tourists within a thousand mile radius of the Gulf and return them to safer shores.

Plus, which is perhaps equally serious, the BSFA is going through a cycle of change itself. The Coordinator, Maureen Porter, has resigned. Andy Sawyer, as the most senior of the magazine editors, has written an appreciation which is printed in the traditional *Walking on Glass* slot after the editorial and before the news, and I can only add that Maureen was extremely helpful to me as I struggled through this first year of editorship. The situation now is blurred. The Committee has arranged to meet as you read this, to decide on future strategy and to suggest possibilities for a new Coordinator. If that scheme is unsuccessful, then the post will be advertised in the next issue. However, if there is a new Coordinator appointed, then s/he will be in place for the Annual General Meeting at Eastercon, which will be described in that issue.

I should add here that there has been a series of difficulties with producing the form for the BSFA awards, starting with the Big Snow on December 7/8 last year. They did not arrive in Reading in time for the collation and, as Nic Mahoney writes in his awards piece, Paul Kincaid and Maureen Porter put out a special mailing to ensure that all of you received one. This is an immense effort, to enable and encourage you to vote and, since there has been a delay in getting them to you, I feel that Nic will be flexible about when he receives the nominations, though naturally he would like to receive them as soon as possible.

Turning back to the *Matrix* issue, I find, somewhat to my surprise, that this is the last issue of my first year, a year of change in my own life, where I went back to work, and where my son finally learned to talk clearly and my daughter learned to write. There are a few changes which I want to arrange,

and I feel it is only fair that you should be aware of my intentions. There is the survey to start with. Yes, I know it was a long time ago: but analysing a survey is as time consuming as starting a fire with sticks and friction. However, even friction heated twigs can lead to a forest fire, and when I looked at the survey, I was gratified and amazed to see how many of you generously offered your help.

So here goes. I want to make changes in the way the news and media are presented. Both are major subjects, and columnists, like everyone else, have to sleep occasionally. I therefore want to have a team of people working on news and working on media - for example, Mark Ogier from Guernsey has offered to supply an occasional column on the latest from satellite tv and Boris Sidyuk from the Ukraine will provide news on the Russian publishing front. To prevent duplication, I hope to put all team members in touch with each other and hope that this will encourage some communication, if only in a common loathing for deadlines. Speaking of which, the deadline for the next issue will be early because the magazine is due to be printed in Easter week. Even printers should be able to have some time off then.

But to un-digress, I need help from far flung members who might come across some SF news. If we work together, we can lessen each individual load and provide a broad and fascinating cover of SF both here in Britain and abroad. The time for being insular is past. We are going to become Europeans soon (more change) and we should go to meet our future cheerfully, not cower for the inevitable and hope that it will somehow disappear.

I have been a little surprised at the comments in the survey which indicate a desire for a more positive slant towards science and technology in *Matrix* and the articles I actually receive, invariably anti science. Now, I will say this only once, but I am quite prepared to print material which presents a point of view clearly with a reasoned logical argument, whether I personally agree with it or not. But I am not going to print mindless, woolly attacks on science which quote hearsay as a prime source, which get their "facts" confused and which are, I am afraid, just plain silly.

Finally, thank goodness, an editor is very much like the conductor of an orchestra. While any half decent editor should be able to write any column of the journal, it is bad practice to have to do so, and positive suicide, editorially speaking, to do so continually. My job is to find new contributors who can write literately on Science Fiction, motivate them, maintain more regular contributors and present everyone's work in a clear grammatical fashion which will interest the readers. Your job is to read it and occasionally comment on it. You can write a letter to *Matrix*, for example, developing a subject. Or you could send a request for the noticeboard, to communicate, sell, or search. It's a free service, available for and by members. Likewise, the cons listing is free: but a convention can't be listed if I don't get the information. If you feel strongly about a subject, then there is the *Soapbox* column - and you don't even have to write about Science Fiction.

You may be content to read the magazines and spend an evening on them every two months, toying with the competition, but leaving it for something more interesting. That's a valid position. Science Fiction may not be a top priority in your life. You may just once decide to be more adventurous. It's a bit scary, to change your habits can make you feel vulnerable. But it can make you feel good. Why not try it?

There should be a sheet with your mailing with details of the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on the Sunday of Eastercon in Glasgow. I shall be there, with lots of other BSFA people. I'd like to see you.

Finally, really finally this time, there is a vacancy for an Advertising Manager. It needs to be someone with access to a telephone and preferably word processor in the day. There are two parts to the job: firstly getting advertising for the BSFA magazines, probably from publishers, but also possibly from clubs, conventions, individuals or groups. The second part of the job is advertising the BSFA, raising its profile as far as the general public is concerned. Applications should be to Brett Cockrell in the first instance (as Treasurer, he acts as a Deputy to the Coordinator, and lives at 40 Cyprus Road, Finchley, London N3 3SE).



NEWS

Information from Molly Brown, Jo Raine, Alex Stewart, Phil Emery, Terry Pyle, Christina Lake, Boris Sidyuk, Robert J. Newman and your editor.

There is no news from David Hodson this time, though he assures me that he compiled it in plenty of time and entrusted it to the tender mercies of the post (I am writing this six clear days after he posted it first class from London). I really regret this, because he seems to have compiled an excellent column. If columnists have trouble getting material to me in future, we can arrange to have it faxed, but please telephone me first in the early morning or evening at 0532 791264 to negotiate it.

MURDER ONE BULGES INTO SF

Maxim Jakubowski is developing a three way specialisation on a Charing Cross Road site where the various "shops within a shop" will cover SF/horror, crime and romance. Westminster City Council particularly wanted a bookshop on that particular place, previously owned by Boots the chemist.

Although there might be some SF overlap with the nearby Forbidden Planet, the stock will be pitched at a different, older market with no comics. Maxim describes the potential atmosphere as having "more of a Waterstones feel to it". There will also be a SF and antiquarian SF department.

SUB ROSA

Alex Stewart, who is a director of the book packaging company, *Midnight Rose* with Neil Gaiman, Roz Kaveney and Mary Gentle, has presented a news release to correct the "number of factual inaccuracies" printed in *Matrix 91*, namely that the *Midnight Rose* company had split. It has not split. However, Fox is longer working for the directors. Alex Stewart explains the situation in detail, concluding that with the messy situation of a threat of litigation from Chris Bell, a joint copyright holder and scriptwriter for the *Redfox* comic and the breach of the warranty clause with the proposed publisher, Penguin cancelled the *Redfox* project "with the full agreement and approval of the *Midnight Rose* directors".

Midnight Rose will not be complicating matters further by bringing any defamation suits "at this time", but the company feels obliged to make a public statement in order to set the record straight.

On a more constructive note, Alex also disclosed the list of stories and authors to be included in *The Weerde*, quoted in *Matrix 88* as being an attempt "to use contemporary science to create the atmosphere of dread that Lovecraft extrapolated from the latest scientific ideas of the 1920s as much as from the stock paranoias of the horror writer". They are: "A Wolf to Man" Roz Kaveney; "Sunflower Pump" Paul Cornell; "Rain" Chris Amies; "To the Bad" Brian Stableford; "What God Abandoned" Mary Gentle; "A Strange Sort of Friend" Josephine Saxton; "Railway Mania" Michael Fearn; "Blind Fate" Liz Holliday; "A Change of Season" Storm Constantine; "Cold Skin" Colin Greenland; "Ancient of Days" Charles Stross.

PUBLISHING

TOLKIEN TAPE RELEASED Isis (55 St. Thomas' Street, Oxford OX1 1JG) has released possibly the longest single voice recording of a single work with

Rob Inglis reading *The Lord of the Rings*, predictably in three parts. Besides enduring for a monumental fifty one hours and taking up thirty eight tapes, Rob Inglis and the recording crew listened to tapes of other recording extracts first and consulted with Christopher Tolkien and the Tolkien Society when working out the correct pronunciation of the many languages in the work. The three parts are £44.95, £39.95 and £39.95 respectively and there are companion volumes of the saga in large print and a children's copy of *The Hobbit*.

ALEXANDER POPOV has announced the establishment of a new Bulgarian publishing company: Gemini Books, and is contacting English authors with the possibility of translating their books into Bulgarian.

NEWS FROM THE USSR is that the Dhipro publisher's foreign section is closed because of financial problems: they don't know how to work with book dealers abroad and their last two books in English, the comic *Welcome Danger!* and the hardback *And Man Created Syhom* are not bestsellers. However, Alexei Antromonov has come to the UK to get the rights for publishing Douglas Adams' *Hitch Hiker's Guide ...* into Ukrainian and there is also a new magazine called *Nauka Fantastyka* (*Science Fiction*), which will contain about 60% SF and F stories and the rest reviews and articles about science. Although it is published monthly in Ukrainian, it has colourful covers and illustrations, and can be obtained by sending a £1 cheque or 4 IRCs to Boris Vasilievich Sidyuk, Poste Restante, General PO, Kiev 25200, Ukraine, USSR. Plus, for non-Ukrainian speakers, there is a special newspaper about SF and SF creation called *Velikoje Koloso* (*Great King*) published weekly by the SF fan club council of Ukraine in Russian as well as Ukrainian.

COURSES, WORKSHOPS, CONTESTS

IAN WATSON DAY SCHOOL. This will occur at Keele University, Saturday March 2. After coffee/tea at 1030, Ian Watson will talk about his work and speculate on the future of SF at 1100. Lunch will be at 1245 and Ian Watson will return at 1400 to host a discussion with the audience on the future of SF. The audience will disperse from 1530 onwards following more tea or coffee. Details from Phil Emery, 21 Ferndown Drive, Clayton, Newcastle, Staffs ST5 4BP or the Keele University (0782 625116).

BBC READERS WORKSHOP is run by BBC readers Michael Davies and Graham Jones, offering an active exchange of ideas, criticism of on-going work, and professional counselling. Dates are February 22-24. Cost ca. £60. Info and bookings: The Hill Residential College, Pen y Pound, Abergavenny, Gwent.

WRITING THE SHORT STORY is a workshop to cover both technique and marketing, again February 22-24 (a popular weekend - Ed.). Fees £70 residents, £48 non-residents. Info and bookings: Dillington College, Ilminster, Somerset TA19 9DT.

CITY LIT offers a variety of writing courses and workshops, many of which start in April. Contact: The City Lit, Stukeley Street, Drury Lane, London WC2B 5LJ (tel: 071 242 9872).

THE 24TH CLARION WORKSHOP in writing SF and Fantasy will be held from June 23 to August 3 at Michigan State University. Writers-in-residence will be Tim Powers, Karen Joy Fowler, Ellen Kushner, Thomas Disch, Kate Wilhelm and Damon Knight. Gardner Dozois and Gordon van Gelder will be editors in residence on two Saturdays during the workshop. For complete info and application forms, contact David E. Wright, Director, Clarion '91, c/o Mary Sheridan, Lyman Briggs School, E-28 Holmes Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1107, USA.

SHORT GRAIN CONTEST offers cash prizes of \$250, \$150 and \$100 for "post card" stories or prose poems up to 500 words. Contact Box 1154, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3B4, Canada, closing date March 31.

THE SEARCH FOR MSS

ACCESS PUBLISHERS produce books on disc and are looking for Science Fiction manuscripts of at least 40000 words. Submissions must be on disc in ASCII format. Pays royalties of 10-20% based on average retail price of \$10.

Contact John Farchi, 1078 E. Otero Avenue, Littleton, Colorado 80122, USA (tel: 0101 303 797 2821).

CAN YOU WRITE FOR THE THEATRE? Send the two copies of a play which has not received a professional performance to Alec Baron, Script Coordinator, Yorkshire Playwrights, 19 Park View Crescent, Leeds SL8 2ES, by February 28 and you run the risk of having it workshoped, for which you will receive some remuneration. In any case, it will be returned with detailed and constructive reports - provided you enclose a large stamped addressed envelope.

AWARDS

SMARTIES PRIZE This is the largest prize in the children's book world and the 9-11 category was won by *Midnight Blue* by Pauline Fink (Lion) a first novel about a young girl who flees from her grandmother's cruelty to another world. However, inevitably, there is cruelty there also. The 6-8 category was won by *Esio Trot* by Roald Dahl (Cape).

THE GERMAN KURT LASSWITZ AWARDS for the best SF of 1989 went to:

NOVEL: *Midas* by Wolfgang Jeschke, charismatic Guest at the Dutch Worldcon

NOVELETTE: "Seventeen Sentences", author not revealed (at present; it was credited by our source to the "Siebzehn Satze")

SHORT STORY: "Wanderlust" by Gisbert Haefs

TRANSLATOR: Irene Holicki

ARTIST: Dieter Rotermund

RADIOPLAY: *Project Ichthanthropus Wrecked* (fascinating title) by Dr Dieter Hasselblatt

SPECIAL AWARD: Walter Froneberg. He is the mayor of Wetzlar and has given considerable support to their SF library.

The best foreign novel translated into German was *Life During Wartime* by Lucius Shepard with *The Light Fantastic* by Terry Pratchett and *Dinner at Devil's Palace* by Tim Powers as runners up.

GUARDIAN FICTION PRIZE Traditionally given to a writer who has not previously won a literary award, this was presented to Pauline Melville for her collection of short stories *Shapeshifter* (Women's Press). It is "adventures in the twilight zone" commented *Guardian* literary editor, Tim Radford.

OF BOOKS AND OTHER ART FORMS

TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM Birmingham and London are to host an annual arts festival to highlight the artistic achievements of each decade of the century. All forms of art will be encompassed including literature: but how much SF?

INTERNATIONAL WRITERS' DAY celebrates the 70th anniversary of PEN March 23 at Olympia from 1030 to 1730. With a theme like "The Tower of Babel: the art of translation", it is logical to have guest speakers Michael Ignatieff and Germaine Greer. The cost is £12 attending, or £27 including lunch from Serafina Clarke, 98 Tunis Road, London W12 7EY.

TOP SELLING CHILDREN'S SF over Christmas included *Doctor Xargle's Book of Earthlets* (Red Fox), which was even bought by teachers for reception classes (a recommendation?) and *The Time and Space of Uncle Albert* by Russell Stannard (Faber) which is, apparently, "a sort of junior Stephen Hawking". The *riles, parents will be pleased to know, were outsold massively by Roald Dahl and David Sweeten of Sweetens bookshop exclaimed triumphantly that "posthumously, Roald Dahl clobbered the Turtles back into their New York sewer, slammed on the cover and dominated the children's list". Pity he had to die to do so.

MORE ON THE STORY TELLER WHO LOST HIS STORIES Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* has had an illustrated edition commissioned. The author apparently told the stories to his son before writing them down, latest in a literary tradition including Richard Adams, Roald Dahl and Rudyard Kipling. It is a sure sign of success to have P2C2E, which is

Processes Too Complicated To Explain (ie the parent is too tired to explain that paradox or technology just now).

THE HITCH HIKER RIDES AGAIN Douglas Adams is apparently working on a new Hitch Hiker's book, which may help the membership of the Z29 Plural Z Alpha group, mentioned in the Clubs Column. Z29 also report that they are taking their former treasurer - Tom Fakes - to court to try to recover over £300.

MOST READ BOOKS FOR ADULTS over Christmas included Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*; good going among ones like *The Trials of Life* or *The Guinness Book of Records*.

SCIENCE FICTION CRUISE

A Science Fiction cruise leaves Tampa, Florida, this October 19, sailing to ports like San Juan, Puerto Rico, Tortola and St. Thomas in the British and US Virgin Islands respectively and Nassau, Bahamas, with the enjoyable company of author Joe Haldeman and writer/editor Stanley Schmidt. Apart from special sessions with the guests and group meals, attractions include cocktail parties, team competitions, trivia contests, special gifts and lots of surprises. So for details of a week long holiday of a life time on the M.S. Nieuw Amsterdam, write to Don Fenwick, Omni Group Cruises, 6513 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 205, Hollywood, CA 90 028, USA.

CHICAGO AIN'T THE WHOLE PUNKIN OR WHO'S RUNNING FOR TAFF

The long distance runners for the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund who intend, barring acts of God, to attend the Chicago Worldcon (August 29-September 2) have been announced. They are:

ABIGAIL FROST (nominated by John Berry, Gary Farber, Dave Langford, Caroline Mullan and Ian Sorensen) promises to amaze the Americans by her incomparable ability to switch from patrician to fishwife and back and also to build awareness among younger and European fans. *Fanzine renaissance 1992? You bet she adds.*

BRUNO OGROLEC (nominated by Jenny Glover, Dick Lynch, Mark Manning, Skel and Walt Willis) is a charming witty European who speaks fluent English and says that his nomination has brightened this otherwise rather dismal year considerably.

PAM WELLS (nominated by Harry Bond, Jeanne Gomoll, Chuch Harris, Lucy Huntering and Martin Tudor) loves H.G. Wells, Ursula K. LeGuin, Philip K. Dick, Iain M. Banks and Jonathan Carroll and is the Fan Guest for the Easterncon (Blackpool 1992). Her comment is simply *Take me, America, I'm yours.*

Anyone can vote who has been active in fandom since before January 1990 (this can be through fanzines, conventions, apas, clubs, writing etc.) but votes must be on an official voting form which will be available at most cons or from Christina Lake, 47 Wessex Avenue, Horfield, Bristol BS7 0DE or Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442 (USA). Forms must be accompanied by £1 or \$2 which helps to pay for this trip, voting is by secret ballot, the deadline is May 15.

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

Look out for Science Fiction films here. During February it is offering *Bladerunner* on Wednesday 13 and Monday 18 and *Videodrome* on Sunday 17 and Thursday 21.

OBITUARY

DONALD CHAFFEY, film maker and craftsman, died November 13, 1990. He made *Jason and the Argonauts* in 1963 where Todd Armstrong dodged the Ray Harryhausen Super-Dynamation monstrosities with great skill (remember those skeletons?), *One Million Years BC* later in the 60s, where Raquel Welch wore that famous fur bikini stuck on with (it seemed) superglue (to one's disappointment) and *Creatures That Time Forgot*. Later assignments were cult episodes of *The Prisoner* and *Danger Man* then finally *Pete's Dragon*.

