

95p *Matrix* 95

The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association



News International SF, New Books,
Magazine and Edinburgh Fringe Preview.
Views Bookshops and the Recession.
Gene Engineering: Beyond Frankenstein?
Reviews *The Rocketeer*, Hollywood News,
SF Radio, Film and Satellite TV.
Plus Fanzine and Convention Listings,
Competition, Clubs Column and Letters.

August - September 1991

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The Usual Details

This issue's cover art was produced by **Stephen Manderson**. Interior illustrations from **Ian Gunn's Sillier Illies**, a collection he produced for ANZAPA in February.

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**Deadline
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Determinants Jenny Glover

With a bi-monthly schedule where the contributor's deadline is three weeks to a month before the finished product is delivered, keeping a news magazine topical can be something of a joke. Either the news has to be highly organised — to fit into *Matrix*'s timetable, an author signing effectively has to be announced three months or more in advance — or what is reported has to be more than just the bland facts of reportage. For example, **Chelsea Quinn Yarbro** recently received death threats serious enough for her to have a round the clock security guard who was more visible at the World Horror Convention than her (and also provided excellent security for the rest of the con in his spare time). My American contacts were rather elusive on the subject, asking why it was so important to know what Ms. Yarbro had done to deserve such attention; the British ones were equally indifferent, rather chauvinistic, claiming that anything goes in the States. Or, to take another example, **Stephen King's** home was broken into by a man with a [fake] bomb and a grievance in mid-April. The man was charged with terrorising and burglary, though he doesn't appear to have actually stolen anything [a dog team cornered him in the attic]. Stephen King's reaction appears to have been mild irritation at the inconvenience: I feel that my reaction would have been far more severe.

Despite **Sandy Browne's** annoyance at seeing lists of forthcoming books (he asks why they can't be put in the centre, where he can tear them out and shred them into tiny pieces), there are many BSFA members in places far remote from decent bookshops: **Antony "Doppelganger" Shepherd** writes inside the bookless walls of Barnsley. With such a wide geographical spread of members, from Oban to Newport Pagnell, and from Oman to Novosibirsk, there will inevitably be lists of events like book fairs, which are more for reference than for straight reading.

But despite the long lists, the news column attempts to entertain, to provoke [successful in the case of the **James Randi** item last time] and to encourage feedback. The newshounds may sit in libraries searching for SF references in esoteric journals or they may rove worldwide to the opening of the House of Elsewhere like **K.V. Bailey** or, rather more cautiously, to the remains of Chernobyl, like **Boris Sdyuk**. A member may see a casual mention in their newspaper, like the unfamiliar **Mr. Terence Pratt** who will give a course in "sci fi" at Pen Farn in November.

The other advantage of having a large, loosely-knit news team is that if one member has an emergency — an illness, a trauma like moving house — he need not be under extra stress retrieving the word processor from the removal man to type up the latest news or rising from an influenza-soaked bed in semi-delirium to chase up a half-remembered item. This time, seventeen people sent information in, ranging from SF on the World service to a proposed Larry Niven inspired theme park in the States. In addition, other members send additional information about fannines or conventions to go in the respective columns. The final tally of everyone concerned in the production of *Matrix* comes to nearly a hundred — *Matrix* is very much a group effort.

There are other news magazines around, naturally, which split into two categories: the glossies, like *Locust* and *SF Chronicle*, which have large print runs and quality reproduction, far too many advertisements, coloured covers and reviews jostling with the news. The white covered magazines consist of *Critical Wave*, the European Science Fiction and Fantasy Review, *Shards of Babel*, the European SF newsletter and, of course, *Matrix*, the newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association. They are not strictly comparable, as *Matrix* does not cover reviews (there are two other separate magazines, *Vector* and *Paperback Inferno* to do this) and *Matrix* is a club magazine. This is not totally

advantageous, for while there is a guaranteed market, the editor does not have the incentive of desperation to increase membership and sales just to survive; in addition, there are set deadlines for the magazine to go to the printer and there is **Keith Freeman's** team able to collate, staple, fold and distribute the BSFA mailing for the immediate future (though the site is to be demolished within eighteen months).

The other two magazines have more latitude about publishing. *Critical Wave* tends to be available at conventions, and occasionally has a wobbly production schedule to fit in major conventions. Copies are sent out afterwards to non-attending subscribers. *Shards of Babel* is more vulnerable to editorial whim, but has the incentive of an all-European 1992 to encourage regular publishing.

The Windmills of Life

There were three separate occasions when my life took a right-angled kink: the first time, I was a solitary ten year old, dutifully trotting back from Brownies on a hot summer evening. Walking up the cracked earth drive with an abandoned warehouse on one side oozing heat and cracked paint and mock orange trees on the other, coyly letting cracks of dusty sunlight through, I suddenly realised that this moment was now and would become past even as I recognised it. This recognition of the fleeting nature of time may have been a rehearsal for the second, days before my last O.U. exams, when I was collecting elderberries for wine. I vaulted over a wall and fell some twenty feet onto a rock in the River Leith, breaking a bone or so on the way. I can remember lying there calmly deciding that my back must be broken since I couldn't move my legs and wondering how I would adapt to life where I couldn't dance or stand or run. As it turned out, only my shoulder was broken and nine months of physio-therapy lay ahead.

It's probably too soon to say, but taking on *Matrix* may also be one of these turning points. Certainly, working to a strict bi-monthly schedule has made my life more organised and I've got to know a lot of people who I would never have written or talked to otherwise. This issue will, I think, have been the most satisfactory so far, as it has been planned and formatted in a complicated juggling schedule with work, house and spending a lot of time with the children, who are now seriously playing *Dungeons and Dragons*.

No Focus in this Mailing

Cecil Nurse, editor of *Focus*, has had a bad time recently and his printer appears to have broken down, so there will be no issue in this mailing. He apologises for this and also asks if there are any volunteers for a Production Assistant or Co-Editor to help with the magazine. Please write to him initially (49 Station Road, Haxby, York YO17 9ES). *Focus* is intended for members who are interested in writing seriously and appears, normally, four times per year.

Empire Dreams The Coordinator's Report

Keve says he's sleeping, but seriously, there will be a longish piece next time.

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News

from K.V. Bailey, Steve Jeffery, Dave Hodson, Steve Rothman, Andy Sawyer, Molly Brown, Roger Robinson, Mat Coward, Steve Grover, John C. Fairweather, Dave Langford, Tim Colcannon, Steve Glover, Andrew D. Douglass, Rick Moen, Maureen Speller & Jenny Glover.

Randi Feedback

The reaction to James Randi's appeal in *Matrix 94* was mixed. Mat Coward wrote mysteriously to inform BSFA readers who want to know why not to donate to a fund to help James Randi should read the article "Science Fiction" in *Fortean Times* 52, price £2 from SKS, 20 Paul Street, Frome, Somerset BA11 1DX. However, SKS is a bit miserly with his magazines or else slow in delivery: I've been waiting three and a half weeks for my copy.

Uri Geller appears to have said that *There was a phase when I had Rolls Royces and ten Rolex watches and I bought 500 silk shirts in one go... Having money frees you from a great deal of the stresses of life. You don't have to worry about things like bills and mortgages.* When asked to explain this statement a little more fully, Uri modified it slightly and said: *I don't know if [the watches] were all Rolaxes. They could have been Constantine Vacherons or Piagets.* Later, writing from his home of Sonning Court, Sonning-on-Thames, Berkshire, he wrote *I will sue Randi in every country where my legal rights enable me to stop him from spreading lies about me.*

James Randi says of Uri Geller: *Truth is something that can be established only by proper investigation, and it is not a matter of opinion, nor of "viewpoint".*

Jacques Beneveniste, whose "discoveries" had seemed to justify homeopathist's claims of the curative values of "high dilutions" and whose findings were investigated by James Randi among others said: *[The magazine] "Nature" sends a magician to check my research and the INSERM [his employer, the French medical research council] doesn't even protest. It's the limit!*

Faith healer Peter Popoff's comments were not that printable after James Randi revealed, live on the Johnny Carson tv show, that the healer knew names and details of sick audience members through an eartpick and radio receiver provided by his [Popoff's] wife.

And Dave Langford, who co-organised a defence fund for British UFO investigator Jenny Randles last year, suggests that any members interested in helping James Randi's defence fund should write to Mike Hutchinson, 10 Crescent View, Loughton, Essex IG10 4PZ. He adds: *[Mike] is the British agent for Prometheus Books and a reliable chap.*

A six part series starring James Randi and his investigations started a couple of Wednesdays ago. I saw him being interviewed on daytime tv, where the presenter bent several spoons by way of introduction. Talking about his series, James Randi said *A magician is an actor playing the part of a wizard with genuine skills... I believe the line is crossed when you don't make it clear whether it is an act or not.*

Pleasures of the House of Elsewhere

The reopening in new premises at Yverdon-les-Bains, on Lake Neuchâtel, of the science fiction museum, la Maison d'Ailleurs, has proved to be a highly successful event. Basically the donated collection of the French writer Pierre Vernins, and now under the inspired curatorship of Roger Gaillard, the museum was visited by over 3,000 people in the first few weeks, myself (K.V. Bailey) fortunate enough to have been among them. I greatly enjoyed browsing through its large collection of cartoons, paintings and sculptures, and its reference library, which rivals in its international coverage even that at the Polytechnic of East London (the Science Fiction Foundation's library); and I found the museum's current exhibition of modelled (and sound-and-script enhanced) literary utopias, created by a variety of artists and designers, a delight and quite unique. It includes Aristophanes' satire on Plato's ideal polis, Thomas More's irony on the inutilty of gold, Marge Piercy's aquarium-like incubator from *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and a tableau of the psychedelic

life-in-death scene from Aldous Huxley's *Island*. Most spectacular is a huge and detailed model of the Temple of Generation from Campanella's *City of the Sun*. Utopia in many of these creations is shown as ambiguously affective. Across the road from the House of Elsewhere, in the Hotel de Ville, is another exhibition, "Chimborazo", celebrating, while also delicately mocking certain national/democratic foibles, the seven hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss Confederation, self-styled the one existent utopia.

In parallel with all this, the June international conference *Utopia and its Metamorphoses*, exploring again the ambiguities and paradoxes of utopia, took place in the near-adjacent Municipal Theatre. The University of California's Riverside/Eaton programme and the Swiss Academy of Human Sciences were among the organising collaborators; the conference had a good deal of academic gravitas, yet was a lively and sociable event involving between sixty and seventy "conferenciers" from several western European countries and from the USA (predominantly), Canada and New Zealand. American critics as formidable as Eric Rabkin ("On the Necessity of an Impossible Dream"), George Slusser ("Cryonics and the Bodily Utopia") and Maureen Barr ("The Postpartipatist Utopia") sparked wide-ranging discussion. Members of the BSFA who gave papers were Edwards James ("The Negative Utopia in Modern SF") and myself ("The Mines and Quarries of Arcady"). To keep the craft of fiction well before the assembly, there were also writers — Elizabeth Vonarburg, James Gunn (who gave an authoritative overview of the relevant SF field) and Kim Stanley Robinson on "Orange County as Utopia". This last contribution was a high point. In the course of his presentation of the creative rationale underlying *The Wild Shore* and its two successor novels, he demonstrated how "rupture and fresh start" seem to be necessary for the utopian venture, and noted the implications for his stories of a realisation that no utopia, even if attaining freedom from pain, can guarantee happiness. He also described how he sought and tested utopian "blind spots" in Wells and Moore, for example, in order to discover his own.

The Swiss Jura was a desirable setting for all these utopian goings-on. My own spa hotel was straight out of *Last Year in Marienbad*: Neuchâtel alone among Swiss lakes now preserves stretches of native red-bed, time-slipping you into the past; a distant monastic hostel on the Compostella pilgrim route provided a splendid banquet; and the farewell dinner at a hotel almost space-view high above lakes and valleys set its seal on a good week. If you're planning travel in that part of the world, don't miss out on Yverdon (just north of Geneva) and its House of Elsewhere — K.V. Bailey.

Philip K. Dick Celebration

Already committed for this weekend (details below) are Ken Campbell, who will deliver the opening address; Dr. Ernesto Spinelli, who will shed some light on the phenomenological nature of Dick's works; John Constable, who will use *A Scanner Darkly* to focus on drug uses and abuses; Brian Stableford and Maxim Jakubowski, who will lead a discussion on the mainstream works; Philip Strick, who will look at Dick's influence on the cinema; and Brian Aldiss, who will do "something special". Plus John Dowle will perform *Take them to the Garden* (performed in the Edinburgh Fringe last year), John Joyce will perform the "Metz speech" and two youth theatre groups are working on dramatising short stories and Geoff Ryan will discuss some of the problems involved in arranging PKD for the stage. Lawrence Sutin whose books *Reflected Exegesis* and *Divine Invasions* on Philip K. Dick are being published real soon now will also definitely be there, plus Neil Ferguson who will be conducting a panel on the significances of the revelatory experiences.

Several other people are going to try their damndest to get there, like Norman Spinrad, who has a Russian commitment just beforehand, Fay Weldon and Jack Cohen. Paul Williams will definitely be there: he's Guest of Honour as well as literary executor of the PKD estate and administrator of the PKD Society and Newsletter. Incidentally, Paul states that he would like some other person or organisation to take this over as from August 1992, and anyone or any society with ideas for the continuation of the society and newsletter should get in touch with the convention organisers, so that their views can be reflected and considered.

Other events will include a PKD community mural painting, optional showings of films, music influenced by Dick's work and inspired by his experiences and exhibitions of art works — the Grafton cover art and a display of papers from the R. Crumb comic of the 1974 revelatory experiences. But the main purpose of the weekend is to get people together to meet and talk about Philip K. Dick.

Registration is £13.50. There is a limit of 300 places, of which 100 have been put aside for members of the PKD society. Accommodation is being arranged locally — bed and breakfast will cost £30-£50 per night including breakfast

and transport is being organised between the hotels and the college. For more details, contact Connections, Epping Forest College, Borders Lane, Loughton, Essex IG10 3SA or contact John Joyce (071 272 5078) or Jeff Merrifield (0621 891287).

John Joyce will also perform the *Metz* speech at the Duke of Cambridge Pub, W5 on the evening of August 15 at 8pm.

World SF in China

In China, SF has such standing that Wang Fengzhen, one of the major translators, was permitted to go on Shanghai TV just after the Tiananmen Square disaster and criticise the army. So when Western delegates arrived at Chengdu, Sichuan Province in late May for World SF, the annual meeting for SF professionals, they faced an unprecedented press reception. The vice-governor of Sichuan, who is in charge of approximately 108 million people, greeted the rather dazed Westerners, including Malcolm Edwards, publishing director at Grafton. Malcolm Edwards said later that his reception was very much the same as that accorded to visiting heads of state. He made two TV interviews, four speeches, innumerable interviews (all before the main ceremony) and every so often he would encounter Brian Aldiss, doing equally much with the media.

When faced by the formidable Mrs. Yang Xiao, editor of China's only SF magazine, *SF World* and the charming Jaroslav Olsa, Czech editor and translator who reported that the Czech parliament contains four deputies active in SF publishing, not to mention the Mayor of Prague who was Kurt Vonnegut's Czech translator, Malcolm Edwards said: *There were many moments in Chengdu when I wished I could have imported some of the literary editors of this country who, while paying lip-service to the idea that they ought to pay occasional attention to SF, resolutely refuse to do anything about it.*

The next World SF meeting will be in Yugoslavia, provided they can concentrate on tourism instead of sniping at each other, failing that Roumania are poised to host it, just as they would be pleased to host an emergency Eurocon if Zagreb is too hot for SF tourists.

BSFA London Meetings

The August meeting is likely to be moderately informal as Bruce Sterling might or might not be passing through London on his way to Winchester for Wincon II. Should he not be there, then there will probably be a balloon debate or someone will play Devil's Advocate on a SF topic. Meetings after that are a bit more organised: the September guest is David Gemmell, with Kim Newman in October and Iain Sinclair in November. The meetings take place at The Old Coffee House, Beak Street, Soho (just off Carnaby Street, nearest tube Oxford Circus) and start from about 6.30pm onwards. There is a charge of 50p for members, £1 for non-members.

Signings

Murder One, 71-75 Charing Cross Road will have the following signings — telephone 071 743 3483 for details:

September: J.G. Ballard *The Kindness of Women*
October: Terry Pratchett *Witches Abroad*; Douglas Adams
November: Dan Simmons; Jonathan Carroll; Brian Lumley.

USEXCO at the Fringe

The Unauthorised Sex Company are gathering at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to present what performer and writer Simon Ings calls a "son et lumière" about the human form. The text draws on sources from Virginia Woolf to the Song of Solomon, visuals and live music are provided by Dave McKean and the other performers are Collin Greenland and Geoff Ryman. *Writers are seen as rather dull and distant figures who only occasionally get away from their desks says Geoff Ryman we want to give people better value for money, boost the visuals and sound — and have more fun while doing it.* USEXCO are at the Calton Studios, 24-26 Calton Street, 8-9pm, August 28-31. tickets £3.50 (£2.50 concessions). Tickets can be ordered with Visa and Access from 031 226 5138 or, after August 8th, from Calton Studios box office, 031 556 7066.

Other SF related events at the Fringe are: *Pardon me, is this Planet taken?* by the Edinburgh Players, a Star Trek type musical (Cameron House Community Centre, 7.45pm, August 12-24, tickets £4.50); *Love lies Bleeding* by

Kaleidoscope Theatre, more fantasy than SF really, with the tale of the Quest for the Grail (St. Martin's Church, Dairy Road, 8pm, August 17-24, £4); *When the Wind Blows*, stage version of Raymond Briggs' anti-nuclear cartoon by the Oxford based Odd Socks Theatre Company (Overseas House, 7pm, August 9-31, £4.50); and *Frankenstein and the Dormouse* where the Westbury Theatre Company concentrate on Mary Shelley, genius (Rockville House Hotel, 8.30pm, August 11-31, £4). Iain Banks and Douglas Adams are appearing at the Edinburgh Book Festival, which also has the exhibition *Strip Search 2*, which Andy Sawyer mentions later in this issue.

Friends of Foundation Science Fiction Day

This was well attended by around 50 people who enjoyed an informal programme of events to promote and support Foundation and the BSFA.

Roger Robinson welcomed the attendees and introduced the events before Paul Kinsaid, moderating from under a potted trifid, asked *Why SF?* of a "professionals" panel of Mary Gentle, Ben Jeapes and also David Pringle, who was then presented with an award from the Polish Eurocon to celebrate *Intersone* being voted the "best European SF magazine".

The fanzine panel, moderated by Rob Meades, appears to have discussed everything — conventions from Eroticon to the Wordcon, filking and, eventually, fanzines; then Collin Greenland read from *Take Back Plenty* before he was interviewed by Chris Amies and Colin speculated on the *Alice in Wonderland* theme running through several of his works and the different approach in writing short stories for the *Temps* and *Weerde* shared worlds anthologies.