BSFA NEWS

Normally the BSFA news this issue would be concerned with the run up to the BSFA awards, traditionally presented at the Eastercon. However a combination of coincidences means that the award schedule is delayed. This will not mean the postponement of the awards -- see Nic's article below. The major piece of news, though, is Maureen Porter's resignation as coordinator, and Andy Sawyer, *doyen* of the association editors is best fitted to look back on Maureen's terms of office.

MAUREEN: AN APPRECIATION

Maureen Porter has decided to step down as BSFA coordinator, a post she has held for the past two years - the first of those years combined with the editorship of *Matrix*, which she took over in mid-1986.

BSFA coordinator - which means, among other things, acting as a figure-head for the Association and pulling together the ideas and energies of a various and geographically spread group of people - can be an overlooked and thankless task, and I think we should pay tribute to the effort Maureen (and before her, Paul Kincaid) has put in over the years. The work she has done towards keeping the BSFA on an even keel has been immense.

When Maureen first took over as *Matrix* editor, I had been editor of *Paperback Inferno* for a year it was yet another of what might euphemistically be called the BSFA's "periods of change". (I'm reminded of what Fairport Convention violinist Dave Swarbrick is alleged to have said to a journalist when announcing that yet another member had left the band: "... and if you ask if this is a logical move in our progression, I'll slosh you ..."). That we pulled through is partly due to Maureen's determination. Sadly, however, there comes a point when BSFA activism, which is voluntary, unpaid, spare-time activity rewarded only in egoboo and the occasional spare copy of role-playing spin-off fantasy novels which have not been snapped up by eager reviewers, has to be relinquished and Maureen feels that her energies need to be directed elsewhere than the BSFA at present.

So, thank you Maureen for your help, inspiration, friendship and occasional kicks. I'm speaking personally here, but I know that I'm also speaking for the rest of the committee and the membership at large. We've valued your contribution to the BSFA, and wish you well for the future. I certainly hope that we will not for too long miss Maureen's own writing (which I've admired since way before we first met), in pages of BSFA magazines and elsewhere.

THE BSFA AWARDS

Nic Mahoney

Many of you will have noticed the absence of the ballot form I promised in the last sentence of my last article. I had no idea that the postal service would fail to deliver the package of forms to Keith Freeman. It never occurred to me just how reliant we are on the post office. It may be 1991, but communication with our disparate thousand souls cannot be taken for granted.

Only yesterday, I was told of our coordinator's decision to resign. Maureen deserves some kind of award for the work she has put in both as coordinator and as editor of *Matrix*. Relieving herself of these tasks can be looked on as a far more sensible decision than taking them on. For instance, how would any of you out there like to take on the task of a special mailing? Maureen and Paul did this. Much as I would have liked to share their martyrdom, I was not able to help. I feel guilty, not least because I was relieved I could not help.

Whether or not you received your form through this means is another matter, but let me assume that you did. Hopefully, this will have led to a list of nominations contained in this mailing but since there is again a headless monster menacing fandom, nothing is certain. In two days' time, we could be at war with Iraq. There could be another cold war if Lithuania is dealt with tomorrow as it was today. One thing is certain: the finest works of science fiction will be recognised and honoured. To this end, if you have the forms, please fill them in and send them before I leave for the Eastercon.



INFORMATION SERVICE

RADIO SF: Barry Hill talks to Phil Nichols

Barry Hill is a man with a hobby. A hobby that has grown over the years to the extent that it now takes up most of his time, and threatens to overwhelm him. In their two houses on the outskirts of Leeds, he and his family live surrounded by his collection of tapes and tape recorders: Barry Hill owns the largest

archive of radio programmes in the world. He began collecting as a child, by recording his favourite programmes off-air for future listening. Today, he keeps a virtual twenty-four hour vigil, making sure that as many radio programmes as possible get into his collection. The BBC, for various reasons, is unable (or unwilling?) to keep all its programmes, and the National Sound Archive is cutting back on its radio recording activities; the Hill collection, on the other hand, continues to expand.

Currently, however, Barry is in need of financial support. He estimates that £25,000 per year would ensure that his collection could remain in Britain, the alternative being that it would be sent to an American archive.

Recently, I met with Barry to produce a short video aimed at putting his case to potential sponsors. Given our shared interest in SF, it was no surprise that we got round to talking about SF and radio ...

Phil Nichols: Do you have a favourite series or programme?

Barry Hill: I should say my favourite single Science Fiction play is "The Silver Sky", specially written by Tanith Lee for radio. That is absolutely excellent, starring Paul Darrow. If you know Avon in *Blake's Seven*, you know the story of "The Silver Sky". It is absolutely excellent.

PN: Some of the best British radio SF has been in the form of the single play. Do you think that's likely to carry on in the future, or will series spring up now and again; what would you like to hear?

BH: I would like to hear a lot more science fiction, but I can appreciate that it's not likely to happen. One of the things that started off my connection with the United States was to obtain more Science Fiction programmes; because they broadcast - and I use the past tense - a higher percentage of science fiction programming than the networks put out in this country. Science Fiction is my personal favourite. I also like detective stories, which they do excellently as well.

PN: Recent American drama series tend to be revivalist; even if not a revival of a pre-existing series, they tend to sound as if they were made thirty years previously.

BH: That's right. They tend to take the safe bet. There were two famous series called *Dimension X* and *X Minus One* in the early '50s. There was one brief, disastrous revival of *Dimension X* in New York. The station asked if anybody who was interested, and liked the programme, would write in and respond; they had the possible sponsorship, the money to make more programmes lined up. They didn't receive one reply. Nothing was heard about it, and it all died a death, until about a year later when they were refurbishing a building nearby, they found the sacks full of mail, that had gone there, but had been misdirected.

PN: A personal favourite of mine is the National Public Radio series "Bradbury 13", which actually captured the essence of Ray Bradbury's work better than any media production.

BH: There wasn't enough interest or power in radio in the United States to keep that going. They lacked funding. They lack funding, inclination and expertise, unfortunately. That is no criticism of their liking of the genre, it's just that it's difficult for somebody to start running again after thirty years.

PN: These shows do seem to be produced by enthusiasts, rather than people who have been in the broadcasting business for years.

BH: Unfortunately, that is true. The experts in producing these programmes are effectively all in this country. That sometimes reflects itself in costing. For instance, *Alien Worlds* costs about six and a quarter million dollars to produce twenty-four programmes. An interesting Science Fiction serial that was very controversial near its tail end; which is why there are three unaired episodes. (I have them on tape). In one of them, for instance, they needed the sound effect of somebody walking over the hull of a spaceship, and the way that they did that is that they bought a small liner, put it in dry dock, gutted it, and recorded the guy walking in and out on the hull. Which got the sound effect, I'll agree; whereas the BBC sound effects could have done that in ten minutes without the cost of buying a liner. We have the techniques and the technology, the experts over here whereas, to be fair to the Americans, when they do that, it's a real effort because they haven't got the background.

PN: Tell us something about *Journey into Space*.

BH: *Journey into Space* was an excellent serial produced by the BBC, written by Charles Chilton in the 1950s. There were basically four series. The first one was "Operation Luna", originally broadcast in twenty episodes. Later on it was appreciated that it was very popular, and "Operation Luna" was re-broadcast (it performed again - PN) in thirteen half hour parts. The second was "Red Planet" and the final series was "World in Peril". To my knowledge, the very first series has not survived, because it was not recorded on any medium. Recently the three series have been rediscovered on disc.

The sequel to *Journey into Space* came twofold about thirty years later: there was "The Return From Mars", an hour-and-a-half play, and there were two series of six called *Space Force* which went out about four or five years ago.

PN: What did you think of *Space Force*, compared to *Journey into Space*?

BH: I thought it was very, very well done, and in my personal opinion it wasn't given the airing it should have been. The second series of *Space Force* was broadcast in decent quality, stereo, only at half past three in the morning! It was different. The best Science Fiction serial, to answer your unspoken question, was *Earthsearch*, by James Follett, and that was an absolutely brilliant series. That was the '80s equivalent to *Journey into Space*. There have been some absolutely great Science Fiction serials like *Aliens in the Mind* starring Peter Cushing and Vincent Price, absolute belters. The English are very good - the BBC, I should say, in particular - at doing Science Fiction series. Another interesting one was done by Piccadilly Radio in Manchester, the independent station: Stephen Gallagher wrote an eighteen part serial ("The Last Rose of Summer" - PN). And those were excellent. To my knowledge, apart from the recordings that I have, which were kept by somebody recording them off-air, those don't exist anywhere. So if anyone knows where the original ones are, I'd greatly like to know.

PN: One of my personal irritations is the way Science Fiction is treated on radio. There are lots of unfinished series, and missing episodes.

BH: That's right. Science Fiction really is a Cinderella, basically because it is not liked; the powers that be don't like it. The description that I have heard - third hand - is that when it comes to a Science Fiction programme, and the relevant committees, of whatever network it is, meet, it just goes straight round, and it's passed straight through. There is very little Science Fiction aired. There is a book coming out, waiting for a publisher, written by Penny Fabb - a member of ORCA - which lists everything that has been broadcast on British networks on Science Fiction. Everything from *Dan Dare* that went out

on Radio Luxembourg, to the BBC programming, and the Radio Piccadilly programming that went out; it is a work that needed doing.

PN: You say that it doesn't seem to be liked by the powers that be?

BH: Most definitely not.

PN: But *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was probably one of the biggest attractions to radio for a whole generation.

BH: That's right, but it was a freak. They were almost unhappy about it. For instance, the successive books that were written by Douglas Adams have not been broadcast, even though they were available to be broadcast; which - considering the actual money, spinoffs, films, television series, numerous readings, and the money that has been generated - is surprising. The lack of interest in Science Fiction from the broadcasting networks is a personal hobby horse of mine.

PN: We don't get to hear much American programming over here, but the BBC did run one American Science Fiction series: *Star Wars*.

BH: *Star Wars* was broadcast in thirteen episodes. The first programme was "programme zero", where Mark Hamill explained the storyline and how it was expanded. That wasn't broadcast over here. More significantly, there was a second serial called *The Empire Strikes Back*, which wasn't acquired, for whatever reason, for this country's listening. Also, as far as I understand it, in this country, it was broadcast slightly edited, and in mono.

PN: Do you think we lost out there?

BH: We lost out on an area of interest that could have been exploited. Obviously there isn't the interest in *Star Wars* now that there was. But it could have been exploited to a great degree by the powers that be, both in terms of radio interest and also the fact that it could have been commercially exploited in the same way that happened to *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which happened to *Hitchhiker* by accident; it wasn't promoted as such. It was a cult thing that just exploded, and it surprised everybody - except those of us who actually listened to it.

The Old-Time Radio Show Collectors Association, run by Barry Hill, makes available to members many of the programmes discussed above. Annual membership costs £3.50. For an introductory leaflet, please write to Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB. Please enclose a SAE.

MEDIA FILE: LAST IN THE PRESENT SERIES

John Peters

Christopher Reeve, now unlikely to appear in any further *Superman* movies, is set to star in another attempt to bring H.P. Lovecraft to the big screen in *The Horror of Charles Dexter Ward*. In *Bill and Ted go to Hell*, the boys are confronted by their evil twins sent from the future to destroy them. Randy Quaid (seemingly never out of work) stars in Handmade Film's *Cold Dog Soup*, where he plays a taxi driver who helps his girlfriend to bury her recently deceased dog, but events do not work out to be that simple - sounds a bit like *Pet Sematary* to me; harking (and probably barking) back to his *Crimes of Passion*. Ken Russell's latest is *Whore*, in which Theresa Russell plays a LA prostitute. Familiar from *Twin Peaks* for her tongue twisting routine cherry stalks, Sherilyn Fenn has a Barbara Cartland-type romantic encounter when he is "seduced by something less than human" in *Meriden*. The first UK financed feature to be shot in Moscow will be a fantasy, *Sigis*. For gourmets everywhere, *The Killer Tomatoes Strike Back* stars John Astin as Professor Gangrene, the inventor of the bacon, lettuce and human sandwich. Chuck Norris' latest will be *50/50*, directed by Charles Martin Smith, immortalised forever as the nerd in George Lucas' *American Graffiti*.

The latest Stephen King film, *Graveyard Shift*, spent only a short time at the top of the US box office charts, dropping rapidly after Halloween and

replaced by *Jacob's Ladder*. Jeff Daniels, recently seen in *Arachnophobia* stars in *The Grand Tour* - he is renovating a small town hotel when it is visited by time travellers from the future arriving on a Cook's tour to watch the town be destroyed by meteorites. Bruce Willis' latest film, *Hudson Hawk*, is reported to be \$15 million over budget, he is also due to work on the new Dustin Hoffman project *Billy Bathgate* and after that, *The Last Boy Scout*. *The Ticking Man*, Sgt. Rock and the proposed third *Die Hard* film. The long announced *Hook* should be in production during early '91 now that the locations have been set; Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams and Julia Roberts star and Steven Spielberg will direct while also producing a new version of *Peter Pan* - Joe Dante has been approached to direct this, though after the lack of success for *Gremlins II* he had announced that he wasn't going to make any more fantasy films in the near future; the script for *Hook* was originally written by writer/director Nick Castle who also wanted to direct it, however when Spielberg and Hoffman became interested in the project, Castle was paid \$500,000 not to direct it.

Disney's newest animated film is *The Rescuers Down Under*, they also have animation projects under development for the next three years, including a new version of *Aladdin*. One of Paul Verhoeven's future projects under development is *Women*, based on Charles Bukowski's novel; this could challenge the new US ratings as it will be sexually explicit - Verhoeven has approached sfx specialist Rick Bottin to design an erect male penis which the male lead will have to wear in several scenes.

Horror films are currently doing good business in the US - over the Christmas period the previously mentioned *Jacob's Ladder* was beaten to the top of the chart by *Child's Play 2*, even *Predator II* had a respectable showing against the other box office hits; the new Stephen King novel-to-film, *Misery* (for which Columbia expect to pick up some Oscars this year), also seems to be doing well. *The Addams Family* is finally under production with the cast set at Anjelica Huston (replacing the already announced Cher as Morticia), Raul Julia (replacing Kevin Kline) and Carol Struyken as Lurch, director is Barry Sonnenfeld; it should be a prequel to the famous tv series and the hope is to capture the cartoon strip's weird humour.

Alien III is again in difficulty - director Vincent Ward has left the production citing "creative differences" after rewriting the script (his version apparently ensured that the aliens didn't come to Earth, but to a space monastery set in a lake); Ward has been replaced by David Fincher, the director of Madonna's "Vogue" video, but with the film due for an August opening, it seems likely that there will be more problems ahead for this much troubled production - which already include James Cameron and Sigourney Weaver suing 20th Century Fox over alleged non-payment of money due from *Aliens*. This could affect Weaver's scheduled appearance in the latest sequel. Likened to *A Fish Called Wanda*, Bob Hoskins' new film *The Favour, the Watch and the Very Big Fish* is a comedy about a couple's relationship and their misadventures - it also stars Jeff Goldblum and Natasha Richardson. And her mother and aunt, the Redgrave sisters, Vanessa and Lynn, are to star in a tv movie remake of *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. Rutger Hauer's latest film, *The Castle*, has ceased filming due to lack of funds and Hauer has moved on to star in *Wedlock*, a romantic thriller also starring Mimi Rogers.

So I married an Axe Murderer stars Martin Short. *Princess of Mars*, based on an Edgar Rice Burroughs novel, is due for production this year; the story deals with a confederate soldier transported to Mars where he becomes involved in a very different style of warfare. *Airplane* director Jim Abrahams is due to send up the *Top Gun* style of film with *Hot Shots* starring Charlie Sheen. Following on from *Rocky V*, and a promised *Rambo IV*, Sylvester Stallone is due to appear in *Isobar*, another action/adventure yarn where his muscles outlast his adenoids. Following up the extremely impressive SF thriller *Hardware*, director Richard Stanley's next project is *Dust Devils*, a horror film set in South Africa and depicting Hell overspilling onto the Earth. The only true *She Devil*, Julie T. Wallace, is currently shooting *The Lunatic* in Jamaica under the direction of ex-10CC musician Lou Creme. Jeremy Irons should be starring in *The Cull*, a thriller set in the Scottish Highlands. Disappointment in the last Bond movie's financial return has meant a shakeup in the production company - Cubby Broccoli has handed over control to his daughter Barbara and stepson Michael Wilson, director John Glen and writer Richard Maibaum have not been rehired, and the new producers are looking for a Hollywood

director to revitalise the film series. Both John Landis and Ted Kotcheff have been suggested as likely candidates.

Described as a cross between *Quest for Fire* meets *Romeo and Juliet*, Agaguk stars Lou Diamond Phillips and Jennifer Tilley and is being shot in remote areas of Northern Canada. Jean-Claude Van Damme has two SF actioners in development - *Universal Soldier* is all about genetically engineered soldiers with Van Damme facing villainous Dolph Lundgren; the second film is *Atlas*, which he describes as "Spartacus set in the future". Distribution problems have been resolved for *Captain America* and the film has now opened in the UK - another comicbook hero, *The Flash*, has had his tv adventures released on video. Sequels to look out for (or not) include *House IV* and *Problem Child 2* (though the original hasn't been released in the UK yet). Alan Rickman, the villain in *Die Hard*, is to play the black-magic wielding Sheriff of Nottingham in *Robin - Prince of Thieves*. Meanwhile, John McTiernan's *Robin Hood* has had some drastic changes - it is being rewritten for television and he will remain as executive producer only; McTiernan now plans to make a western. A large number of the Universal-owned cartoons of the 50's and 60's are currently being enhanced (aka cleaned up and dusted off) and transferred to a more stable filmstock; most of these, including the entire *Casper the Ghost* series will probably appear on video later this year. With Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* due for release, watch out for films hoping to cash in on its success - the first is *The Dark Backwards*, a comedy about a three armed man. It appears that *Robocop 3* is unlikely in the near future, plans for a third film have been cancelled after #2's poor box office returns and Peter Weller's reluctance to wear that suit again. Rick Moranis reverses the shrinking ray in *Honey, I Blew Up Baby* and Disney expect more mayhem to follow when production starts in March.

It seems that 1991 may be a vintage year for classic film titles, try these: *Vampires Always Ring Twice*, *Nudist Colony of the Dead*, *Rudy Learns Quantum Mechanics*, *Dorg The Man Eating Crayfish* from Kelly High.

To finish off my final column, here is a brief check list of what you should expect to see on the big screen sometime this year: *Adventures of Ford Fairlane*, Renny Harlin's new thriller starring Robert Englund, Priscilla Presley and Andrew Dice Clay; *Alien III*, personally it is a case of I'll believe it when I see it; *An American Tail II*, more cute animation from Don Bluth and Spielberg; *Awakenings*, Robin Williams and Robert de Niro in Penny Marshall's follow up to *Big*; *Dead Again*, Kenneth Branagh directs and stars in this tale of hypnotic regression; *Delirious*, John Candy wakes up following an accident and finds himself in a strangely familiar hospital; *The Fisher King*, Terry Gilliam's latest; *FX II*, Bryan Brown returns in sequel; *Hamlet*, Mad Mel takes on the Bard; *Highlander II*, Sean Connery and Christopher Lambert re-team in long awaited sequel; *Hudson Hawk*, Bruce Willis plays an art thief; *Jacob's Ladder*, an ex-Nam vet is haunted by demonic nightmares, directed by Adrian Lyne; *The Jetsons*, film version of tv show; *Kindergarten Cop*, Arnie does his bit for the school curriculum; *King Ralph I*, John Goodman becomes king of England (honest!); *Look Who's Talking Too* sequel - Travolta dances with a talking nappy; *Naked Gun II*, The Police Squad's finest (Leslie Nielsen) returns for more lunacy; *Predator II*, Arnie-less sequel; *The Rocketeer*, comic strip adaptation, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, but you can't wait for this sequel; *Terminator II*, Arnie as we know and love him.

And that's about it. I hope you've enjoyed the column over the last couple of years and found it of some sort of use, and my thanks to those of you who wrote in. So with a shout of *That's a wrap!* the floods die and the camera starts whirring. Darkness falls and someone falls screaming into the popcorn machine.

MEDIA REVIEWS

THE HANDMAID'S TALE

directed by Volker Schlöndorff, 1990, 108 mins, 18

Reviewed by Joseph Nicholas

I'm aware, of course, that film is a different medium to print, and that the work of translating a novel into a screenplay means that one can very often end up with something different from the readers' expectations, to say nothing of the author's original intentions. Nevertheless, there is some truth in the

criticism that, in adapting Margaret Atwood's novel for the cinema, Harold Pinter's script has, by omitting her careful extrapolations of existing trends to show how the Republic of Gilead developed, rendered the connections between here and there and so rendered the whole rather less meaningful.

Nevertheless -- although I haven't read the novel, and have to assume that what is left is reasonably faithful to it -- I found that even on its own terms the scenario *simply doesn't make sense*. If Gilead regards women as chattels, then why do some women still have the power to order large numbers of men around? If fertility is so much under the control of the state, then why was Kate/Offred (and presumably large numbers of other people as well) ever allowed to establish a normal nuclear family in the first place? Why is it only women who have been made infertile by radiation and chemical pollution, and not men as well? What sort of infertility plague is it that -- since Kate and her friends are always dreaming of escape from Gilead, to where life is presumably quite different -- affects only this one nation, and not the rest of the world? Such questions might seem pettifogging, but because we are given no answers they fatally undermine the scenario's credibility. What Margaret Atwood is offering us, after all, is not a metaphorical vision of the future but a *literal* one, an actual prediction of how things might turn out and what we (or, more correctly, women) should therefore guard against. Thus even one hole in the extrapolative reasoning is one hole too many; and her warning collapses.

In addition, the whole vision strikes me as rather paranoid anyway, but this is doubtless because fundamentalist Christianity of the kind depicted is more common, and has considerably more political power, in North America than Europe, where TV evangelists like Jim Bakker and Pat Robertson would be laughed into oblivion. (And I suppose I think it's paranoid because I'm only a man -- but then I'm hardly likely to feel threatened by a future which gives absolute power to men). So one is left with the quality of the script and the acting, which is really very good indeed without ever fully compensating for the other flaws. Natasha Richardson, in her first major role, is excellent (and the resemblance between her and her mother, Vanessa Redgrave, is quite startling -- right down to the similarity of their mannerisms); Fay Dunaway conveys just the right blend of menace and vacuity as the establishment wife; and Robert Duvall turns in a highly professional performance as a character struggling to do his duty by Gilead's strict moral code while wanting to be liked by the person it requires him to regard as less than human -- a character who one eventually comes to feel sympathy for without ever really respecting. Because, of course, as good liberals, we are all on the side of the rebels anyway ...

In short, *The Handmaid's Tale* is worth seeing. But for philosophical depth, you'll probably have to look elsewhere.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Reviewed by Joseph Nicholas

Is there any real point in reviewing this film? Well, yes, there is, actually -- not as an example of modern marketing techniques but for what it tells us about the society that produces such cultural artifacts. The sociological approach to criticism teaches us that at its lowest level, popular culture exactly replicates society's basic hopes and fears -- and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is full of them.

Recent US opinion polls have shown that with the end of the superpower confrontation that was the most overt characteristic of the Cold War, Japan has now replaced the Soviet Union as the most feared competitor and likely opponent -- so it is no surprise to find that the main bad guys in this film are Japanese, enticing wayward school children into their clutches with the promise of alcohol and cigarettes (but not, significantly, illegal drugs -- the producers missed a good one there) and then training them in the martial art of ninja before sending them forth to dominate the streets of New York. And, like Fagin in Dicken's *Oliver Twist*, also training them as pickpockets and petty thieves -- which points us towards the second fear expressed in the film, that of an economy which is losing its global edge. The abandoned warehouse which serves as the ninja gang's headquarters is stacked from floor to ceiling with boxes of domestic electronic goods -- precisely the area in which Japan has outcompeted the US (and everyone else). Although the film provides no overt explanation of the connection between this consumer technology and petty theft, the implication is that the US clearly feels that Japan is not playing fairly in the global market; that the orient is not so much mysterious as downright devious.

Against this is set the myth of the nuclear family which nurtures, sustains, and leads everyone along the path of righteousness. The film's subplot concerns an erring schoolboy whose contact with the turtles teaches him that the extended surrogate "family" provided by the Japanese Fagin is no substitute for the real thing, and that true love can only be found in the bosom of one's parents -- to which he duly returns at the end of the film. (Although in fact we only ever see the father, who appears no longer to have a wife -- leaving us with the clearly reactionary implication that if he acquired one, the boy would also reacquire a mother and would perhaps never have strayed in the first place).

I haven't said much about the plot -- largely because there isn't much of one and because large parts of it have been lifted from the second film in the *Star Wars* trilogy, right down to the force (ninja) that can be used for good or evil and the wise old teacher who delivers himself of several mock-portentous apothegms to both his students (the turtles) and the schoolboy. However, the are no special effects; the film is live-action throughout, and so probably cost (in usual Hollywood terms) very little to make. Whether you want to see it entirely up to you.

FLATLINERS

directed by Joel Schumacher

Reviewed by Joseph Nicholas

To review this film, I have to reveal large parts of the plot; those who abhor such things and want to be surprised when they see the film should stop right here. Although what's really surprising about *Flatliners* is the amazingly bad fist it makes of its genuinely scary and terrifying idea: dying, and then being revived to tell others of one's after-death experiences.

Five medical students, led by Keifer Sutherland and Julia Roberts and nominally held back by Kevin Bacon, take it in turns to inject themselves with anaesthetic, reduce their body temperatures, and then electroshock their hearts into stopping -- going under for longer and longer periods each time. Each seems to replay portions of their lives, some parts pleasant and others not, and all talk of feeling that there's something out there, watching over them to see that they come to no harm -- although for people so interested in after-death experiences none of the five ever ask whether these visions might be real evidence of life after death or just hallucinations induced by the brain chemistry going haywire as electrical activity ceases. This is particularly true of the character played by Julia Roberts (who may be 1990's star discovery but strikes me as fairly vacant), who has been obsessively documenting after-death experiences for years beforehand without ever asking such elementary questions -- yet if scepticism is not the hallmark of scientific enquiry, then what is? And wouldn't the feeling of being watched over simply be a residual belief in a supreme entity built into the structure of Western Christian society, or just the knowledge that your friends are waiting to revive you?

What the film offers as an answer to this is an old-fashioned morality built around the precept "beware lest thy sins find thee out". Each medical student, when revived, is haunted by past transgressions committed when children, which now pursue them as adults -- in Kevin Bacon's and Keifer Sutherland's case, the taunting and bullying they handed out to their fellows at school. Bacon assuages his guilt by tracking down and apologising to the person he once bullied, but Sutherland can't because the person he tormented he accidentally killed -- and when this revelation arrives you practically laugh out loud, because if this is so, then how can the boy be so ferociously and continually beating him up? Are we supposed to believe that all his bruises were made by a ghostly hockey stick?

Apparently, I stayed to the end, to watch Sutherland kill himself again, apologise to the boy's ghost, and then be revived after having been out for a whopping twelve minutes. Oxygen starvation of the brain? Only of the director and the scriptwriter, I think.

HARDWARE

(18) directed by Richard Stanley

CHILD'S PLAY 2

(15) directed by John Lafia

Reviewed by John Peters

Hardware has been gaining something of a reputation over the last six months or so, and having just seen it, I can certainly understand why. Stanley may

well be a film buff plundering recent genre films quite thoroughly for his debut feature production, but he has, thankfully, also brought a perverted sense of style to it.

Set in an ill-defined future, though I can tell you that this future is a pretty grotty one, all junkyards and rust-coloured skies, a nomad scavenger discovers a robot's head and torso buried in a desert landscape. Having sold the remains at the local scrapyard, the nomad disappears and Mo buys the scrap for his sculptress girlfriend, Jill. This is not a particularly good career move on Mo's part as the robot (actually a MARK 13 military cyborg whose sole hobby is killing anything that moves - including the cuddly toy) begins to rebuild itself from the retrograde Black & Decker tools that Jill uses.

I'm sure that you can guess the rest - we are definitely in *Terminator/Predator* territory here and after a rather slow build up, the film kicks into explosive gear for Jill as Mark 13 tries to take out a permanent time-sharing lease on her apartment. It's also fair to mention that "overkill" isn't in the Mark 13's vocabulary - eye-gouging, limb dismemberment and lethal injections (all to the same poor foe) are just a few of his favourite things.

Too derivative to be an exceptional genre film, *Hardware* reveals yet another new director to watch out for. All Stanley needs is the right script and budget. What is worthy of note is that the film is British, uses its meagre budget wisely and looks as good as any Hollywood blockbuster.

Which is more than can be said for *Child's Play 2*, a cursory sequel with only one motive: to make money for the studio. Not having seen the original, I can't compare the two films, but the sequel definitely lacks a sense of style.

Basically a rewrite of the original, the voodoo-transferred soul of a gangster lives on in the charred remains of "Chucky", a really obnoxiously cute doll. The toy company retrieve and rebuild Chucky and before you can say *Crackerjack!* it comes to life, bumps off a few nonentities and escapes. The doll (extremely well animated by Kevin Yagher) searches for Andy, its young owner, so that the gangster's soul can change tenancy before the voodoo spell makes his stay in the doll permanent.

It is difficult to say what exactly is wrong with this film: the timing certainly seems off, and even the miserly eighty five minutes running time seems an eternity. Casting Jenny Agutter and Gerrit Graham as the foster parents at least ensures decent performances, but the script is trite, unimaginative and offers nothing new. *Child's Play 2* is competently filmed - but ultimately boring.

THE SILVER CHAIR

BBC Children's Television, 6 episodes, November-December, 1990
Reviewed by Jessica Yates

The Silver Chair as a fitting climax to the *Chronicles of Narnia* series which encompassed four of the seven *Chronicles* by C.S. Lewis in three six episode serials over three years, with video cassettes becoming available a year after each serial was shown. The final *TV Chronicle* has a good thriller-style plot and even a few jokes, and takes its literary ancestry from mediaeval romance and ballad.

Eustace and his schoolfriend Jill are summoned to Aslan's country and entrusted with a quest. They are to travel north of Narnia into the giant's country and search for Rilian, the kidnapped son of King Caspian. Friendly owls tell the children that Rilian is probably in the clutches of a mysterious magical woman who killed his mother in snake-form. The owls provide the children with a guide, Puddleglum, the morose Marsh-wiggle, who always looks on the gloomy side of life.

The trials and tribulations of journeying across the moors so confuse the travellers that even when they meet a mysterious Knight in the company of a Green Lady, they don't guess who the couple are, and willingly agree to the Lady's suggestion that they go to the castle of Harfang, and tell the giants that they've been sent by the Lady "for the Autumn Feast".

The irony of this double entendre was well milked in this production, my children laughing at Jill and Eustace's stupidity, and there were excellent special effects demonstrating the difference in size between the giants and our heroes, with gorgeous Patsy Byrne (from the Elizabethan *Blackadder* series)

as the Giant Nanny. The joke was definitely on them when they discovered the giant cookbook open at the letter "M", for Man, Man-Pie and Marsh-wiggle!

Escaping from the giants, our heroes are captured by Underworlders and meet the Black Knight again. During his ordeal in the enchanted silver chair, he begs them to release him in Aslan's name. All these rather improbable events were made credible by the committed acting of the two children and Tom Baker as Puddleglum. Barbara Kellermann as the Green Lady was too hysterical and obviously evil, when the book and Pauline Baynes's illustrations call for a deceptively young and innocent-seeming lady - the archetypal Queen of the Fairies who entraps young men in mediaeval romance. Just because Kellermann had been successful as the White Witch, there was no need to cast her as Green Lady. However, special effects came well up to scratch in transforming her into her snake-shape.

DAN DIRE - PILOT OF THE FUTURE

by "Hugh Sun" aka Nick Newman (*Private Eye*)
Reviewed by Jessica Yates

In *Matrix 75* (April/May 1988), Roy Gray reviewed the first six months of *Dan Dire*, a fortnightly strip which began in *Private Eye* 673, October 1987, to celebrate the new-look Labour Party after it lost the last General Election, and closed in *Private Eye* 757, December 21, 1990, with the fall of Maggie Thatcher, the "Maggon".

I suspect many *Private Eye* readers turned to Dan Dire first on opening each new issue. It was amazing how many parallels could be found between popular SF films, TV series or comics, and the political events we were actually living through. Such pleasure was derived from the coincidences which often seemed to occur for the benefit of "Hugh Sun", and SF fans would particularly have enjoyed the easy blending of characters and clichés from different space operas: mainly *Dr. Who*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and *Space Odyssey*. Such skill too in the artist who drew our beloved or hated politicians in SF terms, so that even disguised as robots they could still be recognised by a few strands of flex, a pair of eyebrows, a pipe or spectacles. Consider Geoffrey Howe, as the computer HOW 9000; Cecil Parkinson - or CEC-IL, the Roboflop; the Duglek (Douglas Hurd).

When John Major came on the scene, he was rechristened "Major John", from the pop song "Space Oddity" - "Ground-control to Major Tom etc". There was the Riddex of Quarg, a disembodied brain planning to destroy the green asteroid belt; Norman Skulman, modelled, I suppose, on Skelton, the villain in *He-Man*; and surely the most inspired parody, Blubba the Gut on his inflatable platform, named of course from Jabba the Hutt in *Return of the Jedi*, identity no prizes for guessing! Other minor characters included Lieutenant Cuhurrie of the Starship *Free Enterprise*, Space Padre "Jenks" Durham, Tureen Mind-Meddler Ken Bakka, the Browne Worm (from *Dune*), the Scargien, and the two-headed Murdo Babbelbollox.

The supposed hero of the strip was Dan Dire, whose mission was to rid the Universe of the Venusian arch-criminal, the Maggon. Dire's fellow-pilot was Pigby, and many were the puns based on Roy Hattersley's supposed greed. Dire and Pigby were backed up from Lunar Base by characters drawn as Benn and Livingstone. Usually one of them would utter a heroic oath e.g. "Lolloping Lasers!" or "Suffering Sputniks!", newly coined for each issue, while the Maggon's followers would swear by something topical like "By the Point Failures of Crew" or "By the Falling Index of Hang Seng". This brings me to the money-lenders of Yip on the planet Mammom, who regularly featured, as did the nursemaids on the slave planet NHS-3 "Ward Factor Nil". The Liberal Party was represented by a "doomed escape pod" which never won back, haunted by the spectre of Dr. Whoen, the Time-is-now Lord.

Luckily for "Hugh Sun", the downfall of the Maggon in real life involved several of his star characters, so with the collapse of the HOW 9000 mainframe, dashing rebel leader Han Solotene stormed the Battilestar, the Maggon was visited by the men in grey space-suits, the Duglek tried to seize power, but was defeated by Major John, and the Maggon was expelled from the airock to the laughter of her old enemies. Dan Dire returned to base to be relieved from command, as the Maggon's downfall had had nothing to do with him! Step forward Star Cadet Smith ...

BSFA Survey

This survey was distributed with *Matrix 84* and instigated by Maureen Porter, the BSFA Coordinator, who wanted to gain a clearer idea of just who the members were and what they wanted from the BSFA. The response was staggering: nearly three hundred detailed responses with lots of constructive comments.

What is a BSFA member?

The figures indicate that he is male, aged 'thirtysomething' (between early twenties and late thirties) with a quarter of a child.

Male:	230	Age:	Under 20	5
Female:	40		20-30	109
Married:	108		30-40	110
With children:	79		50-60	7
			Over 60	4

The Essentials of Life

BSFA readers were well equipped with technological utensils: TV (243), VCR (164), Typewriter (126), Computer (160) and extremely imaginative as to what the computers were used for. The most popular uses were games (22) and writing/publishing (64); other uses were programming (11), database, leisure (8), music editing, home accounts, consulting, business, general (6), study, wordprocessing (8), research, comms and analysing satellite data.

Reading Habits

Considering that BSFA readers tend to be in their twenties/thirties (or would like to be), they appear to have started reading SF extremely early. This could, of course, indicate judicious parental choice, or just intelligent offspring. Or that, like Everest, it was there.

When asked how long they had been reading SF regularly, 151 said 15 years or more, 81 said between 10 and 15 years, 27 said between 6 and 9 years and 10 confessed to between 1 and 5 years.