Friends of Foundation would be grateful for photographs of authors and other prominent members in the SF field, to help them provide a full service to writers, researchers and others. If you have any photographs to donate, please include the subject(s), date and place of the photograph and the name of the photographer.

FoF will hold their AGM at Novacon in the first weekend of November. The con is held at the Excelior Hotel and will preferably be at a more congenial time than 9am on a Sunday morning. To show the dedication of FoF, however, there were some 70 people there last time, who had either set multiple alarm clocks or not gone to bed at all.

Space School

With 1992 being International Space Year, there is increasing interest in the Space School held annually at Brunel University. On Saturday 10th August, the public are invited to watch The Great Space Race: model rocket competition (details 895 71490) and people attending can learn about a huge variety of space related topics including Tom Becker on *Music of the space frontier*, Nick Larter on *Biospheres and the colonisation of space*, Prof. Ken Pounds on *The invisible universe* and Prof. Heinz Wolff claiming that *Space is good for you*. At a press conference there, astronaut Helen Sharman said that there was no sound in space except that generated by the spacecraft and that the stars looked like the (dense and even) splatter of specks of white paint (cast onto the floor from a plastic foam paint roller).

Courses

The City Illiterates are to celebrate 21 years of attending the Cock Tavern there on Friday 13th September, when they aim to have all class members and tutors present. The actual class will start on Friday, September 27 for two terms at 7.30pm at the City Literary Institute, Holborn, Stukeley Street. Brian Stableford has agreed to be tutor for the second year running.

Incidentally, Brian Stableford will also lead a Science Fiction and Fantasy writers' workshop at the University of Reading, commencing January 15, 1992 (details from Department of Extended Education, The University, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ, fee £23 for 10 meetings).

Terry Pratchett will lead a 5 day residential Science Fiction and Fantasy writing course November 25-30 at Fen Farm. Details from Sally Warboyes, 10 Angel Hill, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1UZ (Tel: 0379 898741).

New Books

Allen, Roger MacBride: *Orphan of Creation* [Orbit paperback, August, £4.50]. A paleontologist discovers the ultimate nightmare: bones of a creature which shouldn't have lived in that place or time. He continues to dig and ends up in the deepest forests of Western Africa, facing a miracle. This is being published jointly with Allen's *The Ring of Charon* in hardback.

Andrews, Graham: *Darkness Audible* [Excalibur, £3.99].

Anthony, Piers: *Virtual Mode* [HarperCollins C format £7.99]. This starts yet another new series.

Asimov, Isaac: *Forward the Foundation* [Doubleday hardback, October, £15.99]. Look to Hari Seldon for the novel to complete the Foundation series. Secrets have to be kept: the secret of Dors Vennabli, Seldon's wife, the secret of Eto Demerzel, a robot power behind the throne in a society where robots are officially dismissed as childhood fantasies. Their destinies entwine: will both manage to safeguard mankind's future?

Brust, Steven: *Brokendown Palace* [Pan Fantasy, November]. By the banks of the River Parie live four brothers and a hungry dragon (not to mention a goddess, a wizard and a stallion). So who was going to get the dragon food? **Chalker, Jack L.:** *Song of the Dancing Gods* [Orbit paperback, August, £4.50]. Latest of the *Dancing Gods* series. Two humans are in a fantasy world where magic works: things aren't doing what they ought to. Tiana has the body of an exotic dancer and the mind of a slave (with fulfillment?) and the protagonist Jack is having to work to hang onto his own soul.

Clarke, Arthur C. & Lee, Gentry: *Rama II* [Orbit paperback A format, August £4.99]. Sequel to *Rendezvous with Rama*. Both a possible picture of Earth 200 years into the future (comforting to know they think we will last that long) and an explanation of the spacecraft, *Rama II*.

Collins, Nancy: *Templer* [Futura & Sphere, paperback, £4.50].

Deakins, John: *Barrow* [Pan Fantasy, October]. Debut fantasy of wicked wizards and multi-limbed monsters, smugglers and seers. The author is a science teacher who loves SF and decided in 1982 that he could write better stuff than he was reading.

Dzorde, Gardner (ed.): *Best New SF 5* [Robinson paperback, August, £7.99]. Besides a summary of the year in SF and a list of recommended reading, there is work by Lucius Shepard, Bruce Sterling, Walter Jon Williams, James Patrick Kelly, Ursula K. LeGuin and Greg Egan.

Garnett, Dave (ed.): *New Worlds I* [Gollancz paperback, August, £4.99]. This includes a new story by Michael Moorcock.

Heinlein, Virginia (ed.): *Grumbles from the Grave* [Orbit paperback, August, £4.99]. Robert A. Heinlein had requested that a selection of his letters should be published post-humously and these letters, from 1939 on, are interesting for the scholar of his works. They are not, however, flattering to the author.

Knaak, Richard A.: *Dragonrealm 4* [Orbit paperback, September].

Preuss, Paul: *The Medusa Encounter* [Pan Science Fiction, October]. Special Investigator Sparta, who was featured in *Breaking Strain* and *Hide and Seek*, now attempts to find the truth about the final deadly voyage of the freighter *Star Queen*; also the truth about her own identity.

Shaw, Bob: *Orbitville Departure* [Orbit paperback, October].

Sutton, David & Jones, Stephen (eds.): *Dark Voices 3* [The Pan Book of Horror] [Pan Horror Original, October]. Horror's most sinister stars and nightmarish newcomers gather to draw you, the reader, into the darkest depths of dread.

Turner, V.: *Testimony of Daniel Pagels* [Macdonald Hardback, August £12.95].

Wylie, Jonathan: *Dream-Weaver* [Corgi Original paperback, August, £4.99]. After two trilogies, a big fantasy (and I mean big: 572pp).

Zelazny, Roger: *Knight of Shadows* [Orbit paperback, August £4.50]. Merlin is Corwin's son and he's carelessly lost two people he loves, one of whom, Julia, was murdered, but is now reincarnated as his enemy, the other is his father. Basically, Merlin has got to decide, just like everyone else, whether he's going to stick with Amber or get off to the Courts of Chaos.

Reprints

Anthony, Piers: *Dragon's Gold* [Grafton £3.99]. This is done in collaboration with Robert E. Margott and starts yet another new series.

Ballard, J.G.: *War Fever* [Paldin £4.99]. This coincides with the publication of *The Kindness of Women*, the sequel to *The Empire of the Sun*.

Beahm, George (ed.): *Stephen King Companion* [Futura & Sphere paperback £6.99].

Bear, Greg: *Queen of Angels* [Legend paperback £3.99]. Murder mystery in 2047AD.

Capek, Karl: *War of the News* [Picador, November]. Suddenly the news appeared from under the sea, wanting to exchange pearls for knives. Of course, they were initially exploited, but then they started to want equal opportunities and universal news suffrage.

Clarke, Arthur C.: *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* [Orbit paperback, September].

Eddings, David: *The Ruby Knight* [Grafton paperback, September £4.99]. Book 2 of *The Elenium* with the concluding volume *The Sapphire Rose* coming out simultaneously in hardback.

Fulton, Roger: *The Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction* [Boxtree paperback, £17.95]. A definitive A-Z of this subject including *Thunderbirds*, *Doctor Who*, *Star Trek* and *The Prisoner*.

Gay, Anne: *Mindail* [Orbit paperback September]. Fantasy to follow *The Brooch of Azure Midnight*. Karel, youngest member of an interplanetary combine called Spiderglass, has been manipulating the lives of two sisters — until the Gate is discovered and the rules are all changed.

Hardy, Phil (ed.): *The Aurum Science Fiction Film Encyclopedia* [Aurum Press hardback, October £25]. Plot summaries and complete statistical information to over 1450 films up to *RoboCop* and *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. There is much international information from France, Germany, Italy, Russia and Japan and also details of Oscar winners.

Koontz, Dean R.: *Shadowfires* [Headline £4.99].

Larson, Gary: *The Pre-History of the Far Side* [Futura & Sphere paperback, October, £7.99].

McCaffrey, Anne: *The Rowan* [Corgi paperback, September £3.99]; *Rowan in Flight* [Bantam C format paperback £7.99], with simultaneous publication of *All the Weyrs of Pern*, her new hardback.

Pratchett, Terry: *Wings* [Corgi paperback, £2.99]. Final part of children's trilogy.

Melville, Pauline: *Shape-shifter* [Picador £4.99]. Short stories which won the *Guardian* and *Silver Pen* prizes.

Rusdie, Salman: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* [Penguin Granta paperback, August £4.99].

Vance, Jack: *Lyonesse III: Madouc* [Grafton paperback, August £4.99].

Wilson, Robert Charles: *The Divide* [Orbit paperback, October].

Wingrove, David: *The Broken Wheel* [NEL paperback, September, £4.99]. Book 2 of the *Chung Kuo* saga, book 3 coming in hardback simultaneously.

It's not quite SF, but ...

Baxter, Glen: *The Billiard Table Murders* [Picador, October]. Gladys Chabington Morton aims to spread her wings having schemed to blast off the choirmaster's tomes during the final bars of *Jerusalem*. A detective spoof by an expert and sophisticated comic picture raconteur. Watch out for the picture whose slogan is *His career in wildlife photography was, however, short-lived*. **Gray, Alasdair:** *Something Leather* [Picador £5.99] and also a reprint of *Landark* [Paldin £6.99].

Stewart, Michael: *Birthing* [Fontana paperback, £4.50]. Chilling tale concerning the discovery of a Neanderthal boy.

Tarkovsky, Andrey: *Time with Time* [Seagull Books, Calcutta, £25]. His diaries printed by letter press and hand bound in Calcutta, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair, who also translated his *Sculpting in Time* [Faber paperback].

Obituaries

Michael Wall, playwright and writer, died in London on June 11. BBC viewers were not able to see his play *Headcrash*, a futuristic fantasy about a young man on the run because of the violent imagery: the BBC's loss. But there was a chance to watch *Eric Crab's Terrible German Experience*, about a totally ordinary boy who ate obsessively until he turned, quite irrevocably, into Germany. He said once that he tickled like a bomb and that he would explode one day: his ideas clashed with excitement, he explored the failures of communication between people who are just trying to understand each other. Although his terminal illness was diagnosed shortly after his daughter's birth, he kept on ticking while he could.

Milton Subotsky, producer and screenwriter, died in early July. Although he may be remembered for *Dr. Who are the Daleks and Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150AD*, he would probably prefer to be remembered for founding Amicus Productions with Max J. Rosenberg and popularising the "anthology" horror film with examples like *Horror Hotel* (1959) and *Scream and Scream Again* (1970). He chose the collected works of Ambrose Bierce for his contribution to *Horror: 100 Best Books* and at the time of his death, was considering a project based on the writings of Manly Wade Wellman.

James Franciscus, actor and film producer, died in Los Angeles on July 8. He starred in *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1969), *Marooned* (1969) as one of the three astronauts stranded in space, *The Valley of the Gwangi* (1969) where he battled with prehistoric monsters — it was a busy year for him — and in *When Time Ran Out* (1980). His part there was fine, but the movie will be remembered as probably the worst disaster movie ever.

Promotions

This is the season for the *Sunday Times*/Black Swan Literary Quiz. The actual quiz will appear in the August 25 issue, but there will be plenty of hype fore and aft.

The VG Graphics list [Gollancz] is launched with simultaneous hardback and paperback publications of *Alan Moore's A Small Killing*, illustrated by Oscar Zarate [£8.99 reprints] and M. John Harrison's *The Luck in the Head* illustrated by Ian Miller.

It's unbelievably 25 years since *Star Trek* started to go to places men did not go to and there will be extensive press coverage as for September 16, also the publication of the sequel to *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* by Margaret Wander Bonanno. Other *Trek* novels reissued will be *Spock's World* [£10.95], *Prime Directive* [£13.99] and *Lost Years* [£12.95]. 17 tapes will be published including: *Probe: ST-TNG: Vendetta*; *Strangers from the Sky*; *Web of the Romulans*; *Yesterday's Son*; *Gulliver's Fugitive* and *Prime Directive*. In a parallel celebration, the National Irish Star Trek Society are holding a convention in Athlone from September 6th to 8th. Details from Damon Wise, 4 Liff, Tullyglass, Shannon, Co. Clare.

The Dream [Park] is Alive?

Theme parks are all pretty normal now, with Camelot, Disneyland, the American Adventure — but there are plans to make a new theme park, a melding of high technology and theatre, a real Dream Park. Every time you read "Dream Park" in this item, remember that there ought to be a "TM" immediately following it, because words like "Dream Park", "The Barnstorm Project" or "The California Voodoo Game" are trademarks owned by Larry Niven and Steven Barnes, Tower of Night Inc. and can only be used under licence.

The idea is that you come with a group via the Dream Park Shuttle. At Admissions, you will cash some money for gold pieces which can pay for costumes. The simple staff is included with the admission fee, but if you want anything more than a tunic, a greek tunic, a futuristic jumpsuit, fine. It is extra. There is a brief indoctrination on the Dream Park Rules of Interaction (briefly, physical contact is not allowed) before you can pass through the medieval town on the Dream Park Museum of Fantasy and Mythology. Gaming area C has an African mythos game running, Gaming Area B has live-scale games, maybe the Inca game, maybe the Mekong River Delta game, played continuously through the night, where participants can sleep under the stars.

Perhaps tomorrow you will spend a quiet afternoon in the Virtual Reality parlour where you can seem to walk alone in the American West, communing with a buffalo. Or a jackrabbit. Or why not have a drink in a tavern at night — stop by at a Weapons Rental shop, just in case you feel like a bit of interaction.

The idea is that Dream Park will be the ultimate playground for the over one million roleplayers in the US and abroad; and it will have a Semester At Dream Park (remember the TM) college-accredited drama program to populate the park and staff the games. Swords are available right now, and long staves, vials, scimitars, throwing stars, polearms and repair kits should be available later in 1991. Parts of the Park may be demonstratable by late 1991, but get details first from: Dream Park Corporation, 4251 Ponderosa Ct., Boulder, CO 80301, USA.

Bookselling in the Recession

John Horloran, chief executive of BPCC (Britain's largest printer) says: *This is the worst time I have seen for 15 years ... everything is down to hand to mouth for both new titles and reprints.* Richard Joseph, Managing Director of the London-based bookshop, *Books Etc.* is not taking the recession lying down. *You have to fight for every sale — we're not accepting the bad times* he says and claims that his staff will aim for good customer service through greater knowledge of the book trade. The days of *If it's not on the shelf, we don't have it* are over. Or are they? A Ms. Harriet Houtley of Englefield Green made a special trip into London in the Spring to buy a paperback published in March. Fourteen shops later, she had a full quiver of excuses from Selfridges, Waterstones, W.H. "I'd check the microfiche, but it's not working" Smith, Foyles ("It's up to the rep. to stock the shelves"), Hatchards and Dillons.

She could, of course, have tried an independent bookshop. With high rents and the general movement of the retail industry towards bigger chain stores,

independents are making *drowning squawks* as the Hitchen Bookshop in Hitchen put it and most would agree that *Customer service is a basic necessity of survival*, which is what Matthew Huntley of P&G Wells, Winchester said, backed up by Mark Warner of Bookmark, Norwich and The Colophon Bookshop in Wallingford.

And yet Peter Else, from Braithwaites Books (a branch of which has just shut down) in Leeds, says *What is wrong ... to suggest a customer check the shelves?* What is wrong is that customers are paying for a product and even the tolerant British may eventually decide that they have a right to good service or even some service at all. *I've had it with customers!* rages Peter Else. He may find that the customers, who ultimately pay his wages, will soon have had it with him (see previous bracket).

People

Iain Banks, when interviewed by *Imagination* magazine, said that he doubted that he wrote the sort of fiction that Americans wanted to read: *They want more positive upbeat things and killing off the main character at the end of the book — "oh my God, how are they going to complete the trilogy?" — "well, funny enough it's a new concept called the novel". I just don't think I'm compatible with the American reading public.* Orbit are publishing Iain Banks' latest novel *Against a Dark Background* as a paperback in September 1992.

Dave V. Barrett, former *Vector* editor, surveyed computer books for the July edition of *British Book News* and concluded with Geoff Watson's comic strip published as *Down with Computers!* (Ravette Books 1988, £1.95 pb). He also mentioned his own anthology, *Digital Dreams* and claimed that one critic's reaction to it was *I never knew there were so many ways of hating computers.*

John Brunner is working on *Fair Cruelty* for Avon books. It's taking longer than anticipated because the characters are taking over and making it longer than planned. He has also sold a "posthumous collaboration with Sakai", called *The History of my Aunt to Pulphouse.*

Ettore Caporali, Italian translator of *The Satanic Verses* was beaten and stabbed at his home in Milan in early July by an Iranian man claiming to have lost Salman Rushdie's address; the Japanese translator doesn't seem to have been luckier either — he was attacked in the street for the same reason.

Kathy Gale has moved from Pan to The Women's Press where she will be on the board and also publishing director. Her appointment started on June 17 and it will be interesting to see how she integrates her speciality of picking commercial SF with the mainstream list of The Women's Press. She is replaced at Pan by Bill Fletcher.

Terry Pratchett, when interviewed in *Imagination* magazine (obviously an interesting magazine — I sure liked reading it) revealed that in the States the artists are deliberately not allowed to read the book when they illustrate the title, then adds *I remember getting a large colour photo of the "Mort" cover and I just sat and looked, and said this was one hell of a good cover. Not only because of the design, but every character was more or less as I had imagined them all and after that point I find it impossible to imagine them as anything else.*

H.G. Wells is the subject of a major article in the August *Book and Magazine Collector*. Apparently he described the short story collection *The Country of the Blind* as *all the short stories I would care for anyone to read again*; one of his favourite books was *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. A close (unnamed) friend once said that Wells thought up the plot in the Tottenham Court Road on a Bank Holiday when he was in a mood of discontent.

Tad Williams, who lives in California where he has adequate peace and quiet to concentrate on his writing, will have a new edition of *Tailchaser's Song* published by Legend in November. His current trilogy, *To Green Angel Tower*, will be published in October 1992.

Catalogues

Special Collector's Catalogue of SF, Fantasy and Horror (Ken Cowley, 153 Old Church Road, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7TU). This catalogue concentrates on Anthologies, many of them dating back 40 years or so. Ken is particularly careful with his books, so most are in good condition and his prices are reasonable, because he needs the space. Practically all are first printings. Ken welcomes wants lists, but they must be accompanied by a s.a.c. A quick glimpse reveals Dann & Dozoi's *Magical!* (18 feline fantasies incl. Stephen King's "The Cat from Hell"); Pamela Sargeant's *Bio-futures* (tales about biological

metamorphosis, including a reading list); *New Writings in Science Fiction*, all 30 issues of the anthology series edited by John Carnell and Kenneth Bulmer, published 1964-77.