Predictably, 201 replied that SF/Fantasy formed the major part of their reading for pleasure (42 said neither and 85 said both); equally predictably, when asked if they preferred SF to Fantasy, 201 went for SF, 12 for F and 85 said both.

Analysis of SF/F reading

What kinds of SF do you read?

	Often	Seldom	Never
Alternate History	56	96	12
Time Travel	52	109	6
Space Opera	28	103	22
Near Future	73	82	9
Hard SF	67	86	13
Robots	38	106	14
Future Wars	18	102	37
Cyberpunk	36	92	43
Feminist	32	86	45
Other Worlds	85	77	4
Alien Invasions	28	104	28
Environmental	41	107	13
Social	54	96	15
Humorous	56	94	10
Film Novelisations	1	62	105

Other: SF Art, American, Inner Space, Based on Reviews, Philip K. Dick, Poetry, Anthropological, Philosophy, Religion, Anthologies, Short Stories, Telepathic/Mystery, Children's, Antiquarian, Science Fantasy.

Which types of Fantasy do you read?

Sword and Sorcery	22	142	95
Quests	31	138	96
Talking Animals etc.	6	99	151
Celtic Fantasy	35	112	115
Humorous	79	106	59
Dark Fantasy	41	116	96
Romantic	10	82	163
Magic Realism	52	126	84
Film Novelisations	4	46	206

Other: High Fantasy, Based on Reviews, Fantasy Art, Powers, Blaylock and Jeter, Quality not Subgenre, Gothic, Poetry, Prehistoric: Clan of the Cave Bear, Lord of the Rings/Gormenghast, Shared World, Feminist, Historical, Children's, Norse Myth, Antiquarian, E.R. Burroughs, High, Anthologies, Psi, Free Verse, Lost Worlds, Game Novelisations.

Which of the related genres do you read?

"Literary" Fantasy	47	149	53
Ghost Stories	19	92	129
Horror	34	115	111
Graphic Novels	26	102	126
Comics (Specialist)	38	73	154
Comics (News Stand)	20	50	184
Occult fiction	12	75	166
Mythology	31	146	73
Borderline/Mainstream	63	149	18

Others: Historical, High Fantasy, Mainstream Avant Garde, SF/Fantasy, Crime/Mystery, Mainstream, Poetry, Non-fiction/Science, SF Non-fiction, Science/Fiction Non-fiction, SF Art, Modern Literature, Bande Dessines, Children's Fiction, Classical SF, Medieval Whodunit, Classics, Modern Fiction, Folklore etc. Spy, Weird Fiction, Papers, Comedy, Crichton, Adventure, Martial Arts.

Apart from the incredible variety of reading material, there seems to be a bias against reading film novelisations. However, when asked if the SF/F readers purchased was mostly new or used, the response was 141 (new), 56 (used), 55 (equal) and where it was bought proved as varied as ever. The surprisingly low figure for buying books at conventions may be partially explained by the low number of BSFA members at cons.

Where do you buy your SF/Fantasy?

	Often	Seldom	Never
General Bookshops	160	100	8
Specialist Bookshops	91	135	37
Conventions	22	88	119
Specialist Mail Order	60	90	135
Secondhand Bookshops	78	132	56

Others: Group Meeting, Titan/Capital City, Borrow from library, Jumble Sales, Carboot Sales, Local Club Auctions, Charity Shops, Library Sell off, News stands, Market, Shows/Fairs, Supermarkets, Friends' Lists, Subscription, Book finding services, Review copies, Remainder Shops, Withdrawn Library stock, Donated, Swaps, Borrowed, Cast offs, Clubs, Friends, Book Fairs, Second hand Mail order.

The interests of BSFA readers

The news of SF/matrix concentrates on written SF and there is a BSFA magazine especially for aspiring SF writers (though one person suggested that there should be one for aspiring SF artists also). But readers have other interests too:

	Lot	Little	Not
Films	148	113	9
TV media	89	145	36
Writing	133	81	55
Costuming	6	30	230
Reenactment	3	41	215
Comics	48	94	137
Fantines	48	116	83
Computers	88	103	75
Videos	73	124	68
RPG	31	69	155
Art	70	145	62
Mystery	47	88	94

Others: Animata, Music, Innovative Fiction, Board Games, Robotics, Folk, History, Science/Technology especially Astronomy, Space, Science Fact and Teaching Astronautics, Medicine, Environment, Model making, Poetry, Biographies, Historical Fiction, Paganism, Feminism, Green Politics, Futurology, Music, History, Pulp Magazines, Science and Society, Changes in Social Attitudes, Politics, Theatre, Sex and drugs and rock and roll, Juvenile, Desires, Pubs, Near Science Non-Fiction, Desires, Near Death experiences, Occult, Sports, Lit. Crit., Philosophy, Mainstream, Maths, Unclassifiable, Plays, Small Press, Fiction, Meeting people, Mythology.

Adventures in publishing

There are a lot of well known authors in the BSFA, perhaps they weren't in this particular sample. Or perhaps the mood was more for reading than for writing.

Have you ever had published:

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Short fiction	7	63	192
Full length fiction	4	10	250
Reviews	33	69	167
Crit. non-fiction	18	48	208

Have you ever been published in:

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Fanzines	38	78	159
Semi-prozines	13	38	237
Prozines	8	27	226

Which SF/Fantasy related magazines do you read?

	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
Interzone	142	65	63
Asimovs	36	82	146
Analog	30	74	163
F&SF	26	70	100
Omni	14	80	171
Fear	25	33	201
Locus	46	40	183
SF Chronicle	36	34	203
Critical Wave	26	16	197
White Dwarf	4	40	220
Dragon	6	23	232

Others (Gaming): *Sorcerers Apprentice, Film mag, Living Legends, The General, The Gamer, British Chess Magazine, Dragon, Cerebration, Intellect Devourer, Games Review Monthly, Games International, Pergamon Chess, PBM Times, FANewsletter.*

Computer magazines: *Crash, ST Format, 8000 Plus, Sinclair User, Your Sinclair, Byte, Amstrad PC, Your Computer, Personal Computer world, Atari ST User, Unix World, C User Journal, Computer Weekly, Computer Shopper, PC Plus, Amiga Format, Commodore Computer International, ST Action, Ace, Informatics, Amstrad PCW, Professional Journals, MacUser UK, Acorn User, Systems Int. Industrial Computer, Cadcam Int.*

Other Newszines: *Tolkien, New Scientist, Fantasy Zone, Starlog, Starburst, Flyers, Samrain, Pieces of Mary, Thyme, Platt SF Guide, PI Matrix, Advance Comics, Comics Buyers Guide, Astronomy Now, Astronomy, BFS, BFS Newsletter, The Adventurer, British Book News, Intermediate Reptile, Connexion, Private Eye, SF Zone, Farthony, Small Mammal, Venue, Mystery of Rush, Mensa SF zine, File 770, Ansible, History Today, Economist, SF Guide.*

Other Critical Journals: *Mythlore, New York Review of SF, JFA, Fantasy Adventurer, SF Studies, SF Eye, BFS Newsletter, Fangoria, OtherRealms, Resurgence, Espresso, Armchair Detective, Thrust, Strange Ones, New Pathways, Australian SF Review, SF Scholars, Extrapolation, Aklo, Thrust, Amazing Heroes, Panurge, Iron, Stand, Ghosts and Scholars, Fantasy, Dark Dreams, Nickas, British Fantasy Newsletter, Cinefantastique, Ellery Queens.*

Other fiction zines: *Weird Tales, Dream, Ambit, Fantasy Tales, Private Eye, Auguries, The Gate, Amazing, Iron, Cobweb, Back Brain Recluse (11), New Destinies, Honor Show, Grue, ZAM, Ellery Queen Mysteries, Alfred Hitchcock's, Hardboiled, New Moon Quarterly, Grant, Twilight Zone, Aboriginal SF, New Pathways, Tales of the Unanticipated, Grue Detective, New Visions, Writers, BFS, Writing Womb.*

How many purchased per month?

	None	1	2-4	5-10	more
Hard cover books	163	63	32	12	2
Paperback books	20	40	137	64	18
Films (cinema)	108	91	30	3	1
Video (rented)	132	87	51	12	4
Video (bought)	213	33	8		

On conventions

When asked if they had ever attended a convention, the response was favourable: 178 replied yes, 92 replied no; but when further asked how many cons they had been to, most people had been to one or two per year (109) and the majority had been only to one or two in total (41). Nine people had not been to a con, 27 had been to between 3 and 5, 3 people had been to between 6 and 10 and 2 people had been to more per year. In total, 37 people had only ever attended 3 to 5 cons, 26 people had been to 6 to 10 cons, 19 people had been to 11 to 15 cons and 47 people had been to more.

However, most people (47) had been going to cons between 3 and 5 years, 34 had been going for more than 10 years, 39 for between 5 and 10, 27 for between 1 and 2 and 5 people had not been attending cons at all.

What sort of cons do you attend?

	Often	Seldom	Never
Club based	8	37	92
1 day	4	56	83
Local/regional	29	79	43
Eastercon	42	56	50
Overseas	6	38	99
Worldcons	12	86	56

Others: Wellington, Feminist, SF Festival, Comic Mats, Wargaming, Star Trek, Academic, RPG, Filk, Mexican, SF Film Marathons, Media, Dr. Who, Blakes 7, Local SF Soc, Writers Workshops, Signings, Fantasy, Tolkien, Film.

The importance of being a member

Most people (124) had been a BSFA member for between 2 and 5 years, 60 had been in for 1 year or less, 39 for between 6 and 9 years, 36 between 10 and 15 years and 11 for more.

Members had mostly heard about the BSFA from advertisements (69) or from reading *Interzone* (30). Other places included the US, *Fear*, from friends, at a stall, from reading or purchasing *Vector* (usually in a Forbidden Planet), the WTA, *New Worlds*, *Int. SF Year Book*, University SF Group, a fanzine, TV, Foundation, *Radio Times*, *SF Monthly*, *Forbidden Planet*, SF Exhibition, SF Group, Requirement for submission to *Focus*, *Directory Yearbook of Clubs and Associations*.

On being asked why people joined the BSFA, the top answers were for book reviews (49), new releases (52), general news (62), fandom (43) and because SF was not dealt with in mainstream media (23), but other reasons given were critiques (16), boredom with BFS, disillusionment with *Interzone* coverage, to keep in touch (13), international fandom, to find out about SF, professional writers, to get the *Stratagems* to the UK, because they liked the publications (21), a terrible mistake (1), for convention news (10), to find out about British SF, to hear more about British SF, to support the BSFA, to do illustrations and, perhaps the most logical of all, because they were curious and interested in SF (52). More unusual reasons were British SF contact, Access to Journals, Recommended by friend, Likes SF (5), Sarcastic Comment, Seemed good idea, Contact with SF community, Good thing to support, No interest in SF, Tape exchange, Meet people with similar interests, Take it over, Specialist articles, Author interviews, Meet people, Find out about authors.

When asked if the BSFA fulfilled their requirements, 191 people said yes, 2 said no, 74 said sometimes. Additional comments included: that the BSFA complements other cons, it could do more for local groups, author interviews depend on the current *Matrix* editor, others irrelevant (note here by Jerry: I would suggest that the *Matrix* editors are energetic in getting and transcribing author interviews), that *Vector* is an excellent, the mailings keep people in touch, despite being too small to affect the "media landscape", that there are too many reviews and too few reviews and an anti-science bias. SF readers are as politically naive as other groups, reports one jaundiced member, and there is too much politics, the committee is too cliquey, too literary and doesn't fulfil members' requirements.

The role of the BSFA is to inform/educate (139), present SF news and information (93), provide a forum for debate (42), or criticism (26), promote writing (11), or be an umbrella (23). Other ideas on the BSFA's role are: to raise the standards of SF, to gain a wider acceptance of SF as literature, to promote the reading of SF and raise the public awareness of it, to provide for non-fanzine, non-congoing readers, to be the focus of SF in Britain, to promote interaction between members, to send interesting magazines, to promote SF research, to incite people to think (very great task, muster a reader), as a consumer lobby group, to act as a pressure group or a consumer lobby group or, finally, to "offer nice services", keep one entertained, or "you tell me".

The BSFA should be doing the following in the future: the same as now (101), running cons (8), promoting SF (25), expanding the membership (24), improving the magazines (24), improving the services (12) and widening the base of SF (15). Other predictions were to combine the magazines (3), have a fiction magazine (2), have regional meetings (2), be a national organisation (3), be an international organisation (1), to help new writers, to middle through, kill trade paperbacks, be less dogmatic over the Science Fiction/Fantasy divide, run workshops, have more member participation, update the information services, pay staff, provide more readers' services, introduce people to quality SF, try out new ideas, cater for non-fanzine readers, also cater for children, also cater for people who read children's SF, publish books, arrange discounts, have less angry more critical surveys, encourage more serious SF criticism and generally improve the status of the genre by not mixing SF and Fantasy and by expanding the membership.

These are the SF or Fantasy related societies members belonged to: none (164), British Fantasy Society (24), Ex-BFS (2). More exotic or exciting societies, still related to the genre were: Wellington, European (10), US, Brum, Leeds, Brighton, Glasgow, SF Writers Brighton, BSFG, Cassandra, York, Horizon, Manchester, Foundation, Mensa SF, Folklore, H.G. Wells, E.R. Burroughs, Fanderson, Z29, Octarine, World SF Association, Star Trek Group, P.K. Dick Society, Univ. Durham SF Soc, Ghost Story Soc, Tolkien, City Lit, Mulfex SF Soc, Leicester, SFWA, WFA, Univ. Belfast SF Soc, Hull SF Group, Exeter, Friends of Foundation, Coventry Poly SF Soc, Plymouth, Soc of Stip Illustration,

Ghost Story, Dublin, Oxford, Hull SF, Blake's 7, Australian Tolkien, The Adventurers Guild, World SF, SF Poetry Association, LASFS, Six of One.

The response to the question on whether the BSFA had improved its services in the time one had been a member was favourable. 142 replied positively, against 19 negatives and 21 who said the services were "erratic" and 48 who said the services were improving. The predictable and penetrating comments stated that the magazine production was up (36), as were the contents (15), also Focus (5), *Paperback Inferno* (4), *Vector* (10) and *Matrix* (6).

While some readers needed or wanted more pages, and remarked that the magazine contents were always better than expected, others wanted less fantasy or pseudo intellectual material. Contents were too bitty, sometimes erratic, generally pleasing, but of course depended on the energy of the staff/editors. The general opinion was for a more adventurous BSFA with a more approachable committee: did these readers realise that they, too, would need to be more approachable, more willing to contribute?

Most people thought that the membership subscription was just right (227), only 1 person thought it was too high, though 33 did think it was too low and there were 6 people who did not know. Members commented that £15 would be acceptable, but £20 would be too high per year.

161 BSFA members also read their mailings in peace and quiet by themselves, though 35 shared it with one person, 26 shared the magazines with between one and five people.

Which of the magazines do you read?

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Focus	183	65	12
Matrix	203	17	
Paperback Inferno	204	35	3
Vector	210	30	1

Have you at any time used any of the following services?

	Often	Seldom	Never
Magazine Chain	9	7	199
Information Service	1	31	183
BSFA Library	1	9	202
Orbiter	11	2	195

Would you use them if they were better advertised/re-staffed?

	Often	Seldom	Never
Magazine Chain	18	57	97
Information Service	13	104	58
BSFA Library	23	66	74
Orbiter	10	33	91

Readers were asked if they recalled any other services. They certainly did: a fiction magazine, a duplication service, fanzine production, awards, bibliographies, yearbooks, information sheets on authors, critical biographies, regular writers' workshops, used book/magazine service, the membership list provided with every mailing (usually in rotation), organising conventions, discount for members in shops, indexes and looking after new fans at conventions.

When asked what other services the BSFA should offer, there were plenty of ideas: bibliographies (3), seminars, discounts, more for new people, publish the local membership lists, merchandise, a non-SF section in the magazines, thematic Vectors, workshops, archives, a fiction magazine (8), a service to track down rare SF, cheap books, special deals/events, information about other SF services, like Foundation, a platform for writers, a primary contact for researchers who know nothing about SF, better links with other groups, to sponsor local club activities, more encouragement, a book club, book swaps, archives, more on publishing, to act as agent for foreign magazines and books, short courses on criticism, regional events, book reviews library, an artist's equivalent of Orbiter, a book finding service, a video/audio cassette library and more contact with publishers and editors about "what we like".

Would you be interested in merchandising?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Sweatshirts	40	77	148
T-shirts	48	80	135
Mugs	41	74	151
Key rings	19	55	184
Pens	26	66	171
Badges	45	64	141
New design badge	51	60	133
A "button" badge	34	70	142
An enamelled/laminated badge	50	65	137
Cardboard membership card		48	174
Plastic/laminated membership card	84	60	113

Do you think the following publications would be useful of interest?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Critical biographies	167	80	17
Author bibliography			
leaflets	172	74	18
Series listing leaflets	117	94	45
Suggestions for reading			
leaflets	110	113	39
Notes on organising			
a local group	68	116	63
Notes on starting			
a writer's workshop	80	100	74
Clubs Directory	112	107	41
Bookshop/Mail Order			
Directory	173	73	18
A Fiction Magazine	79	92	70
History of the BSFA	65	129	66
Introductory Membership			
Leaflet	150	82	31

Other: List of local groups (2), Annual "books received" list, Scientific articles, Posters/leaflets for libraries, Flofax organiser sheet, Basic guidelines for writing SF covering basic dos and don'ts, Start a film company, Advice on buying books abroad, All purposes SF leaflet, Author autobiographies, Making back issues of BSFA publications available, A yearbook, Foreign language works in translation, Anthologies of past articles esp. Focus, No fiction, Amateur dramatics groups, Video groups, Sponsor Rob Hansen's collected version of "Then" when finished, Back issues, Reviews index, Book Review sheets by American critics, More advertising, How to organise local events, More artwork, "Value of books" list, Lists of published list, Contacts/Penpals, Encyclopaedia of SF, Suggestions for programmes at local groups, Annual index of reviews.

Which features do you find more interesting/useful in FOCUS?