Dreamberry Wine (Mike Don, 233 Maine Road, Manchester M14 7WG). This catalogue is mostly used books, normally in good condition. Examples at random are: Joe Haldeman, *all my Sins Remembered* (Orbit 1978) for £1; William Morris, *The Wood beyond the World* (Ballantine UK 1971) for £1.50; Harlan Ellison, *Dangerous Visions*, 1, 2, 3 (Berkeley 1969, Sphere 1974) from 80p to £2.

Magazines

CTC publications are to launch a major new SF magazine this autumn and are searching for high quality innovative stories. They could be about asteroid mining, cyberpunk, mad robots or even homicidal aliens — no matter, the main aim is to excite the potential readers, provided they don't have to read more than 6000 words. Details to: Charlie Rigby, Cover2 Cover Publications, Tailby House, Bath Road/Digby Street, Kettering, Northants. NN16 8NL.

Aslan Studios are to launch a new SF magazine called *Sound SF: The Tape Magazine*. Neville Barnes and Paul Beardsley will produce a 90 minute audiocassette with new material on an emphasis on sound — maybe straightforward reading of stories, maybe performances of plays, complete with sound effects and incidental music. A "zerot" issue should be available, priced £2 from Neil Barnes, Aslan Studios Ltd, Paravel House, Loxwood Chase, Guildford Road, Loxwood, West Sussex RH14 0QW. It will include work from *Auriges* and will aim to gauge public interest in this project.

Anthony North Enterprises have announced publication of several new magazines: *Scribbler's News*, planned as a bi-monthly writers' news magazine; *Gaea News*, a bi-monthly environmental/new age newsletter and *The Fireside Philosopher and Rattler's Tales* which will be quarterly printing SF, crime fiction and horror along with articles.

Highlights of upcoming SF magazines are: **Loin McMaster Bujold** *Barraquer Part IV* in the October *Analogue* (*Part III* is in the September *Analogue* with Isaac Asimov goal); **Kerlin J. Anderson** *Beating Warheads into Plowshares*; and **Jula Echlur** *Sweet Disorder* among others; **Connie Willis** *Jack* in the October *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*; plus **Jerry Oltion** & **Lee Goodloe** *Contact*, **Robert R. Chase** *The Shrieking of the Nightingale* and **Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff** *Home is Where ...* in the November *Analogue*.

The September *Fantasy and Science Fiction* catalogues interesting, with **Brian Stableford** *The Invisible Worm*; **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *Dancers Like Children*; an article by **Isaac Asimov** called *SCIENCE: Something for Nothing* and more. However, in November, *Fantasy and Science Fiction* celebrate their 42nd anniversary with a cover by **Bryn Barnard**, based on a story by **Carolyn Ives Gilman**. The contents will include work by **Mike Resnick**, **Marck Laidlaw**, **Bradley Denton**, **Sheri Tepper**, **Paul DeFilippo**, **Ray Aldridge** and **Jane Yolen**. November's *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* will also be a special issue: double-sized, with **Isaac Asimov's** first *Foundation* novella for years, *Forward the Foundation*.

Other magazines to look out for are the September-October *Aboriginal Science Fiction* which features **Phil Jennings** *The Larkie*; **Nina Krid Hoffman** *The Coming of the New Messiah* and **Ann K. Schwader** *Neighborhood Watch* and the summer edition of *Quantum*, which has **Norman Spinrad** on why SF is important in our society and an interview with **Ray Bradbury**.

SF Radio

The World Service has some surprisingly interesting programmes. Captain Scott and I travelled through the endless ice wastes recently when I couldn't sleep well, and the September programme includes several programmes by **John Gribbin** who explores recurring themes in SF to discover where science ends and fantasy begins. The programmes are: *Back to the Future* (is time travel possible) 2nd September; *Beyond Evolution* (creating new life) 9th September; *Reach for the Stars* (faster than the speed of light?) 16th September; *The Living Dead* (suspended animation) 23rd September; *Robots at Large* (machines with minds of their own) 30th September; *Searching for ET: Where are the Aliens* 7th October. The programmes will be on Mondays 2315, repeated on Wednesdays 0815, 1515.

Look out for *The War of the Worlds* too. In 1938 when it was dramatised on radio, the voice of Orson Welles caused listeners to flee their homes in panic.

Now it is read by **Simon Ward**, abridged in eight parts by John Scotney and will be broadcast between 9th and 18th September.

If you prefer fantasy, why not listen to **Ray Bradbury's** *The Golden Apples of the Sun*? The book is adapted for radio by Laurence Gilbert and produced by Peter Hutchings, broadcast on Thursdays from 5th September at 1130, repeated 1715, Fridays 0230. The schedule is 5th September *The Golden Apples of the Sun* and *Hail and Farewell*; 12th September *The Flying Machine* and *The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl*; 19th September *A Sound of Thunder* and *The Murderer* and 26th September *The April Witch* and *The Fog Horn*.

Book Fairs

There are more book fairs than usual in the summer season. Some may only have second hand books, others may have vintage paperbacks: it is a gigantic lucky dip. But, with luck, there might be one near you.

ABINGDON: August 25. The Abbey Hall, Guildhall 10.30am-4.30pm.
BATH: August 7 — monthly book market. The Old Sessions Room, The Guildhall, 10am-4pm. Details Gerry Mossell 0364 62182.
BURY ST. EDMONDS: August 17. Athenium Hall, Angel Hill 10am-5pm.
CAMBRIDGE: August 28. Cambridge Market, Fisher Hall, Guildhall Place 10am-5pm.

CHELMSFORD: Book Fair. August 10 and 17 and 24 and 31. Shire Hall; also August 17-18. Essex Co. Cricket Ground, New Write Street; also August 31-September 1. Duke of Wellington, Hatfield Peveral. Details 0243 381597.

CHESTER: August 23-24. The Town Hall Friday noon to 6pm, Saturday 10am-5pm. Details Kent Nielson 0948 2493.

CLEVEDON: August 26. Clevedon Community Centre 10am-5pm.
CLITHEROE: August 24. St. Mary Magdalene Church Hall 10am-4.30pm.

DORCHESTER: August 18. Kingston Maurward Agricultural College 10.30am-5pm.

EDINBURGH: August 5-31. Adams House, Chambers Street 10am-6pm, except opens on noon on August 5.

ELVASTON: August 17-18. Elvaston Castle, Country Park, Derby (A6) Noon — 7pm on the first day, 10am-5pm on the second.

FARNHAM MALTINGS: September 15. Maltings, Bridge Square, Farnham, Surrey 10.30am-4.30pm. 50p admission.

KEMPTON: September 22. Silver Ring, The Racecourse, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex 10.30am-4.30pm. 50p admission.

LAKENHEATH: August 24-25. RAF Lakenheath Open Day, Suffolk 10am-4pm.

LEAMINGTON SPA: August 10. Royal Spa Centre 10am-4pm. Details 0533 712589.

LEEDS: October 6, December 1. Pudsey Civic Hall. Details 0532 632466; also August 18. Corn Exchange 10am-5.30pm. Details 0274 681177.

LONDON: August 11-12. Hotel Russell, Russell Square, WC1 2-7pm on the first day, 10.30am-7pm on the second; also August 20. London City Market, St. Olav's Parish Hall, Mark Lane, EC3 10am-6pm; also August 23, Camden Lock, New Market Hall 11am-5pm; also Bloomsbury 2nd Sunday of each month. Tavistock Hotel, Tavistock Place, WC1 10am-5pm. 50p admission; also August 14 and 28. St. Botolph's Hall, Bishopgate, EC2 10am-4pm; also September 7. UK Vintage Paperback and Pulp Bookfair 9am-5pm. Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria. £1 admission. Details 0373 865371.

NEW FOREST: August 26. Lyndhurst Park Hotel, High Street, Lyndhurst 10.30am-5pm.

NORWICH: August 30-31. St. Andrews Hall noon-7pm on the first day, 10am-5pm on the second.

SCARBOROUGH: August 31. Central Public Library, Vernon Road 10am-4pm.

SYON PARK: September 1. Conference Centre, Syon Park, Brentford, Middlesex 10.30am-4.30pm. 50p admission.

TRURO: August 16-17. City Hall 2-8pm on the first day, 10am-5pm on the second.

WINCHESTER: August 10. The Guildhall 10.30am-4.30pm.

US Publishing

Just for a change, here are the highlights of books being published during July, August and September. The source catalogues were provided by **Dave Hodson** of White Light Books Limited, PO Box 1872, London N17 6PZ, who is a professional bookseller.

Anthologies: *Isaac Asimov's Robots* (\$4.50) — ed. Gardner Dozois and Sheila Williams. Robot stories from Isaac Asimov, Connie Willis, Tanith Lee etc.; *The Bradbury Chronicles* (\$19.95 hardcover) — stories in honour of Ray Bradbury including contributions from Gregory Benford, Orson Scott Card, F.