Market reports	35
Workshop	32
None	11
Author interviews	9
All of it	23
Informative articles	4
Expert advice	3

Others: Rarely anything, Experiences of writers, Interviews, Various (2), Not fiction, Anything re writing, Anything re authors, Least, W/P advice (2), Admission of weakness, Features, Writing tips, Casual interest, Articles, Reviews, Lead article, Specific advice, How-to articles, Personal experiences (2), Criticism of literary techniques (2), Editorial, Articles by pros.

Like best - MATRIX?

News	107
Book publishing news	51
Media	38
WriteBack	47
All	22
Awards	3
Most	6
Cons	15
Clubs	3
Fanzines	8
Soapbox	16
BSFA news	5
Media reviews	9
Competition	7
Editorial	10
Gossip	4
Reviews	15

Other: Science News, Views, Obituaries (2), Noticeboard (2), Anything about writing, Nothing specific, Articles, Publishers/editors, lists, Walking on Glass, Information Service, Desert Island Discs

Like best - PAPERBACK INFERNO?

Book reviews	90
Closer Encounters/in depth reviews	3
Mag. reviews/on the rack in print	18
All	26
Letters	4
Index	3
Reviews	67
Editorial	13

Other: Longer reviews, Anything about writing, Critical articles (2), Very little, Reviews of Asimovs, Most, Ken Lake Reviews, Nothing specific, Notes of books published.

Like best - VECTOR?

Reviews	100
All of it	30
Critical articles	40
Features/general articles	43
Interviews	27
Editorial	7
Letters	25
Most	3
Interviews	6

Other: Author interviews, Chung Kuo, Tree of Life, Things about Writers, Discussions, Artwork, Articles re fandom, Bits Boyd does, Nothing in particular (2), Adverts (2).

What would you like to see less of - FOCUS?

Nothing	26
Not bothered/wouldn't mind if not published	5
Fiction/workshops	16
Word Processing	3

Other: News unrelated to books, Natural, Less Chat, Spelling mistakes/typos (2), Everything, Should provide one paid story, Apologies for sliding schedules, Infrequency, Letters, Nothing should be dropped except if editors want, Self important amateurs, Poor writing, Interviews with obscure authors, Articles on ms presentation, Not enough news - more professional input - improve presentation - keep variety, want less - the inaccurate woe, waffle, exhortations for material.

Less of - MATRIX?

Nothing/line as it is	33
Media	14
Cons	7
Fanzines	7
Letters	6
Soapbox	5
News unrelated to books	4
Fan News	4
Only want natural changes/ what editors want	4
Forthcoming books	11

Other: Politics (2), Types, Accounts, Clubs, What is SF, Obituaries, News, Space filling artwork, comics, Less repetition, Competition corner (3), "computer", Infighting, Agonising, Awards (2), Lists, Less of re-released novels, Notes - improve presentation, keep variety, juvenile opinions, reviews, articles, long competitions, editorial, non-informative con reps, Ken Lake letters, bad cover art.

Less of - PAPERBACK INFERNO?

Nothing	
line as it is	31
Reviews	4
Capsule reviews	8

Other: Politics, Paperback Purgatory, News unrelated to books, Only want natural changes/what editors want, less articles, Over long reviews including summary of plot/line/variant essay, Fantasy reviews, US magazine reviews, Everything, Media, Production (typewriter), Double reviews, Letters, Less overlap between PI and Vector, Types, Space filler art, What is SF, Comic reviews, Fantasy and horror book reviews, Keep variety, Poor reviews, Muddled printing, Magazine reviews, Title listings, Long reviews, Ken Lake, Dump it, Too literary, Editorial, Twaddle in letters

Less of - VECTOR?

Nothing/line as it is	33
Politics	4
Pretentious/ Highbrow criticism	22
Natural changes/ what editors want	3
Letters (esp. twaddle)	5
Reviews	10

Others: Adverts, (2), Book Reviews, No opinions, Typos, Organic change, Short book reviews, Thematic issues, Non-SF topics, Heavy criticism articles, Long book reviews, Fantasy, Key McVeigh, Ken Lake, Double reviews, Snide remarks by editors, Fantasy and horror book reviews, Articles about Dave Wingrove's mega series, Same author coverage, Articles on old SF, Editorials, Reviews of anthologies, Duplication of reviews in PI, Keep variety, More quality, less quantity, Superficial reviews, Paperback reviews.

(It should perhaps be noted here that the uniform comments on "Twaddle" in the letter columns are almost certainly from a single, albeit vociferous, individual)

Would you prefer to see a single magazine, covering the same subjects as all four current magazines?

Yes	59
No	174
Maybe	9
Don't know/ care	27

Comments: Unique character (78), Separate more convenient, why change (39), One too bulky (18), Two different people can read at the same time, More diverse (3), Divisions might be changed, Current system distributes effort, Coordinating would be difficult, Too expensive, Loss identity (2), Different areas not compatible, Better in present format (5), Reduce scope (4), Would end up with one small magazine (2), Cover different areas, Would like different split of magazines - two magazines, less likely all to stop, Encouraged to read each one, Production difficulties, Contents would suffer, More flexible, Quality of magazines would decay, One magazine = too much work/several, Discussions needed on issue, One magazine too general - reduced coverage, Too expensive/difficult, More professional (13), Attract new members (3), Easier to read more convenient (30), More frequent publication, Cost cheaper, Remove overlap, More appealing, More marketable, Avoid/eliminate duplication, Easier to produce, Higher profile, More coherent, More responsive to members, Attention span, Like larger print, PI has lowest production standards, Easier to promote/sell, Vector could skip book reviews, Easier to store, organise back issues.

Would you be willing to become more involved in BSFA activities?

Yes	32
No	70
Maybe	160

If you don't wish to take part in BSFA activities, is this because of:

Cost/presumed cost	33
Family	52
Too far	44
Don't know others	36
No interest	10
Travel	38
Work commitments	9
Other commitments	14
Busy/lack of time	14
Already involved	5
Health	2

Others: Proof reading, No permanent address, Lack of transport, Too new, Lives in Oman, Fringe fan, Introverted, Not main hobby, Happy to just read the magazines, Works fanzine editor, Other hobbies, No activity this area.

Would you be prepared to help with any of the following tasks?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Collating	39	74	132
Desks at cons	29	61	149
Typing	14	52	184
Magazine production	22	61	159
Act as BSFA local rep	34	63	156
Store BSFA material	18	38	189
Transport material/people	7	40	177
Contribute to magazines	76	96	74
Review books	103	89	67
Review books/videos	50	78	112

Do you have any skills/facilities you think would be of use to the BSFA?

Professional SFF editor in Italy, Knowledge of history of science/engineering aviation, have wip, Knowledge of comics, access to computers (7), access to dtp, good at worrying, writing, children's specialist, book reviews, articles, can write a bit, secretarial-typing (2), artist, jewellery designer, knows yanks, accountant (doesn't volunteer), built-in crap detector, drawing skill, graphic designer, ex-chair thingy.

Well, there you have it, four pages distilled from almost a thousand. The next issue of *Matrix* should contain an analysis of these initial results, along with comments from the magazine editors and the new coordinator. Of course, there's plenty of room in the letter column for anyone who wants to discuss these figures.

I noted the apparent bias against military SF and film novelisations, the way Fantasy is sternly put subordinate to Science Fiction in preferred reading, also the relative lack of women and of people interested in serious writing. But I also noted a fair proportion of editors (professional and small press) and a wider range of reading material than I have ever seen. There was a significant number of anonymous replies, seventeen, some of whom offered to help, under the impression that BSFA committee members have superhuman detective and analytical skills. Well, I can tell you for free that they don't.



WRITEBACK

You are invited to write to *Matrix* about any subject. The address is Jenny Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP.

DEADLINE
Wednesday
13 March
1991

TOTAL RECALL REVISITED

The validity of "Total Recall" has been overwhelmed in the more advanced discussion of to what extent a film should pay tribute to the book it is derived from. This letter violently disagrees with the original Tommy Ferguson article which sparked off the "Total Recall" correspondence and questions my "professionalism" in printing it. However, we are both adults enough to respect each other's opinions and remain on speaking terms. So here goes:

from Terry Broome, 4 Zermatt Street, Chapel Allerton, Leeds LS7 3NJ.

In *Matrix 90*, you attack Jon Moran for criticising Tommy Ferguson's opinion piece on *Total Recall*. Jon was commenting on what Tommy said, not the way the article was originated. The fact you requested it is beside the point. Tommy must remain responsible for his own words and I note on the inside front cover that - as editor - you make a disclaimer of any responsibility for the opinions of your contributors. This all makes your objections to Jon's comments on grounds of responsibility obsolete.

It was, therefore, quite logical for Jon to criticise Tommy and not yourself, though - as editor - I feel you should have been more responsible when you requested and accepted the article.

Even in an opinion piece, we (the readers) must rely on expert opinion. If it isn't an expert opinion, then we have been misled into believing that it is. If it is only an opinion, then you - as editor - owe a certain responsibility to the subject of any *Matrix* item, such as *Total Recall* ensuring that it is treated as fairly and constructively as possible. A needlessly destructive review may damage the success of the subject. Editors and reviewers must treat their roles responsibly.

Was *Total Recall* treated with fairly? No. For the following reasons. The film was prejudged, a diabolical abuse of the responsibilities of any critic. Whilst we may as members of the public prejudice all kinds of things, it is not a professional attitude or approach and ill becomes the critic, editor and magazine caught doing it. The film was prejudged on little evidence. Tommy's pre-review illustrated his ignorance - of the director's previous work (whilst *Robocop* may not have offered much hope, *Flesh and Blood* certainly did), of the cinema form, of SF cinema, P.K. Dick and Arnold Schwarzenegger (who was in the very entertaining *Terminator* and *Twins* and despite his limited acting range they worked). P.K. Dick stories have been optioned for films countless times and are ideal for screen adaptation. And whilst I am a great fan of P.K. Dick myself, I see nothing inherently bad about an adaptation that does not remain scrupulously faithful to the book. It depends how well it's done, but all screen adaptations in any genre or form take certain liberties with the original of necessity. Unnecessary changes (i.e. changes not needed to make a successful adaptation) are a matter of debate. If they are done well, the screen version by its difference can add to the experience of the novel, rather than detract from it. But the purists would argue that the author's work is ruined by changes made in the screenplay, that it is an insult to the author. Whilst I agree many authors are disappointed in screenplays of their work, they must know how the movie industry reduces - has to reduce - stories to their barest essentials to get it into ninety to one hundred minutes. The best directors add to that, but none is naive enough to think the film will be as much like their story as they would prefer. Secondly, and specifically, P.K. Dick worked

with Ridley Scott on *Bladerunner* before his death. He must have known the film would not follow very closely the plot or themes of "Do Androids ..."

Scott's *Bladerunner* even before the massacre the Hollywood system did to it may not have reached the heights of the book, but if Dick had had his way in choice of actors, it would have fared a lot worse. His involvement in *Bladerunner* convinces me he would not have objected to *Total Recall* on grounds of not remaining faithful to the story. Tommy's remarks on this matter are purely his opinions, not based on any expert study of his subject matter. His extensive reading of P.K. Dick and studying of *Bladerunner* qualifies him only to discuss these subjects, not *Total Recall*, which is only secondarily a P.K. Dick subject. Foremost, it is a film, and I see no appreciation in his comments of any aspect of film making.

So, were Jon's criticisms of Tommy's article unfair? No. He correctly identified the person responsible for the opinions of that article and he is quite correct in criticising the basis for Tommy's remarks, considering they were, on the whole groundless.

Terry concludes with a few more negative remarks, but I think he has made his point several times over. I have edited the letter slightly to clarify his argument: unfortunately, I am not convinced. I still consider that the ending of "Total Recall" is nothing less than trite, though I am still amazed by the sfx of the landscapes, even after seeing how they were created.

This debate used an article by Tommy Ferguson as its starting point, so it is reasonable for Tommy to wind it up. I think there has been an interesting spread of opinions - the referee will now cry "Time!" and open the ring for a new topic to get all heated about. However, here is Tommy, to conclude the debate.

from Tommy Ferguson, 107 South Parade, Belfast BT7 2GN

Well, Jon, two out of three is not bad. Yes, I did get specific "suggestions" wrong but I don't think my pre-conceptions about the film were totally off-the-wall. Paul Beardsley was spot-on with his criticisms of the film, and funny with it. The violence was at "Oh, this is silly" levels, characters were stereotyped to such an extent that the robot cab driver had greater appeal than any of the actors and throwing money at a film in the form of sets and special effects does not gloss over these, and other, fundamental flaws in the film. It was a bad film. I did not like it.

I'm actually more surprised than Paul to read his view that there were "recognisable" elements of the original story and Jon says that he believed Arnie's portrayal of the central element of the story and film, the reality conflict with the central character of Doug Quaid. Surprised? I nearly stumbled off my chair. Arnie looks good in an action movie, but I reiterate my original point that he can't act for toffee. It is this which destroys any possible harking to the dichotomy of the original story, a good actor has the potential to overcome script short-comings. With Arnie, *Total Recall* never stood a chance.

As for doing the article (altogether now: it was **not** a review), in the first place, Peter and Jenny have put that case a lot more eloquently than I ever could. And secondly, I had a vague notion that a dialogue might be created on the treatment of books and short stories by Hollywood. I'm very pleased that everyone took the time, diatribe or not, to write in. I think the piece worked on both fronts.

WASHING THAT NINETY PERCENT OF SSH...

The function of the Soapbox column is to allow a reader to write on a subject she feels strongly about, with the sub-plot that, just maybe, it might incite other readers to switch on their word processors and get writing in protest. And boy, oh boy! Steve Rothman's comment on the nature of that available 90% of Science Fiction certainly served it a purpose with a bit left over. Peter Tennant starts first with a gentlemanly protest.

from Peter Tennant, 9 Henry Cross Close, Shipham, Theford, Norfolk IP25 7LQ

Steve Rothman's *Soapbox* struck a lot of familiar chords. Like Steve, I tend to avoid hard science fiction, tv and movie tie-ins, identikit fantasy trilogies

and their ilk. I do make exceptions, but they are rare. Also, like Steve, I discovered Science Fiction through the work of people such as Asimov and Clarke, writers who are pretty much anathema to me now (though I don't begrudge them their success). I like to think that as I've grown older, my tastes in reading have also matured, so that now originality and literary values count for more with me than the cheerful hacks of the sf school of genre writing will allow.

So then, why is the 90% of SF that is crap bought and read? The easy answer has to be that is 90% of everything is crap, then that has to include the readership as well, so what else do "we" expect "them" to buy and read? It's a painfully elitist conclusion, but not necessarily incorrect thereby.

Some points to remember, though. Every functioning art form is in the same boat; this is not a problem unique to Science Fiction. In art, music, writing etc, mediocrity seems to be the rule and not the exception. The good stuff can only exist in relation to the bad, and what we regard as good may be crap to a significant number of other people. Good and bad are, in writing anyway, subjective qualities and so it doesn't seem wise to draw hard and fast lines as to their nature, though we all do. Not everyone wants the surprise and variety that Steve espouses. Many prefer the known and familiar. These, too, have value. Finally, it's only by ways of the familiar that we reach the unknown and learn to comprehend it. The first steps of any journey are always known.

While some may consider the female of the species to be more dangerous than the male, I would personally consider that there is nothing more dangerous than a scientist defending his choice of Science Fiction. And when that scientist also has an engineering background, wow! look out for the fireworks. Here is a second blast against Steve comes from Dave Gillon.

from Dave Gillon, 2 Watts Avenue, Rochester, Kent ME1 1RX

Steve Rothman's *Soapbox* (Matrix 91) worked, it annoyed me enough that I felt that I had to reply. Yes, 90% of everything is crap, but you only know which 90% by trying it first. I can't disagree that we profit by trying new writers, but his call for us to essentially disregard whole genres just because of their hackneyed reputations is going a little far. Even if we did away with the writers producing the offending 90%, I'm afraid that the law would still hold true, and 90% of the work produced to replace them would still be rubbish.

Let's get down to cases. Steve gave his reasons as to why three specific areas of SF and Fantasy don't deserve our support, I'll try to explain why I feel that all three fields have something to offer and that we should put up with (and ignore) the bad books in return for the good work that is being produced.

Hard Science Fiction. Steve's first target here is the use of science and technology, that is a bit unfair, as it is the science and technology that distinguishes Hard Science Fiction from, say, Space Operas, and Steve's second point about scientific illiterates being misled is nothing if not facetious. As for dressing science up as fiction, Steve says it himself, Science Fiction is the literature of ideas. If my reading to make me think, I also happen to have a strong scientific/engineering background and a concept such as Niven's Smoke Ring or Cherry's Sociogenesis (*Cyteen*) can excite me beyond their simple role in the plot of the novel. Yes, I want strong characterisation in what I read, it's the reason that books such as *Flight of the Dragonfly* leave me unsatisfied, but the Hard Science Fiction field is fully capable of producing them. Look at Cherry's *Cyteen*, it utilises the soft rather than the hard sciences, but in it's rigorous development of them it certainly qualifies as Hard Science Fiction; yet the plot will not function without strong, fully developed characters, it needs their depth to develop the essentials of the story, and they have that depth.

As for the militaristic slant, it's there, but conflict is such a large part of our history as a species that it's present in every genre of writing to greater or lesser degree. We have been selectively breeding for successful warriors ever since someone noticed that the grass was greener on the other clan's side of the hill; if we go to the stars, then we won't leave that heritage behind us, we can't, it's part of us, and it should be part of our fiction.

Sword and Sorcery. Steve attacks this purely on the grounds of the bad reviews he has read, very poor ground to put a debating platform on. My own fantasy reading is secondary to my Science Fiction, but I do have a wide enough exposure to put up a defence. Plot elements - yes, they do occur, and watching

the party collecting the plot coupons can make for a boring tale, but a lot of legends are built on the same sort of basis, and a lot of them are rehashes of earlier legends, consider how many mythologies contain female wood sprites, for instance, these stories go back a long way and undoubtedly have a common origin. Rewriting them now is no more unreasonable than it was a couple of thousand years ago, the stories have to be judged on their own merits, not on the basis that this kind of thing has been done before. There are also many S&S stories that aren't reworkings of anything else. I can't call to mind any legends in which the hero is forced to accept that the heroine is not only his intellectual equal, but his martial equal also (Jennifer Roberson, *Swordringer*) or in which a character is forced to face what her life as a mercenary really means in terms of lives ruined (Starhawk in *The Dark Hand of Magic*, Barbara Hambly).