Paul Wilson, Richard Matheson; *Leroni of Darkover* (\$4.99) — ed. Marion Zimmer Bradley and The Friends of Darkover. All original anthology of the legend and lore of Darkover; *Dead End: City Limits* (\$19.95 Tor/St. Martins) — 20 tales of urban horror from John Shirley, Melissa M. Hall, Charles de Lint, Lawrence Watt-Evans and others; *Grand Masters' Choice* (\$3.99 Tor/St. Martins) — ed. Andre Norton. SF stories originally published to commemorate the 50th World SF Convention, from Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Clifford Simak, Fritz Leiber, Andre Norton and others; *Robert Warriors* (\$4.50) — ed. Martin H. Greenberg. 8 tales by authors like Keith Laumer, Fred Saberhagen and Philip K. Dick; *Walls of Fear* (\$4.99 Avon) ed. Kathryn Kramer. Horror stories by Chet Williamson, Edward Bryant, Sharon Baker, Gene Wolfe and others; *Power* (Pocket/Baen \$4.50) ed. S.M. Stirling. Stories starting from the premise of the discovery of a cheap, plentiful source of immense power from Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, Ben Bova, Jerry Pournelle and David Drake; *The Best of Pulphouse: the Hardback Magazine* (Tor/St. Martins \$22.95 hardcover) — ed. Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Short fiction which pushes the boundaries of SF and horror from Edward Bryant, Nancy A. Collins, Greg Egan, Harlan Ellison, Kathe Koja, Susan Palwick, Jane Yolen and others; *Isaac Asimov's Mars* (Ace/Berkeley/Dell \$4.99) ed. Gardner Dozois — stories including "All the Beer in Mars" (Gregory Benford), "Live from the Mars Hotel" (Allen M. Steele) and "Why Mars needs Beatiniks" (George Alec Effinger).

And now a selection in more or less alphabetical order: *Piers Anthony Question Quest* (Avon \$4.99) — latest volume in the *Xanth* series where Lucius is 34 and doesn't like being grown up, so she goes to Hell to find Humfrey, the Missing Sorcerer and, incidentally, his wife, Lois McMaster Bujold *Barravarr* (Pocket/Baen \$4.99) — the bridge between *Shards of Honour* and the Miles Vorlogian saga; *John Cramer Twister* (Avon \$3.99). Industrial espionage and interdimensional intrigue by the science columnist for *Analog*; *Jack Chalker The 90 Trillion Faults* (Ace/Berkeley/Dell \$18.95 hardcover). In the conclusion to *The Quintara Marathon*, the three galactic teams have emerged from the demon cave with the sort of magnified paranormal abilities needed to fight the demons of Quintara; *Arthur C. Clarke & Gentry Lee The Garden of Rama* (Bantam/Spectra \$20 hardcover) — continuation of the saga of alien intelligence begun with *Rendezvous with Rama*; *Tom Deitz Soulmith* (Avon \$4.99). This is the first volume in a new fantasy trilogy where apparently luck was his heritage ... and his curse; *Philip Joe Farmer Escape from Lohi* (Bantam/Dell \$4.50) — Doc Savage's youthful adventures as an Allied pilot and agent during World War I; *Harry Harrison Bill, the Galactic Hero: On the Planet of Ten Thousand Bars* (Avon \$3.99) — after his escape from the *Planet of the Zombie Vampires*, Bill, naturally, needs a drink; *James P. Hogan Entovorse* (Del Rey \$18.95 hardcover). This is the latest volume in the *Giant* series of "hard" SF.

Charles Ingrid Radin of *Doubt* (Daw \$4.99) — first book in a new SF series, *The Patterns of Chaos*. Only the *Choyans* could navigate starships at faster than light speed through the "patterns of chaos" that filled the voids between the galaxies; *J.W. Jeter Madlands* (Tor/St. Martins \$18.95 hardcover). The author is quoted as having the brain burned intensity of his mentor, Philip K. Dick; *Tanith Lee, Black Unicorn* (Houghton Mifflin \$14.95 hardcover). This is her new fantasy novel; *Stephen Leigh & Rudy Rucker Alien Tongue* (Bantam/Dell \$4.99). First volume in *The Next Wave* series; while Stephen Leigh examines the prime question of SF—first contact, Rudy Rucker looks at the latest developments in the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence; *Fritz Leiber The Green Millennium* (Macmillan/Collier \$4.95). This appears to be a wacky film noir adventure set in an uncertainty intriguing version of a future city; *Ann McCaffrey Damia* (Ace/Berkeley/Dell \$19.95 hardcover 336pp) — the second volume in the *Rowan* trilogy; *Pegasus in Flight* (Del Rey \$5.99) which is the sequel to her novel of telepathy, *To Ride Pegasus*.

Larry Niven *Playgrounds of the Mind* (\$33.95 Tor/St. Martins hardcover) — a sequel to *N-Space*, a collection of short stories, gossip and anecdotes covering the second half of Niven's career; **Frederik Pohl and Jack Williamson** *Singers of Time* (Spectra \$4.99). Benevolent aliens called Turtles have taken over the earth: but then the "Mother" Turtle disappears. Mankind is enlisted to make a quick rescue; *Jerry Pournelle & S.M. Stirling The Children's Hour* (Baen \$4.99) — a novel of the Man-Kzin wars — portions of this feline saga have been published before; **Mike Resnick** *Soothsayer* (Ace \$4.50) — this returns to the world of *Santiago* and the Los Angeles Times describes it as thought-provoking, imaginative ... galactically grand; **Anne Rice** *The Mummy (or Ramzes the Damned)* (Ballantine \$5.99). *The Vampire Lestat* comic is based on Rice's work and this elegantly erotic and sensual blend of romance and horror is aimed at an adult audience; **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** *The White Mists of Power* (Roc \$3.99), an epic fantasy where a bard is questing for his stolen heritage.

Norman Spinrad *Russian Spring* (Bantam/Dell \$21.50 hardcover). This is 576 pages of 21st Century politics where a resurgent Russian has combined with

the European community to outdistance the US in space exploration. The only way engineer Jerry Reed can get up into space is to give up his US citizenship; **Allen Steele** *Lunar Descent* (Ace \$4.99) — working conditions on the Moon just keep deteriorating in this new novel by one of the hottest writers of hard SF on the scene today; **Christopher Stashfield Warlock and Son (Ace \$4.50) — action by the Warlock's children now; **Sherril S. Tepper** *Raising the Stones* (Bantam/Spectra \$4.50) — moving tale of a man coming to accept his role in a future universe and saving his world from invasion; **Jack Vance** *Ecce and Old Earth* (Tor/St. Martins \$21.95 hardcover) — the second novel in a hard SF trilogy which started with *Araminta Station*; **Michael Williams** *A Forest Lord* (Questar \$4.50) — 2nd volume in epic fantasy trilogy, *From Thief to King*.**

Clubs Column

Tommy Ferguson

In this column, I'm going to talk about specific clubs: the club I started when I first took over this column and the Forth group in Edinburgh. The differences are nearly as startling as the similarities, but the most important difference is that the Forth group meets in a pub in Cockburn Street (phone Keith Mitchell 031 553 5478 for details), whereas The Garrett occurs at my home (phone me 0232 244322 Ext 309 work for details). Needless to say, anyone will be welcome at either group.

When I first started the Garrett, I wanted as many people as possible to get involved with it; I had set topics for different nights, videos, talks and the like. After this programme was exhausted, nearly two months later, and the numbers hadn't got above three (including myself), I realised that I was flogging a dead horse with this idea. After that, I invited local fans and people who turned up at the other regular Belfast group, The White's Tavern. After a few meetings featuring these people, the Garrett has settled down into a group who know each other, get on relatively well and enjoy being together for the fun and good times. Not what I'd originally intended, but I cut my losses. This is where the Forth group comes on the scene.

Forth is a well established group and is well into the stage that the Garrett has just begun to approach: a settled rhythm where you know there is a good time ahead, with people you can relate to and talk to and, no matter what else happens, there is a welcome waiting for you. I knew some of the faces from cons, but sat at the bar for a while to see who else would come and the general atmosphere of the meeting. Okay, I was nervous as hell.

The group is above all a social occasion, very little to do with SF or even fandom as a whole — this is the most important fact to note about SF groups — they are about interacting with people and with SF merely a topic to fall back on to generate new members/get people interested/advertise their group. It is because of this that first approaching a group can be a most daunting experience: just what do you say to all these people who obviously have been coming here for years and know what it is all about? They're not talking about any SF you know about and you've missed all that has gone on before. What do you do?

I refer back to previous articles about the responsibility of the group to bring in new members or let people who are interested become more relaxed and enthusiastic about the group. It takes time and effort but some of the new people who have become regulars at both The Garrett and at The White's Tavern Group are proved themselves well worth that initial effort.

Both of these groups epitomise one thing about SF groups as a whole: once you've got that initial barrier broken, they are tremendous fun; even more side-splittingly funny than your average Terry Pratchett novel. Even though I only dropped in on one Forth meeting, the topic creating most amusement was that of using the excess energy in the body generated by drinking a lot of alcohol and it was so soundly expounded upon that my sides had cramps from the laughter. At that meeting, and at others of The Garrett, I felt completely relaxed, comfortable and in turn with what was going on; it only took that initial push on my part for a world of wonderful experiences, good friends and great times to be dropped at my feet. Go on, try it; you'll never be the same once you do.

Since I last wrote, I've had some excellent replies to my article on a possible Clubs network. At the moment, I'm still taking in the various details, ideas and suggestions that have been put forward and trying to think of an appropriate response: should it be in these pages, as a discussion-cum-newsletter or perhaps even a mixture of both? The prospect that other people are as enthusiastic about the idea as me, though, is thrilling and spurs me on to further efforts.

Thoughts on the Clubs Network

Maureen Speller

I think that there are two things that a Clubs Network could very usefully devote itself to in the short term. The first is to produce a guide of some sort for people who want to start a group. I was sometimes asked for advice on doing just this, and I think there is still a degree of interest among BSFA members to have local meetings, although too often this seemed to consist of them assuming that the BSFA would provide a kind of kit club and then run it for them. As you probably know, I was never very keen on the idea of regional BSFA meetings as such, partly because too often it was assumed that the Committee would do everything including conjuring a membership of fifty out of thin air and partly because I didn't feel it was right to tread on the toes of existing local groups by setting up in opposition, and mostly because BSFA members are so comparatively thin on the ground, that the group would probably die before it had even got going. (I remember a younger Kev McVeigh deciding to start a group somewhere and then complaining because only six people turned up. He got that many, I thought. And of course, because he imagined more from the start, he didn't persevere and the group died to the extent that two years later, when a new group started, they didn't know that anyone had been there before them).

I could see a guide to running a group which would be based on actual experience rather than a list of what you need to do — find a room, etc. That's easy, but it doesn't take into account the fact that groups don't instantly coalesce, that some pubs work, others don't, all sorts of things. And a guide like this could and should be coupled with a directory of what groups are where, to avoid toes being trodden on unless the interests are so divergent. I'd like to see a Societies directory which covered this, and media groups, and appropriate literary societies and groups of related interest. I tried, not entirely successfully, to promote this when I edited *Matrix*. Again, I saw it as part of the service of providing information so that people could find something that suited them. There was an attempt in 1987, by Pam Wells, for the Worldcon. It was tolerably successful, but was then passed on to the Marphi people (a Newcastle SF group), since when neither sight nor sound has been heard of it. It's probably also very much out of date.

News from the Clubs

Dates to note for the **Birmingham Group** are: September 20 **Anne Gay**; October 18 **Ken Campbell**. Both of the above will take place at 7.45pm at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street — in Birmingham's "China Town". The November 15 meeting will be the annual debate with the University and the Christmas meal will be on December 20 at the Wagon and Horses, Oldbury. Anyone in or around Birmingham may also be interested in a showing of *2010* on September 7 at the Cannon Cinema, John Bright Street, in celebration of the National Astronomy and Spaceflight Show '91.

NORTH CHESHIRE SCIENCE FICTION GROUP. This has been formed by the recent merger of the Chester & Warrington groups and meet on the first and third Thursday of each month at The Hollow Tree on the A49 about 100m south of Junction 10 on the M56. Lifts can be arranged from Warrington and Chester and new blood is always welcome, even if it is only a pint or two. Details from John Weston (0925 52034).

NORWICH SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY GROUP. This group is now run by Ken Shin and one Mr. Paul Curtis. Paucity of Lewis, the original president, voluntarily "stepped down" and passed the post to us in 1990. It remains, as ever, a friendly and informal discussion/meeting group for anyone interested in SF, Fantasy, Horror ... you name it, we talk about it. We meet every second Wednesday at The Lawyer, Magdalen Street, Norwich. Details from Ken Shin, 9a Howard Terrace, Sussex Street, Norwich (Tel: 0603 762966).

SIX OF ONE have groups all over the UK, like Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Harrogate, Liverpool and London and can be contacted at: Six of One, PO Box 60, Harrogate.

THE INSTITUTE FOR IMPURE SCIENCE (IFIS) meets at the Royal Ascp pub every Thursday night from 8pm onwards. Details from Daniel Celano, Department of Physics, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX.

S4 (The Strathclyde Space and Science Fiction Society) has occasional guest authors like **Iain Banks** as well as an annual picnic. There are over 100 members, with a small regular core and they meet on Wednesdays at 6pm at the Mandela Bar, Strathclyde University Union. Details from S4, c/o Clubs and Societies, The Union, 90 John Street, Glasgow G1. (Tel: 041 552 1895).

Rutz, or How the Zebra Got His Spots

Chuck Connor

I can still remember the first SF book I, personally, chose off the East Suffolk County School Library shelves, mainly because, according to the marker sheet, I should've returned it on or before the 22nd January 1972.

Sinful, isn't it? No, not the theft of the book, but the fact that quite a few of you reading this probably weren't even *apoptozoa* then.

Whatever, the book was *Catsy* by Andre Norton, and although I remember being entranced by it at the time (though disgusted with the crude cover — 1962, Gollancz, Alan Brees), I never got to re-reading it at all as by the time I'd tasted that I had moved on to other, more exotic things. Things such as William F. Nolan's *Space for Hire* (which I quoted from in my final English exam, along with Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, another excellent book), some French satirical thing called *The Machine-Gun Post* (published by Signet or Lancer, it is something I still search for to this very day) and a brand new (for the extortionate sum of 35p as well) copy of *Towards Infinity* (Pan, edited by Damon Knight).

I make no bones about it, I bought the book because I fell in love with the cover. It gave me that initial jolt of *Sensawunda*, the first high that sends you craving for more, even though you will never attain such an emotional peak again. I wanted to know about the crashed spaceship with its odd perspectives and mute colours; I wanted to know what it was like there, what the planet was like, and, above all, whether the crew had survived or not because, for some reason, I got the feeling that this wreck had been disused for a very long time.

And I read, and re-read, and re-re-re-re-re-read the stories within, transported to other worlds, different times, crazy technology and imagery that simply never existed in the world in which I was a part of.

Oh, sure, yeah, we had the first manned moon landings, seen in black & white on an old tv. We had the first heart transplant as well as the Olympic Games from some unknown place, giving us the miracle of tv at the ungodly hour of 4 or 5 am. Hell, we even had re-runs of *My Favourite Martian*!

But what we didn't have was the likes of Sturgeon's *Man who lost the sea*, Campbell's *Who goes there* (well, how did we know that BBC's late night movies would include *The Thing* for N-cubed many screenings?), William H. Shiras' *In Hiding* or A.E. Van Vogt's *Resurrection*.

They were the unreality that I used to dull the pain of being trapped in what was, and still is in many respects, a tiny town with a village mentality. A place where you couldn't even do anything because nothing existed — which was why we took to cycling and also Saturday trips on the trains. That was, of course, before the fares went up and the services went down.

It was that mentality which made one obnoxious little dork ask the three of us if we ever managed to get to tv reception out where we were (all three of us lived in the back of beyond, in the wilds of the country). Oh, my, how he laughed at his little joke. And how we laughed when we dropped a condom full of water onto his head — something we had found out about by reading *Science Fiction Monthly* and their report on the making of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. That magazine was good for something after all.

The last time I read *Towards Infinity* from front to back cover was in the summer of 1974 — a hazy time remembered through drinking bottles of warm white wine, smoking Russian Black cigarettes, picking fruit for money, and going into Lowestoft by train on Saturday mornings so as to buy secondhand records and look through Carr's dirty bookshop for American '50s SF paperbacks (an awful lot of imported SF used to come in from the tawlers and cargo vessels) with spaceships on front covers which had been coloured in by totally blind guide dogs.

The old boy behind the counter used to make sure that we kept away from the plastic bagged copies of *Mayfair*, *Fiesta*, *Colour Climax* and *Playboy* — all of which held little interest for me after I found copies of Philip Jose Farmer's *An Exorcism: Ritual One* in a battered import edition.

He was a nice enough old cove, and once he realised that we were only abusing his SF stock, as opposed to abusing ourselves, then he used to hold stuff back for us. We would repay his kindness by returning the ones we didn't enjoy — mainly because you got money back, which allowed you to buy some

more, which, in their turn, would get recycled and sometimes re-read when memory failed or the covers proved too irresistible.

Then you could hold all the books I'd read and kept in the palms of both hands without straining yourself. Delany's *Nova* and *Einstein Intersection*, Miles Donis' *The Fall of New York*, Vincent King, Mick Farren, Shekley, Dick, Stableford, Edmund Cooper and Lupoff's *One Million Centuries*.

And in there is still that copy of *Towards Infinity*. Battle scarred and creased from being rammed into trouser and coat pockets, stained with strawberry juice and marked by a cheap brown paper bag that got soaked in a storm as I was cycling back home from the train station.

Looking at the contents listing, I can see nine now-familiar names, several of whom I now avoid like the plague, and nine stories that groan, creak, and shift with age and implausibility — their copyright statements proclaiming their ages, some from before the Second World War, others from just after it.

And despite the fact that SF has given way to many other genres, I can still take that book from the shelf, open it anywhere, and pick up the story in an instant, like aged friends, talking over old times, in the twilight hours of the day.

Yet I can look at that cover, and, just for an instant, just for that tiny, flickering spark-like second of a battery finally giving up the last of its charge, I get that yearning to know why the spaceship crashed into that desert planet so long ago... and just what *did* happen to the crew...?



Fire and Hemlock

There just hasn't been the time for the kind of in-depth review that the current batch of fazines deserve, I'm afraid you'll just have to make do with this brief listing. Anyway, there's a lot of Good Stuff out there, so get out your asse's (stamped, self-addressed envelopes).

How to Use this Listing

With (the obvious?) exception of those fazines for which a cover price is quoted, fazines tend to be available for "The Usual". This piece of arcane fannish slang merely means that the editor will let you have a copy in exchange for a letter of comment (either on a previous issue, or the promise of one on the current one), an offer of an article or piece of artwork, or at whim — the offer of an A4 stamped addressed envelope helps here.

A Child's Garden of Olaf 10 (Ken Cheslin, 10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 1LA)

This is a cult fazine of the very nicest kind — ideal if you've never seen a fazine before. The letter column is impressive. Articles range from a satirical boiler to a view on Mexico (Harrogate is compared to Hollywood and the hotel washbasins were "big enough to wash one hand at a time"). The time travelling Olaf dominates the illustrations, my favourite here being criticism of him designing an entrance door in the Wooden Horse at the (literal) rear: I agree that it's the logical place to have the door, Olaf, but we must have some consideration for the dignity of heroes and princes.

Barddoni (Pete Presford, Rose Cottage, 7 Tram Lane, Buckley, Clwyd, North Wales CH7 3JB)

Poems, a strong Welsh flavour. The best are, as usual, by Andrew Darrington — he makes you think with deceptively simple language. But I liked a whimsy by Michael Newman, pondering on how *The Ultimate* in history is to have a *biscuit* named after you.