As for pseudo-historical backgrounds, history is regrettably short of Dark Lords brought down by small bands. A non-historical setting is, to my mind, actually better for sustained suspension of disbelief, it also makes for fewer glaring anachronisms.

Shared Worlds. Confession time. I like Shared Worlds stories. Correction, I like good Shared World stories. It has become very fashionable to run down shared worlds, but they are capable of producing work that couldn't be published elsewhere. Yes, the field has its well publicised 90%, but to my mind the best shared worlds are the collections which use their pre-stated background to support short stories which would only collapse at the longer length necessary if they were to stand alone. Cherry's *Merovingen Nights* series is possibly the best example of this. Merovingen's Machiavellian politics and religions are far too complex to appear in toto in any single story, but a collection can support that weight of background.

The shared worlds also have one other valuable role, a lot of the writers published in them are comparatively early in their careers. We can't all burst on the scene like the Second Coming, there must be somewhere for people to work out their apprenticeship - yes, a lot of the work will be part of the 90%, but some of them will be eventually producing the 10% that Steve Rothman wants us to concentrate on; I noticed a Star Trek novel in my local library a few weeks ago - the author, Greg Bear.

One final scurrilous point, Arthurian legend is essentially a shared world. Is Steve really suggesting that we should ignore the *Mort d'Arthur* and the *Mabinogion* (both of which also happen to be reworkings of earlier legends).

All in all, I can't disagree with Steve's point that we need to look for new and better talents, but to do that we need to look everywhere and we always need to look at the story itself, never at the label it is filed under.

A final point from Tommy Ferguson (who seems to be getting all the last words this issue), raising a point about the impact of reality, rather than the quality of the SF involved:

from Tommy Ferguson, 107 South Parade, Belfast BT7 2GN

"S&S ... I avoid like the plague" followed later by "I learn to recognise good SF by reading it". I suppose this is just being picky on my part, but the rest of the article annoyed me. Steve concentrated on the crap that is written and bought without examining what really motivates people to read it. He hasn't read it and therefore his views on why other people read it just seem silly. I've read nearly all the crap fiction there is; most during times of high stress like studying for exams, or during periods of unemployment. If I didn't have David Eddings, Stephen Donaldson and even Perry Rhodan rip-offs, life would have been unbearable. If your personal world is falling apart, you don't want to read about the real world falling about as well. Crap can also be a great fertiliser where bright new things can grow.

Obviously I was not sufficient stressed when I (tried to) read Stephen Donaldson. Next time I move house, have children in hospital, go to a relative's funeral, I shall take his thick tomes with me, while trying not to think of the recent pastiches in "Timbre" and "Black Hole" fanzines (see mentions in the "Fire and Hemlock" column later).

THE CLUBS COLUMN

Tommy Ferguson

As an introduction to this new format of the clubs column, I thought that I would start by focusing on what attracts people to join clubs and what can be done to sustain their interest. As a traditionally cliquish and conservative group of people, the area of developing memberships has been ignored for too long; only the one-off cons giving it any real attention. Group organisations cannot continue and endure without new blood and that, in turn, needs something to attract, and then hold, the interest of incoming members.

So what does a potential member look for, given that they are interested in Science Fiction? Imagine, for example, you saw a poster in your local library advertising a meeting of a SF group in your area, would you go? I put myself in such a position and came up with the following criteria (though others did come to mind, I consider these the central reasons).

LOCATION. Where does this group meet? Most groups meet where alcohol is served, given the social nature of meetings. Generally, this is a good idea, but it must be noted that for some groups this is not the most ideal location. So what is the pub or hotel or meeting room like? Is it in a respectable part of town, easy to get to and from and comfortable enough for the purposes of the group (ie does the management think a live jazz band a better attraction than the local SF group as happened in Belfast? Or a disco, as happened in Leeds - Ed.). These are the sort of things that any person would think of before going to a strange place to meet new people and bear thinking about when forming or moving or advertising your group; most people don't like walking three miles to sit in a rowdy bar with bikers.

EVENTS. This is how most people will have encountered their group and is far and away the best method of attracting recruits short of a G*W*F War. Formal events lead to a formal atmosphere, with established norms like laid out chairs, a top table and an introduction to the night. By having a specified subject and format, you can attract one night stands and curiosity seekers who know that if they don't fit in, they can walk out. These are the people who buy books, read magazines, but don't participate in fandom; they will come to an "event" meeting solely for that event.

PEOPLE. Who would I meet at the local Star Trek club? Why, Star Trek fans of course ... Similarly at the local SF club, you would expect to meet SF fans, but we all know that this is the last thing a new member will encounter. A person going to a SF meeting for the first time will want to talk about SF, their favourite author, the latest book they have read or their own SF story. What is a person to think when they discover fans arguing the toss over the Poll Tax, Global Warming or the price or state or lack of the local beer? Not much. They can get this in any pub, the reason they are there is to talk about SF and meet Terry Pratchett.

I think most people who are involved in some aspect of running a club or group will recognise some failings on their part, if only in not thinking of the future of their club. These things are really easy to rectify, though, and I offer some solutions below. Needless to say, if you can think of alternatives, or have tried these, I would be extremely eager to hear from you.

OPEN NIGHT This is the most obvious ploy to get new members involved in a group, or even to the group for that matter. The idea is self explanatory really (but ...). Have one night set aside where there is a formal schedule for the evening, a welcoming committee for people turning up and leaflets giving details of the night's events or future events or history of the group or committee members. This gives people something to occupy their times and hands as well as being an opening conversational gambit. As the night progresses, have the chairperson, or compare, lead the atmosphere to a more social setting, still keeping an open and friendly atmosphere. At the end (after taking names and addresses, of course) make the future meetings very clear; and don't change them. University/Polys societies have had immense success with this format by holding it at the start of the academic year when everyone is socially nervous anyway. Try it, it really does work.

WELCOMING MEMBER I don't know of any group that actually uses a "formally" named person to assume this role, but after taking on the job for a few years at the Queen's University Society here in Belfast, I can certainly testify to its success. The idea is obvious. New members latch onto this person, who explains the nature of the group, its activities and personalities and then

slowly draws the new person into the social circle of the group. It can be a vital and integral job for a committee member, but its most vital element is the rest of the membership; they need to be welcoming and sociable to people who may be very shy, socially inept and possibly complete dickheads. If the committee member does not have some back-up from the general membership, then the job becomes pointless. Getting new members to retain their interest and stay means having old members seem attractive and interesting people to be with, and I can tell you that's a tough job.

PARTICIPATORY EVENTS Just because some things have become cliché does not mean they have become invalid. Getting involved means becoming assimilated and that leads to group ties and common interests that help to bond people. I'll never forget, for example, one woman trying to eat two cream crackers at the same time. A lot of new members will get help involved in such "ice breakers" (with tagged-on SF themes, eg *SF Call My Bluff*, *SF Charades*, *SF Krypton Factor*) so you simply don't give them the option. If you're going to look like a complete idiot, then you want everyone else to look like one too. Physical involvement in a group is always more effective than any literature or talking will be; remember what questions were asked of the Guest of Honour at the last Eastercon? What about some of the costumes at the Masquerade?

This is obviously just a brief run down of "going there" and "what happens when I get there" that new members will face. Some of the problems encountered are fairly widespread, I think, yet even the solutions outlined above can make a tremendous difference between one night attendees and future committee members. If you, or your group, operate different practices with (or even without) success, do let me know, so that I can pass it on to other people.

Alternatively, if you have just joined the BSFA or your local group, tell me what you thought of your first encounter with like minded people, how successful were they in welcoming outsiders? The more people who write to me, the more column inches I get, the greater audience I will have to give me a platform for my attack on ... wait and see.

Some people who have been writing to Jenny and I recently are given a mention below. If you live near any of them, why not give them a try? If they read this, they could be even more welcoming than usual ...?

WARRINGTON SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

Informal meetings of Science Fiction and fantasy fans in local pub; twice monthly on the first and third Thursdays of the month. Venue is the Ring O'Bells, Manchester Road (opposite Sainsbury's). However, this may well change (because of a surly landlord and variable beer), so please contact Margaret Tout on 092575 4463 (evenings) or 0925 32680 (day).

BOURNEMOUTH

(Bournemouth SF and Fantasy Group). Informal group. We hold quizzes, contribute to our own annual magazine and are making a video film. Contact David and Fay Symes (tel: 0202 432489) who now have a daytime ansaphone.

THE HULL GROUP

continue to meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, but have given up (for the moment) meeting in the Olde White Hart, due to a reduction in numbers. We now meet in each other's houses, anyone interested in coming along, should ring Ian Bell (0482 447953) or Carol Ann Green (0482 445804) to find out where the next meeting is going to be held.

ZZ9 PLURAL Z ALPHA

have just celebrated their tenth birthday at a London party attended by other seventy members plus honorary members Simon Jones (Arthur Dent) and Neil Gaiman. Robert Newman (occasional *Critical Wave* contributor and BSFA London meeting organiser) was elected President, beating a two headed teddy bear by just three votes. Annual membership is £5 and details can be obtained from Robert J. Newman, 136a North End, Croydon Surrey CRO 1UE.



FIRE AND HEMLOCK

I received a copy of Don Thompson's last *Don-o-saur* by the same post as another letter notifying me of his death from cancer on December 15. He died with great dignity and published issue 60 in the full knowledge that he had less than nine months to live. My own memories of him are fleeting: an elderly American sitting quietly in the foyer of the Congressgebouw, summoning up the strength to walk up the stairs. We

spoke for perhaps twenty seconds, a quick exchange of fanzines. But his literary presence has been overwhelming and I shall miss *Don-o-saur* a great deal. It was one of the magazines I invariably looked forward to, read thoroughly, and insisted on keeping safely.

Other foreign fanzines appeared: the latest was Ian Gunn's *Stun Gunn* from Australia. He lists the fanzines he has received, with marks (out of ten, I presume) for amusement value, news, feel and weirdness, the *Matrix* score, I was interested to see, was 9, 9.7, 8, 6; obviously there is a 0.3 need for some Australian news. He is serious on police brutality, navel fluff and the enigma of twenty three, and I'd be inclined to rate him as 10, 3, 8, 10 (most definitely).

Zippping back to the States, *Factsheet Five* appeared. I remain astounded at the variety of American fanzines and totally confused as to the state of American psychology they reveal. However, there is a sizeable minority of British mentions here: they describe *Matrix* as "a rather dignified guide to a sometimes-undignified part of fandom". That is what is known as an ambiguous response, I think. Leah Zeldes Smith has produced *Stet*, which is mostly personal reminiscences on the Wordcon at Holland, the trials of buying a house and recipes which sound delicious, but which are totally impracticable for British shops: five mushroom stuffing, for example (or does your local greengrocer sell more than one variety of mushrooms?), though I do fancy the Cranberry-Orange Cheesecake. And Chuck Connor has just sent me a copy of *Harry Warner's All Our Yesterdays*, which will be available from March onwards for \$15. But I'm not going to skimp over something like this in a couple of lines: I hope to have a detailed review of it next issue. So watch this space.

Kontakt and *Wild Sharkaah* both came from Czechoslovakia: both English language. The former is a small fanzine to showcase Czech SF and communicate with other SF readers while the latter is more stylish, more feminist and it is far more idealistic. But both welcome enquiries ...?

Last of the foreign fanzines is *Timbre* from New Zealand. This is very retrospective feel, with travelogues, though I rather did fancy *Thomas Covenant Goes Shopping*. Mind TC is an easy target, he also crops up in *Black Hole*, the fanzine of Leeds University SF Society, except that there he is called Deed O'Covenant, the Unbelievable and it is excruciatingly funny - to one who has trudged through the original, determined not to taste the book aside until the very last page. Stephen Donaldson is an acquired taste, so they say.

The other club fanzine is *Assegai* and *Voortrekker*, a complete contrast, which appeared from the Friends of Admiral Benbow in Glasgow (they are a social group interested in SF, rather than a University society). This might explain the intense variation in articles - I really liked John Mooney's *The Kracker Wakes*, though I had to read it aloud, as it is, I think, dialect, such as a Scots barbarian might use. I quote "Wummin, tho' liefer of a rara avis kin, incoarsen, furd, supramen, but sich as thea wur left to fool by the mikywayside, which wis Messier". I don't envy whoever proofread it. The prize article, though, is Ian Black's account of a tour to Iceland. It seems Iceland survived and even wants them back! It says a lot for hospitality there.

The last batch of fanzines can be loosely described as "cult". Steve Jeffery and Vikki Lee France rushed out *Inception IV* to coincide with the release of *Hermetech*, so that some copies would be available at the Forbidden Planet signing. After all, it does contain a Storm Constantine article (and illustration), plus poetry by Darren, who turns up in *Disintegration of Time*. This has explicit poetry of minimal Science Fiction content. However, his mind set is rather interesting. One would like to say the same about *Danse Macabre* which concentrates on German music (it is, after all, in German) but has a certain percentage of SF, if only in the names of the bands. Finally, there is *Loaded*, a new quarterly graphic magazine from Gary Gibson. There's a Rob Moran interview and some frustrating unrevealing male nudes: when combined with a colour cover and the tantalising message: *Suggested for mature readers*, it is worth the cover price of £1.50.

There now follow the names of the guilty, in the sort of reverse order convenient only to someone who is checking the fanzines by scrolling back: remember that, unless otherwise stated, the fanzines are available by request, though the editors would probably be delighted to receive some sort of acknowledgement, like a letter, some constructive comments, a fanzine of your own, or even a stamp or two.

Loaded £1.50 (co-edited by Gary M. Gibson and John Harrison, 5 Hillhead Street, Hillhead, Glasgow G12 8PR).

Inception (Steve Jeffery and Vikki Lee France, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA)

Danse Macabre (O. Henke, Luitpoldstr. 18, 8580 Bayreuth, Germany)

Disintegration of Time (Darren Anthony Bentley, 74 Monteith Crescent, Boston, Lincs. PE21 9AY)

Assegai and *Voortrekker* (Friends of Admiral Benbow, c/o Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre G72 9NA)

Black Hole (Leeds University Union, Po Box 157, Leeds LS1 1OH)

Timbre (Tim Jones, 20 Gillespie St, Dunedin, Aotearoa, New Zealand)

Wild Sharkaah (Eva Hauser, Na cihadle 55, 160 00 Praha 6, Czechoslovakia)

Kontakt (Ladislav Peska, Na Dolikach 503, 274 01 Slany, Czechoslovakia)

Harry Warner: All our Yesterdays \$15 (Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF)

Stet (Leah Zeldes Smith, 17 Kerry Lane, Wheeling, IL 60090-6415, USA)

Factsheet Five (Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Avenue, Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502, USA)

Stun Gunn (Ian Gunn, PO Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia).

CRY "FANAC ..."

This column is to show the vast range of what BSFA members and, for that matter, people interested in SF, do apart from read the genre. This time, we present *Bruno Ogorelec* who is running for TAFF (details elsewhere in the News column) and wrote the following for his fanzine, to be called, as one might guess, "The Single Kudo Gazette". I considered that it would be of interest to BSFA readers, as it raises a number of interesting points about SF. I would be willing to give equal space to the other runners, through the bi-monthly schedule of "Matrix" makes it difficult to be fair - the next "Matrix" will probably appear after the deadline for voting, unless there is a superlative turn out at the collating weekend in early May. However, interested parties may see *Pam Wells* at most British cons, especially Speculation, the Easterncon, and *Abigail Frost* visits the monthly "Ton meetings regularly and has recently distributed her excellent fanzine "Chicken Bones" (available from 95 Wilmot Street, London E2 0BP).

PREVIEW OF THE SINGLE KUDO GAZETTE Bruno Ogorelec

Science fiction runs in my veins as, unusually, my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother have all been its aficionados. The grannies never made the

distinction between SF and mainstream literature, though. It was only in my mother's day that the pulps' rather low criteria started sawing the SF limb off. Under Mom's influence, I used to consider Science Fiction the intellectual pinnacle, the literary acme. Alas, I have grown to recognise the artistic inferiority of most of it. Not all, mind you. As the curate said about a doubtful egg, parts of it are excellent. I haven't stopped enjoying it, either. It's just that I cannot, in clear conscience, laud the genre as such any more.

There are some notable exceptions but (to me, at least) the bulk of Science Fiction functions rather like pornography: exciting and stimulating at first, boring soon afterwards, sometimes a bit depressing in the end. Its subject matter is interesting and exciting, but the aims (and, to a lesser extent, the production values) are often so low that there is precious little to sustain the momentum of interest. All to often, it founders in the literary shallows. As I said, however, that does not prevent me from reading or watching the stuff, SF and porn both. Fun and excitement are still fun and excitement, even when shallow. I just wish it were better.

Fandom, now, that's a different thing altogether. From my early brash and abrasive days to the relative mellowness of today, fandom has always been a dependable source of fun, friendship and egoboo. In the beginning, the local Yugoslav fandom meant a lot - kindred souls all, afflicted by the same craving - but the contacts with Anglo-American fandom have gradually come to mean much more. I discovered that what I valued most in fandom was communication and that was where the fandom abroad had scored with me in a big way with the abundance of conventions and fanzines and the gregariousness of it all.

At first, the conventions seemed to offer the most, and indeed at some of them I had glorious fun, but it took horrendous amounts of money to travel to foreign countries. I could not muster that kind of money, not in the long run. Fanzines, on the other hand, offered an amusing and engrossing link with the wide world of fandom and you didn't have to be rich to partake. All they wanted was the usual and I've always had plenty of that.

Funny how the years of writing for commercial publications did nothing to lessen the pleasure of seeing my name in print. Finding it in the letter column of a fanzine was no less wonderful a tonic for the ego than a byline in the "regular" press. A few letters of comment and articles and I was hooked, firmly treading the "twiltone" path. The rest (he said, modestly lowering his voice) is history.

My exploits in Yugoslav fandom have been much more spectacular, but they all happened so long ago that the young fandom in Zagreb hardly knows me at all. To them, I am a dim historical figure, one of the seven founding fathers of SFera, the first SF club in the country. Yet, in my day, I have written dozens of articles on SF, translated dozens novels and scores of stories from English, adapted dozens of SF stories into radio dramas and published a paperback edition of Fred Pohl's *Man Plus* (And, sadly went bankrupt soon after the latter venture. The book itself was a success, but the state bureaucracy killed the individual publishing by decree).

For years, however, the vagaries of making a mundane living in a disintegrating economy has made it difficult to be as active as I would have liked to have been. Right now, I am a travel agent and a soft toy designer. My current hits are big stuffed animals, like a four foot long grasshopper. Obviously, this puts quite a demand on my time and I barely manage to squeeze the letter hacking and the articles into the schedule. But I do manage: quitting this link with fandom at large would be unthinkable. Over the years, the fandom has become a kind of family for me; it would be awful to get orphaned.

It occurs to me that I haven't said what kind of SF I like: I have only mentioned the general attitude towards the genre. Hm. I have great respect (and an equally great disdain) for Robert Heinlein. Silverberg in his heyday (pre-*Lord Valentine*). Fred Pohl's novels almost without exception. Ian Watson. Zenna Henderson. Brian Aldiss. I like SF that challenges my assumptions. P.K. Dick's good half. Ch'rst, I've just realised I'm listing the stuff of the sixties and seventies. What about the fresher names? Well, Gibson's *Neuromancer* impressed me, but cyberpunk as a subgenre did not. I hate formula writing. Many younger writers apparently produce very good stuff, but I've managed to read very little in the past five or six years, sampling a single book by each great new name that flashes on the SF firmament, just to stay in touch. One book is not enough to judge an author fairly. If I do get to the Worldcon in Chicago, I will probably make the hucksters rich: there's so much stuff to catch up on!



THE PERIODIC TABLE EASTERCON DELPHIC POLL

Speculation, the large con to be held in Glasgow over Easter, has sent out a "Delphic Poll". Con attendees are asked to make predictions about whether events will happen in the next five, ten, 50, 100 or 500 years. The questions include:

1. POLITICS IS LIFE

Japanese economy collapses, SF declared subversive, Cars banned from London.

2. SF RULES OK

First man/woman on Mars, Self sufficient space colony, First manned visit to nearby star, Faster than light travel, First contact with alien intelligence, 3-D TV, First sea-bed colony, Teleportation for mass transport, Antigravity, Time travel, Weather control, Black holes used as source of power, First conscious Artificial Intelligence, Direct neuron/computer interface, Commercial space flight.

3. DOCTOR, DOCTOR

Brain transplant, functional sex change, life extension to two hundred years.

4. THE END

Air becomes unbreathable, all Africa becomes desert, Polar ice caps melt.

5. BITS AND PIECES

Loch Ness monster verified, England win World cup, twenty four hour licensing.

The results will be given in a programme item at Speculation. Your roving, curious editor will be there and hopes to report back to non-Speculators on the results.

CONCERT II: A PARTIAL VIEW

as seen by Harry Payne

So who do I blame for this? Omega, for a start. There I was in a quiet corner at the Worldcon, engaged in a deep and meaningful relationship with a glass of Orangeboom, when she hove into view. Little did I know that she was not manifesting in her usual Aspect of Gopher Incarnate, but as Con Committee Member With A Receipt Book. I shall draw a veil over the ten minutes that followed, save to inform that the charm "post-dated cheque", if correctly uttered, serves to ameliorate most of the agony and might even dispel a less enthusiastic CCMWARR.

Then there is Fox. Not only was he directly responsible for Concert II coming into existence (GoH in search of a con!), but 'twas he who informed me that the video programme included the *Daily Pair* (for those of you who have managed to avoid Japanese animation to date, this can best be described as *Charlie's Angels* meet *Robocop* and is incredibly anarchic fun). From then on, it was all uphill to Edinburgh, arriving at the hotel Saturday afternoon via a small but cat-filled flat in the heart of the city.

The first half hour set the pace for the rest of the weekend. I hardly had time to pin my badge on when I became the victim of multiple Grievous Bodily Hugs and not too forcibly escorted to the bar, where the Pink Fluffy bunnies were proudly displaying their latest warped example of humour: the Ceno-

bunny (in the shops for next Christmas, perhaps?) and where I re-acquainted myself with that excellent Scots tradition, drink in reasonable measures.

Onwards - excelsior even - to the main hall for a GohF event. Diana Wynne Jones is one of those few authors who produce a large volume of high quality work with seemingly effortless ease, but the most cursory of meetings with her will reveal that behind this lies a mountain of research, hard draft and a deep love for her work and her audience. For those of you who haven't encountered her books, I recommend them. Why? Borrow one and find out, you cheapskate. Then start buying them.

I left the tail end of the reading with almost indecent haste to get to the video room in time for the start of the *Dirty Pair* showing. The inevitable rescheduling gremlins had struck; but the replacement was almost as good: that classic '70s series *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman*, proof that the television companies in this country have had a long-standing antipathy towards all things Ninja (*trite fans, please note). Take a Japanese cartoon series. Remove "all acts of violence" is what happens to people when they get shot etc (and there are a lot of *et ceteras* - Ed.). Likewise remove all sexual overtones (especially that the chief villain is bisexual). Introduce, at the least expense and less imagination, two robots so cute that they will kill all diabetics at fifty paces. Call the whole sorry mess *Battle of the Planets* and flog to the BBC at an exorbitant sum. Well, we watched the original and good bloody fun it was, too (even if undubbed).

The evening started to assume a surreal air when we sat down to dinner. Having been escorted to our tables, after a suitable time had elapsed, we were again escorted to the self-service canteen. This is, apparently, not an old Scottish custom. Not that I was complaining: I rarely get an opportunity to wreak such mayhem on a dead cow.

Suitably fortified by a quiet swim in the punch, on to the filk. Ah, the joys of traditional filking. No batteries of high-tech equipment, just a circle of like-minded folk who never let lack of singing expertise nor forgetting of words get in the way of making complete fools of themselves. In such joyous company, Saturday turned into Sunday, and the weather decided to let everyone know British Summer Time had ended by turning cold and wet.

Late breakfast consisted of a communal urn of coffee and a Pink elemental disguised as bubble-gum flavoured soda. The latter is the most revolting concept to come out of a can since *Double Strength Jump Cola* and has the dubious distinction of having its own religion. Several manifestations of Pink were observed by its cultists, and at one point a jihad was on the point of being declared on the Caffeine Fundamentalists, who can get quite nasty without liberal doses of their preferred drug on the Sunday of a con. All was happily resolved with an ecumenical chorale over that quintessence of Robert Heinlein's *Crazy Years*, the *Sunday Sport*. Especially the pictures of the goat ...

The video programme had been changed yet again: the *Dirty Pair* was now being shown in the evening. However, one of anime's more notorious oeuvres, *Baoh* was on show at elevenish, so off I slithered and was rewarded with the sight of two munchkins being hustled out of the video room just in time to miss the first disembowelling. Me snigger? Ten minutes of that proved to be more than enough for me; besides, the caffeine and the Pink were resuming hostilities somewhere in my ribcage. I temporarily retired to throw some food into the fray, returning to introduce, and watch (for the umpteenth time) Hayao Miyazaki's *Laputa: the flying island*. This is a truly excellent example of film making full-stop, never mind that it blows away anything churned out of the Disney/Bluth sausage machines in the last fifteen years, and it is proof that There Ain't No Justice that Xxoo date it has been shown once on tv in this country, on New Year's morning two years ago. If it's ever shown at a con again, catch it.

After this, a pause, then an exceptionally civilised tea, then at last! the highlight of the con, what I had so patiently waited for. But the trouble was,

no one else seemed to have. The poor person running the video machine looked like he was getting as hot as it was, so after one episode I left him frying eggs on top of the (switched off) video, donned my top hat and cape, waxed my moustaches, and attending the foul and degrading event which is showing every sign of becoming *de rigueur* at cons: the slave auction. If the *Sunday Sport* find out, we'll never hear the end of it. I tell you, slave-owning is no fun at all; particularly when they keep on demanding pints of bitter! The final blow to my sorely-wounded wallet came at the close of the auction, when Starfleet Security, who had been handsomely paid to police the event, turned out to be a group of Mega-City Judges who fined everyone present for attending an illegal event. I used to feel sorry for people in red uniforms; from now on, it's phasers on slaughter. You have been warned.

The grand finale had to be the filk concert, which acquired a life of its own and only ended when the hotel staff apologetically reminded us they had to set the room up for the next day. The "Filk Wars" have mercifully died and there is some wonderfully original songs creeping shyly out of the underground. This, combined with the good quality tapes being produced in the UK, can only be a Good Thing for filk, provided that we do not lose our sense of proportion. Again. For those who were not there: Diana Wynne Jones can't sing. Not only has she said so, she has proved so. So don't ask her to, it's an unkindness all round, and you might frighten her away.

And that was it. Officially. Unofficially, I departed for my piece of floorspace in the small hours, happy in the knowledge that cons can still be great fun, provided you get the mix right. In this case, the mix was hugs, and coffee, and interesting friendly people, and good conversation, and inexpensive drinks, and battery-powered vibrating rabbits, and Pink, and friends who lend you d-i-shirts when you turn up soaking wet, and good anime, and lots more hugs. So I didn't get to see as much of the *Dirty Pair* as I'd have liked to (please note the italics! thank you) but who cares? It's not as if I've a fetish for scantily-clad psychopaths with oversized weaponry, you know.

Thank you, gentlefolk of the committee. Glad to know you made a goodly sum for the Romanian Orphanage Trust. And when are you planning Concert III?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN '95?

While the subject is Scottish cons, there is a bid to hold the Worldcon in 1995 at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow which, while within easy walking distance of the city centre, even has its own railway station. The committee believe that now that the Dutch Worldcon has shown that European cons can be enjoyable, this has increased the probability of a Scottish one and they comment that: "In Europe the fall of the Iron Curtain means that at last we have the possibility of developing a true European Fandom. Across the Atlantic, we now have better contacts with American fandom than ever before. An event as large and complex as the Worldcon needs experience as well as enthusiasm". To become a pre-supporting member for the UK bid for the Glasgow Worldcon in 1995, please send £5, \$8 or Dfl 17 to UK Worldcon, 5 St. Andrew's Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 2DY and your name will appear with the other supporters in lists in future publications.

OVER THE YEARS AND FAR AWAY

Members who wish to book their holidays, cons I mean, in advance, should be aware of *Pedantcon*, to celebrate the real end of the millennium. It aims to have lots of small events all over the world, one in each time zone at least, to celebrate the millennium twenty four times (more information from Chris O'Shea II, 12 Stannard Road, Dalston, London E8 1DR, date December 2000 to January 2001). For everyone else, there is *Millenium* (sic), which will be more of a party, and probably in Europe. The aim is that people pay a trifle per year until the final amount has been decided (details from Malcolm M. Reid, 55 Cedarwood Avenue, Newton Mearns, Glasgow G77 5LP, date 29 December 1999 to January 2 2000).

If that's a little far ahead, the 1992 Worldcon, **Magicon**, is in Florida, Walt Disney and NASA country. There should be quite a British contingent, because this is the place to vote for the Glasgow 1995 bid. So far there are 2200 assorted attendees, including 75 children (details from Peter Weston, 14 St. Bernards Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B72 1LE).

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Retreating through the time tunnel towards the present, there seem to be a lot of specialised cons: **Masque** in 1992 for costumers (details from Melusine, 5 Wentbridge Path, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 4ET, note that it will be in early 1992 and that numbers may have to be limited). Another con with a definite theme is **Eroticon Six**, which proposed to plumb the depths of eroticism (what else?) in SF and Fantasy. Although non-couples are not precisely discouraged, there are no single rooms available at the hotel (information from 17 Guildford Street, Brighton, E. Sussex BN1 3LA. To be held at the Donnington Manor Hotel, Sevenoaks, £22 attending membership).

SF readers planning a summer holiday this year could do a lot worse than visit a country called SF (Suomi Finland) which will host **Fincon '91** in Helsinki. There is free admission, and an English language content will be guaranteed by the presence of Guest **Iain Banks**, plus, of course, that most Finns speak fluent English. There is no need to be horrified by the price of a Helsinki Big Mac (\$4), since better and cheaper food is easily available. Why not contact Ari Veintie, Harjuku 6A2A, 00500 Helsinki, Finland, for more travel and survival information. The con will be at the Old Student House, Helsinki, right in the centre of the city, August 10-11.

Or an alternative holiday could be Oslo, home of the Vigeland Sculpture Park, Viking Ships, Munch museum and the Holmenkollen Ski Jump. Intercon '91 has an impressive line up of Guests: **Larry Niven**, **Mary Gentle**, **Per G. Olsen** and **Roar Ringdahl** (£5 attending or \$10 until May 1st from PO Box 121 Vindern, N-0319 Oslo 3, Norway).

But don't forget the cons close at hand:

Reconnaissance (February 22-24, Park Hotel, Cardiff, £18 attending from 5 St. Andrews Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 2DY) which, although **Ian Watson** is unable to come, compensates royally with the presence of **Alex Stewart**, **Dean Wayland**, **Charles Stross**, **Colin Greenland**, **Lionel Fanthorpe**, **John Gribbin**, **Dave Langford**, **Lorna Mitchell**, **Terry Pratchett**, **Gill Alderman**, **David Pringle** and probably even more.

Picocon (March 2, Imperial College Union, £5 attending from Rebecca Sowray, Science Fiction Society, Imperial College Union, Beit Hall, Prince Consort Road, South Kensington, London SW7).

Speculation, the Eastercon (March 29-April 1, Hospitality Inn, Glasgow, £25 attending from 35 Buller Road, London N17 9BH), which will have a critic's workshop led by the suave **Colin Greenland**, numbers limited alas, and a whole strand by the inexhaustible **Peter Weston** on *Lost Heritage* which mourns over present day con attendee's lack of real SF reading and intends to do something about it.

Mexicon (May 3-6, Cairn Hotel, Harrogate £15 attending from Mike Ford, 27 Stanmore Crescent, Leeds LS4 2RY). **Mexicon** does not have Guests of Honour as such, but **Howard Waldrop**, **Ian Sinclair** and **Paul Williams** will be attending and there will be a live performance of a SF montage show, for which an original set and music have been commissioned. The five performers will be interviewed as a programme item and the programme will also include *A Long Long Time Ago*, an evaluation of the re-emergence of space opera as a popular genre, *Small but Perfectly Formed* on the classic shorts of SF, *Big New Worlds*, a central panel, *Invisible Cities*, an examination of the backdrops of novels and series and *Shared Worlds and Sharecropping*. There will also be an exhibition of **ATOM's** artwork and a **BSFA** desk.

Protoplasma (Sacha's Hotel, Manchester, £14 attending from 1 Shoemith Court, Merchant's Place, Reading RG1 1DT), has now a Guest: the inimitable and entertaining **Bob Shaw**. However, due to various external pressures, the

committee do not feel able to give of their best this year, so the convention is postponed a year, and all details are subject to re-confirmation.

NOTICEBOARD

FLICKERS 'N' FRAMES #11, new (December) 40 page issue - with special Graham Masterton profile, interview and exclusive fiction; also fiction by Steve Sneyd, Anthony North; Regular synth music column by Mike Ashley and much more. Limited stocks of issue #10 with free Dreamstates tape still available. Issue 12 (hopefully 52 pages) will be available late March. £1.25 per copy (£4.50 for 4 issue subscription) from John M. Peters, 299 Southway Drive, Southway, Plymouth, Devon PL6 6QN. Also available:- a selection of ex-review books and a wide variety of magazines including *Science Fiction Chronicle*, *Future Life*, *Space Voyager*, *Spaceflight News* and many other titles covering computers, electronics, science, film/video, music, etc. For a full list, please send a sac to the above address.

BSFA READING HABITS: The editor would like to apologise for suggesting that Steve Rothman was running a survey on this. Although he is interested to know of the reading habits of other BSFA members, he is unable to reply to letters as he is abroad for a while. Could members recommending books write to the editorial address please (16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP).

WANTED: Gollancz edition of Volumes 1 and 2 of Philip K. Dick's *Collected Stories*. Must be in mint condition with dust jackets. I will pay a good price and will include mint copies of paperback edition as part exchange if desired. Brian Cox, Little Crede, Crede Lane, Bosham, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 8NX.

BSFA COLLATING WEEKEND: This will take place on Saturday April 6 - Sunday April 7 at the Statistics Department Annex at Reading University. Tea/coffee provided and pub lunch plus congenial conversation and lots of exercise. This is one way to help other BSFA members and be a welcome help to the BSFA. Details from Keith Freeman (Tel: 0734 666142).

FOR SALE: Issues of *Fantasy and Science Fiction* (July 1980; Oct 1981; Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec 1984; Jan, Feb, Apr, May, Jun, July, Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec 1985; Jan, Feb, Apr, May, Aug, Sept, Oct, Dec 1986; Feb, Apr, May, July, Oct 1987; Oct 1988) 50p per issue, plus postage - or open to offers. **ALSO** Issues of *Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction* (nos. 17, 19, 20, 25, 27-30, 32, 33, 36, 38) 50p per issue, plus postage - or open to offers. Please contact Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB.

PENFRIEND REQUIRED. I would like to have a penfriend in Great Britain who is interested in Science Fiction. I am thirty eight years old, an economist. My hobby is Science Fiction (particularly hard core SF), modern and classical literature, chess. I look forward to hearing from you. Frantisek Nespar, Narodniho odboje 18, 690 02 Brno, Czechoslovakia.

STEVE'S ST PATRICK DAY PARTY Steve and Jenny Glover present their 12th annual Paddy's Night Bash on Saturday March 16th, from 7pm onwards at 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP, and would be pleased to see any BSFA members who are in the area.

JOHN BRAY'S ELECTRONIC APA PROPOSAL "After much muttering at the Christmas 'Ton, I've finally bought a PC and got an account on CIX. I've an urge to use my toy further, and while there is a SF conference on CIX, I was hoping to set up some kind of electronic apa. Same rules on submission (members must contribute moderately regularly) but without the usual delay in mailing, discussions should circulate faster. I am aware of ShatterNet, but they are RPG based, and I want mine to be literary (and preferably hard) SF based". Details from John Bray, jbray@cix.compulink.co.uk or, by email, at 28 Russell Court, Oakhill Crescent, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6EE (081 399 7502).

E.R.B. I'm interested in contacting any E.R.B. fans, particularly in the N/W area, with a view to sale/exchange of his works. Contact Craig Herbertson, 13 Rushworth Court 273 Wellington Road North, Stockport SK4 5BP (or does anyone have E.R.B. to sell?)

"THE SODALITY OF HOLY ST BRIDE AND COMPANIONS OF ST AELRED" An apa for gay, lesbian and bisexual people who are interested in SF. Mailings are monthly and current "mother superior" (administrator) is Jane Carnall, 21 Chequers Road, Basingstoke RG21.

SCIENCE FICTION IN LITHUANIA

Gediminas Beresnevicius

In the course of one year, Lithuania has changed greatly. Political activity is very high. Historical and cultural monuments destroyed during Soviet occupation are being restored again. Lithuanian has become the state language. Churches once turned into warehouses are returned back to believers. About one hundred and fifty informal papers and magazines are published today. Mass media allow different views and opinions; meetings and rallies draw up between one hundred thousand and two hundred and fifty thousand participants. Parties and organisations resume their activities which were stopped in 1940. The Lithuanian Reconstruction Movement Sajudis has definitely won the elections to the USSR Supreme Soviet.

These are the first steps to independence and self-determination of the Lithuanian nation which had its state in the thirteenth century, and in the period between the two World Wars.

Old Soviet myths, such as the fact of so-called voluntary entry of Lithuania to the Soviet Union, are being criticised. On the whole, the attitude towards the past has greatly changed. Historians today can tell the truth about the events in 1940 when Lithuania was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union.

Conditions for Lithuanian Science Fiction have improved too. Books which were kept in special stocks today are available for the reader.

Justas Piliponis (1907-1947) can be treated as the father of Lithuanian SF. He wrote mainly adventure novels. His best known novel *The Second Flood* was published in 1930 (second part in 1934). The action of the novel takes place in the 37th century AD. The author depicts world wars, global climatic cataclysms, giant technical projects etc. One of the best episodes is the journey of two heroes, one of them a Lithuanian, into the hollow depths of the earth.

The Brothers Tomdikas in 1934 published their SF novel *Damned Souls in Love*. The hero, Doctor Velzhas, with the help of a certain device mortifies his flesh and goes to Hell - a vast planet full of wild animals and dead people; members of Hitlerjugend ride on horses; Lenin torments himself in a remote town.

The book *Siegfried Immerselbe Rejuvenates* by Ignas Seinius, published in the same year, attracted readers' attention. The novel is a political pamphlet on racial ideology of German fascism. The fantastical transformations of Faustus of the twentieth century and the hero's love story help the author to reveal the political intrigues of Europe of those days.

Besides the above mentioned SF books in the time of the Lithuanian Republic, several other authors published novels, short stories with elements of SF, for example, symbolic mysteries of Vydunas, criminal novels based on SF by M. Mateika, stories by J. Visakis, and others.

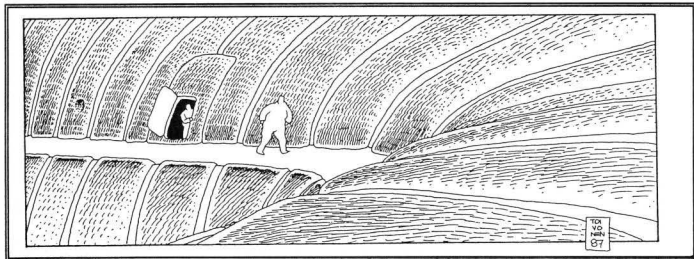
Historical cataclysms (mass arrests and deportations to Siberia and the Far North in 1941, the struggle against deportations, armed resistance until 1954) was a big blow and brought heavy losses to Lithuanian culture, and SF in particular.

The first book of this genre after the war appeared only in 1964. It was a collection of short stories "Ready for Star Flights" by V. Minius. The long pause in Lithuanian SF can be explained by censorship in Moscow; each SF novel or story had to be translated into Russian. Nobody wanted to do that.

The end of the 60's witnessed the rise of SF literature in Lithuania. Today, well-known authors like Vytautas Norbutas, Banguolis Balasevicius, Kazys Paulauskas and others published their first stories. V. Norbutas was the most talented among them. He widened the genre, introducing stream of consciousness and methods of narration and presentation. In general, SF in the 60's was very popular in the Soviet Union, but the "Lithuanian wave" lagged some five years behind. That is why it did not differ greatly from Soviet SF.

The second wave of Lithuanian SF came at the end of the 70's until the beginning of the 80's. B. Balasevicius and K. Paulauskas wrote more books, V. Minius and L. Latonaite had their small collection of stories published. Several new names appeared. The paper "Komjuunimo tissa" played an important role in all this. From 1981 until 1984, the paper often carried SF stories. Moral and ethical problems prevailed in SF then. B. Balasevicius became interested in social SF and K. Paulauskas went on writing adventurous stories.

Though S.T. Kondrotas and J. Ivansuskaitė represent traditional prose, there are some elements of SF in their books.



The Lithuanian SF writers have always written in Lithuanian. That makes it difficult for people who do not speak Lithuanian to read their books. On the other hand, Lithuanian SF writers are original, though they do not write about Lithuania itself, the present and the future. The theory about the convergence of all the Soviet nations into one (Russian) nation which has been put into practice since the tsarist times must have had something to do with it. Scepticism and nihilism stem from it. Writers do not believe in the future, and the action in their writings often takes place on some other planet or imaginary capitalist country.

Now many taboos do not exist any longer. The Lithuanians are a much stronger nation. All the changes may give rise to a new wave of SF dealing with politics and social life.

New times have brought new hopes to writers of Lithuanian Science Fiction.

(Note from Ed. - this was written in 1989 for a special English issue of the Vilnius Science Fiction club "Dorado" and Kaunas club "Phoenix")

FAN GROUPS IN EASTERN EUROPE (CONTINUED)

Bridget Wilkinson

The list of fan groups was curtailed last issue by the death of Roald Dahl. This time, there is a list of Czechoslovakia clubs, which seem to exist in every tiny town and hamlet. The prefix "SF Klub" will be taken as read.

- KPVPVF, Boris Porosin, Svermova 25, 974 00 Banská Bystrica
- Gea, Jaromír Formánek, Komenského 13, 680 01 Boskovice
- Mages, Milan Gazdík, Lachova 3, 84104 Bratislava
- IQ 2001, Peter Pavelko, Liptovská 4, 821 09 Bratislava
- Sfera, Vlado Špon, Togliattihó 10, 852 09 Bratislava
- Lulungamena, Josef Peterka, Dukelských hrdinů 21, 690 02 Breclav
- Maleví, František Moravec, Brezova nad Svitavou 47, 569 02 Brezova nad Svitavou
- Soufan, Eliska Konečná, Mikulčická 3, 627 00 Brno
- Nix, Pavel Mikuláš, Dimitrova 23, 602 00 Brno
- AF 167, Vera Sevcikova, ing., VUV, Vavřinská 6, 658 41 Brno
- IF, Miroslav Linduska, Richterova 3, 623 00 Brno
- Bonsai, Jiri Matys, Ujezd 2222, 470 01 Ceska Lipa
- Stanislav Komarek, U mlekarů 12, 737 01 Cesky Tesin
- Strazi casu, Ludek Navrátil, Horní Jeleni 266, 533 74 Horní Jeleni
- DUO, Petr Exner, Havlickova 294, 500 02 Hradec Kralove
- Sfinx, Milos C Podpera, Ksidisti 398, 250 67 Klecany
- 451 degrees F, Igor Melichercik, Matuskova 10, 040 11 Kiskinec
- Trifid, Bedrich Gaidarus, Lazebnický vrch 5, 460 01 Liberec
- Arisada, Jiri Fidler, K. Marx 1124/23, 277 11 Neratovice
- Duna, František Hlouš, Lininova 233, 417 31 Novosedlice
- Futurum, Pavel Konecny, V. Rezac 10, 771 00 Olomouc
- Hepterida, Hana Pechulova, Hradecká 33, 746 01 Opava
- KLF, Jiri Pilch, Svazkova 17/2205, 704 00 Ostrava-Zabreh
- Atlantida, Petr Svoboda, Družby 342, 530 09 Pardubice-Pol
- Andromeda Karel C Jedlicka, Nepomucka 15, 317 04 Pízen
- Laser, Tomas Jirkovsky, Olsova 18, 307 07 Pízen
- Time Machine, Zuzana Reblova, Prachovice 166, 538 04 Prachovice
- ARS, Jiri Turner, 17 listopadu 2, 110 00 Praha 1
- Ada, Alexandr Hlinka, Krokova 778/98, 128 00 Praha 1
- R.U.R., Ivan Adamovic, Hlavni 2725, 141 00 Praha 4
- KJV, Egon Cerny, Matechova 14, 146 00 Praha 4
- Kinston, Václav Soukup, Maroldova 7, 140 00 Praha 4-Nusle
- BC, Zdenek C.L. Rampas, Libocka 3 162 00 Praha 6
- Spectra, Filip Skaba, Pod leskikem 363/4a, 109 00 Praha 10
- P01, František Franko, KHP Revolučna 17, 080 01 Prešov
- Nekonečno, Elena Volgyiova, P.J. Safarika 5/8, 971 01 Prievizda

- Slan, Ladislav Penka, dr., Na dolikách 503, 274 01 Slany
- Bohuslav Sobotka, Zlata hora 12331, 684 01 Slavkov u Brna
- Castor, Miroslav Butora, Tkacka 4/5, 052 01 Spiska Nova Ves
- Pulsar, Josef M pecinovsky, Druzestveni 640, 411 08 Steti
- Makropulos, Petr C. Konupcik, Bludovska 21, 787 01 Sumperk
- Tresek, František Plešáček, Netolický 1124, 674 01 Trebic
- Nasca, Ladislav Cibulka, Pícasova 549, 400 01 Usti nad Labem
- Mobius 2061, Miroslav Fiser, Vyskytna 33, 588 41 Vyskytna nad Jihlavou
- Atrass, Jan Fabian, Tajovského 32/40, 965 01 Ziar nad Hronom

You may ask why I have laboriously typed out all these addresses, and, probably learned a bit of Czech subliminally. I've done it for two reasons. One is to marvel at the number of SF clubs such a small country can support, which appear, from their names, to be still concerned with SF. How many clubs in Britain exist purely for the discussion of SF? How many clubs in Britain have regular members?

The second reason is that if you have outgrown your shelves, there is no need to pass your SF on to Oxford, where it will lie, priced at about 5p, unwanted by people who rummage for a nice detective story or a romance to pass the time until they can get to the tv. Books sent to these clubs will be valued, read with interest. Besides which, the post office have apparently just introduced a "small package rate" for goods under a kilo. Check first though.

Or if you have magazines - back issues which are forming untidy piles. Perhaps you are preparing for a spring clean or having one forced on you. Don't let your SF be thrown out to end up on a tip, mauled by hungry seagulls. It's a waste of paper, if nothing else.

SOAPBOX

This is the place, the column for you to vent your spleen and anything else you feel like venting (or spleening?) Last time, Steve Rothman commented on the lack of quality science fiction. As he departs for farther shores, the torch is picked up by Jim Provan, who simply asks:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SCIENCE FICTION?

The only problem with receiving book tokens for Christmas is, of course, what to spend them on. Hours of agonising over shelves of titles, desperately trying to recall favourable reviews read weeks ago in *The Sunday Times*, the *TLS*, *The Literary Review*, *Foundation*, *Vector*, *Paperback Inferno* etc., in the sure knowledge that one the way home, your newly-purchased reading materials will be dropped in horror into the nearest puddle as you spot **THAT BOOK** which for months you had meant to ... thought it was out of print ... didn't know it had been released in paperback ... read his/her last and vowed to buy the next ...

Sounds familiar? Well ...

Imagine my horror the other day when after about an hour in my local SF bookshop, I had to admit that I was beaten. There was nothing worth spending even part of my £15 present on. It was at that point that I asked myself the dreaded question which had been lurking in my thoughts for some time: what's wrong with science fiction?

To put the basis of my answer into perspective, consider these pairings:

- (i) Kylie Minogue's *I should be so lucky* and Gyorgy Ligeti's *Requiem*
- (ii) *The News of the World* and *The Observer*
- (iii) *Neighbours* and *Twin Peaks*
- (iv) Castlemaine XXXX and Sapporo Dry.

To avoid any condescension, I won't ask the two obvious questions: suffice it is to say that anybody who thinks that quality is necessarily related to popularity is sadly misguided.

If we are to find the one thing responsible for this, the obvious answer would be that the population of this country is so backward (thick?) that they will gladly lap up whatever is provided for them. This rather broad sociological point sheds some light on the major villain as far as what's wrong with science fiction is concerned: marketing. On that fateful day in Forbidden Planet, I worked out that about a third of all books were either sequels or belonged to trilogies, or worse (is Mr. Eddings incapable of producing a single-volume story, irrespective of such a book's literary quality?) I mean, think about it! Asimov's *Foundation* series, Hubbard's *Battlefield/Mission Earth* series, Eddings' *Belgariad*, *Elenium*, *Malloréen* - that's about twenty six books (I may have lost track somewhere in Eddings' lot) and not a decent one among them. Sadly, it's the "they've bought that - now we'll give them this" marketing strategy which can't fail on a nation of people who are content with their lot and seem to be afraid of change, which in turn probably explains why they never read any real SF. If this piece is beginning to sound like a full-scale attack on fantasy fiction/Dave Eddings, I should add that one of my favourite books of all time is *Daybreak on a Different Mountain* by Colin Greenland, a refreshingly wonderful example of intelligent fantasy.

These marketing strategies are aided in their execution by the existence of "genre labels" such as SF, horror, fantasy, etc. Rather than write a novel which will subsequently be accepted as SF, too many authors seem to set out to write "a science fiction novel" which can be readily identified as such by the intended audience, either by its position on a certain shelf or by the large spaceship or BEM or barbarian on the cover. This usually leads to cliché-ridden work, limited in scope by the perceived boundaries of popular SF. On the plus side, however, there has been much talk lately of "transcending the genre" and for me, the best books of recent years have included the likes of *Lanark* by Alasdair Gray and *The Bridge* by Iain Banks: two novels which are not SF, but have doubtless been read and enjoyed by many of the more literate of SF readers.

The sad fact then, is that as long as there is a mindless audience just waiting to be manipulated by cynical publishers of semi-literate rubbish, about ninety percent of all SF will continue to be Popular General Fiction junk set in space or castles or the future. What we can do is separate that ten percent of literary gold from the muck which constitutes the majority of so-called SF and celebrate the beauty of intelligent, enjoyable and stimulating writing. If such writing happens to fall under the banner of SF, then we are lucky people indeed.

(For the record, I went to Waterstones and spent my £15 on *Foucault's Pendulum* and *Ulysses*. Maybe one day I'll return to Forbidden Planet and find ...)

COMPETITION CORNER

MATRIX COMPETITION NO 91 - RESULTS

A small, but select band of entrants overcame the effects of the plum pudding and submitted "book lists" which hid the three Christmas Presents of A LONG WOOLLY SCARF, A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE and YET MORE HANKIES. As I expected, the hankies proved the easiest present to find with the best list being from Dave Mills collaborating with Piers Anthony's 45 letter list of "Crewel Lye/Mute/Omnivore/Thousandstar/Kirlian Quest". The second smallest hanky was provided by Vaclav Kriz and E C Tubb (55 letters). E C Tubb also helped Sean Friend to find the shortest woolly scarf (66 letters) with "Kalin/Eloise/Angado/World Of Promise/Lallia/Zenya/the Jester at Scar/Web of Sand". Next best was Andrew Buchan with Alan Dean Foster's 70 word scarf.

The partridge was a bit tough with the lowest score of 89 coming from both Colin Greenland (Moorcock) and David Mills (Silverberg) with Sean Friend and Doc Smith coming close with 90. Colin (and Mike) came up with "The Bull and the Spear/Stormbringer/The Golden Barge/The Final Programme/The Warlord of the Air/The Deep Fix". But the champion was undoubtedly Garry Noble with Paul Anderson (66).

The Prize list is as follows (details in hanky, scarf, partridge order):-
FIRST EQUAL - £8 - David Mills 211 (45 Anthony + 77 Farmer + 89 Silverberg)
FIRST EQUAL - £8 - Garry Noble 211 (56 Foster + 89 Simak + 66 Anderson)
THIRD - £4 - Colin Greenland 219 (58 Aldiss + 72 Le Guin + 89 Moorcock)

Average score was 237 (64 + 77 + 96). Thanks to all those mentioned above and also to those who also entered, namely Andrew Buchan, Andy Mills, P.J.L. Ellis, Sean Friend, Theo Ross and Nigel Parsons. Two entries were cancelled due to a slight misunderstanding of the competition, including Nigel who got the lowest score.

MATRIX COMPETITION NO 92 - ANYONE FOR COCOA?

The world of SF (as many others) is littered with acronyms. They may be for individuals (SMOF), groups of people (BSFA), publications (PAPA), objects (TARDIS), or (parts of) book titles (UNCLE). All competitors have to do this month is create new acronyms for specific groups of SF-related people, either real or fictional. Entrants should submit one or more acronyms and should, for each, include the following:-

- the acronym (initials)
- the explanation
- a mini-prospectus of up to twenty five words describing the group
- suggestions for at least one member of the proposed group
- suggestions for one specific exclusion from the group.

The following is a (poor) sample entry:-

- UP-URS
- Union of Politically-Unsound Rightwing Scribblers
- a group of Gengis Khan followers whose political views come through too heavily in their otherwise acceptable writings
- Included should be R.b.r.t H.n.l.n and J.r.r. P..r.n.l.l
- excluded should be ..n W.s.n.s.

The prize this month reverts to the usual five pound book token and will be given for the best (or most scurrilous but still printable) acronym submitted. I'm looking for quality and not quantity, although you can submit as many as you want. Entries plus any comments about the Competitions Corner, should be sent to Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 0RG, to arrive by March 13.

(Anyone who didn't understand the title should apply to join COCOA, which is the Campaign to Outlaw Contrived and Outrageous Acronyms).