Czerwony Karzek 1 (Red Dwarf) (Gdansk SF/Club, skrz. pocztowa 76, 80-325 Gdansk, Poland)

Ursula K. LeGuin topography, loads of fiction. But why does Polish fantasy art concentrate on female bottoms? I just hope, for the health of the ladies in Polish comic strips, that the weather is sub-tropical.

Dalekaid 7 (D. West, 17 Carlisle Street, Keighley, West Yorkshire BD21 4PX) Excellent criticism of the Mexican fazine panel (consisting of Rob Hansen, last minute substitute for Lilian Edwards, Abi Frost, fazine editor and TAPF candidate, Martin Tudor, fazine editor and Chris Reed, small press editor). While the panel was ostensibly about fazines, it got dominated by the red herring of "Amateur Publishing". D. repeats yet again that fazines are not *embryo semi-prozines*. The difference is not just a matter of degree but of kind. Fazines are response oriented: they are produced either for response (from

the readers) or as responses (by the editors). Small Press are all sales-oriented: any response from the readers is incidental to what is essentially a producer-consumer relationship — pay the money and we don't care if you never say a single fucking word. In this case the adjective is merited.

Dinah's Club (Dinah Pua, "Minas Istarion", 2 Duncan Gate, London Road, Bromley BR1 3SG) Briefly, this cat, in a feeling of goodwill to all felinekind and a bit left over for humanity, edited and presumably word processed this fazine, though left the duplication to more feeble, clawless, human digits. After comments on filking in general and a list of contact addresses, comes *My Grandfather's Clock*: cat perspective only. Fun.

Fandom Newsletter (Matthias Hoffmann & Thomas Rechtenwald, Kirchbergstrasse 14, D-7800 Freiburg i Br., Germany)

Elegant and informative newsletter with more on Perry Rhodan than I personally would like. But where's the reader feedback?

Flickers 'n' Fanes 13 (John Peters, 299 Southway Drive, Southway, Plymouth PL6 6QN)

Mike Ashley on electronic music — rather biased towards Gandalf, but he also recommends Mark Dwan highly. He's keen to know of more Mark Dwan recordings: so am I, that's my kind of music. More fiction, reviews and the latest in film news: there's a lot to read here. £1.25 per copy.

Imagination 6, 7, 8 (Ian Murphy, 63 Beeches Crescent, Southgate, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 6BU or imurphy@icx.complink.co.uk)

This covers SF, Fantasy, gaming (which I skipped — our seven year old has just discovered D&D™) fiction and reviews. We ended up without half our material 4 days before we were due to go to press and therefore everything started to fall apart. Thankfully we have now got it back together again, but at the cost of much sleep and considerable aggro claims the editorial. I know the feeling (So do I — Editor's Apprentice). Anyway, I read less than a third of it seriously, but that's a fair chunk with an average of 88 pages per issue. It's 95p for a copy — worth it.

Moving Finger 2, 3 (Dave Bell, Church Farm, North Kelsey, Lincoln) A double page spread, with space for postcard size feedback — he hasn't yet adopted the Ian Gunn habit of requesting 23 word letters of comment — and then editing them down. Issue 3 raises the potential of Social Workers to wreak havoc. Dave mentions *The Crucible* — I'd have mentioned *High Wind in Jamaica*. But a topic like child abuse is worthy of some comment. I'll do it real soon now, honest Dave.

OtherRealms 30 (Chuq von Rosbach, 35111-F Newark Blvd, Suite 255, Newark, CA 94560, USA or chuq@apple.com)

Since this is the parody issue, the trials of Melanie Rawn's writing day, whose editor in three time zones away, seem unrealistic. Given a day when at 6.45pm write check for pizza delivery and swear to spend three hours at gym tomorrow, at 10.30pm neighborhood felines begin utilization of my outdoor plants as catbox, at 5.12am parrots vacationing in local palm trees begin vigorous discussion of flight plan back home to Mexico and at 5.40am fellow tenant who owns brand new fire-engine red Corvette and works two jobs to keep payments opens car door without having first turned off alarm system how the hell does she manage to get two whole chapters done? There is a review of Judith Tarr's *A Brawl of Sphinxes* plus a starchy reply from someone claiming to be The Author — I love this issue.

Saltromantis Two (Michael Ashley, 9 Blakeley House, Kilmore Grove, Woodside, Bradford BD6 2RF)

Deep in the trivia of Mexican seen from the wittiest angle imaginable (and Michael has an all too vivid imagination), is a astute comment on the state of contemporary fazines as represented by an uninspiring panel and an apathetic audience.

Shards of Babel 31 (Roelof Goudriaan, Caan van Necklaan 63, 2281 BB Rijswijk, The Netherlands)

European newsletter with John Richards pessimistically arguing that the European ideals will disappear once the effort of actually crossing the Channel becomes more obvious. Pascal Thomas uncharacteristically mournful over the French National Convention: you know something's wrong when a convention's post-mortem begins on the first day. Positive details on the European Convention Union and 99.9% complete convention coverage (they didn't get details of X-men in the one in Leeds at the end of November — Roelof, there's a letter coming immediately!)

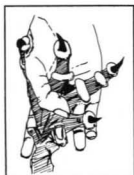
Songs 15 (Pete Presford, Rose Cottage, 3 Tram Lane, Buckley, Clwyd CH7 3JB, Wales)

North Wales in '92 — which will be revealed in *The Periodic Table* — chat, the typing much hampered by his dearest Barbarella who comes into the room then exits leaving the door wide open and the occupants freezing. Yet she always get forgotten, being feline, well, give or take the odd strangle or two, followed by panic stricken half hours reviving that bundle of fur over there: no, it's not conducive to fazine writing.

Spektra after the Flood (Lars-Arne Karlsson and David Griffin, Ekas Gallared, 310 60 Ullared, Sweden)

Nebula issue, with careful, thoughtful reviews of nominations.

Wild Shaarkab (Eva Hauser, Na Chidlade 55, 160 00 Praha 6, Czechoslovakia) The highlight is an account of the Eurocon at Warsaw (probably the worst organized con that I have ever visited) or rather a visit to Stanislaw Lem who lives in a beautiful house with ... an elegant wife and a fat dog.



WriteBack

Letters are welcome from all members on any subject. Please write to Jenny and/or Steve Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP by the deadline:

**September
13, 1991.**

The Future of the BSFA — Does it Have One?

Last issue, Ian Sales suggested ways forward for the BSFA, mentioning in passing that unless the BSFA did something, and did it fast, there would be no BSFA to go forward. This produced a very heartening reaction, with several constructive suggestions, as below:

from Ian Rosenthal, Flat 1, 138 Tomswood Hill, Barkingside, Essex IG6 2QN

I was unsure when reading this whether Ian had been commissioned by the BSFA to write this, and was therefore expressing the BSFA's opinions, or whether this was a one-off article — I note that Ian is chairperson of the Coventry Polytechnic SF society and so suspect the latter is the case.

I found myself in agreement with everything he said and wondered if the BSFA was seriously considering an "advertising" or "awareness" push? If so, I suspect that an advert, or series of advertisements (costs permitting) in, for example, *Starburst*, might have the desired effect as this is a relatively high-circulation, high-street magazine covering topics such as film, tv, books, comics, SF-related theme music and science fiction conventions.

I have also found that my local library (Fulwell Cross in Redbridge) has recently opened a showcase containing only SF and Fantasy books, with a view to attracting people into the library.

I've never seen the genres so popular before, perhaps advertisements or sample magazines (like *Vector* or *Paperback Inferno*) could be placed in libraries? Of course, this all comes back to defining the aims of the BSFA; I understand this to be the promotion of science fiction literature and other SF medias. Perhaps you could confirm or otherwise define BSFA aims? I note Ian's comments on the "ghetto hierarchy" and sometimes wonder if this might be true. I wonder if the mass readership that buys books in Waterstones or W.H. Smith's instead of *Andromeda* or *Forbidden Planet* would find enough to interest them in the BSFA; however, I am sure that some would be willing to contribute, and perhaps act as the catalyst to wider acceptance both within and beyond the "SF ghetto".

Ian wrote the article independently of the BSFA, though he has met several members of the committee at conventions. Incidentally, Kev McVeigh, the new co-ordinator, was once instrumental in founding the Coventry Polytechnic SF Society.

One of Ian's other ideas was a promotional magazine for High Street sale. The obvious objection must come from the treasurer who needs to guard BSFA funds from the possessiveness of a medium rare dragon.

from Pat Gardner, 49 Beachcroft Place, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 8JN

Because I, too, would like to see the BSFA expand and have a higher profile, I hate to take issue with Ian Sales, but I must because I do not believe his suggestions for expansion are sensible.

Produce a four-colour glossy magazine for sale in W.H. Smith? Since I am not aware of the BSFA making a large surplus each year, existing income must be accounted for by the current mailings. To produce the magazine, either a bank loan or increased subscription is required to provide "up-front" money. From then on, it is a horrible gamble. What is W.H. Smith won't stock it? If they do,

suppose it doesn't have a prominent shelf position. If it does, what if the punters won't buy it? This could be very successful or could be a disaster. I don't want the BSFA to be involved in a risk of this size.

Advertising? I agree, but if in too high a profile magazine, the BSFA could be swamped (I believe a mention in *Science Fiction Monthly* in the '70s resulted in a near collapse of the BSFA). A steady membership growth is preferable.

Economics of scale in print runs? The trouble is, there is an "economy trap". A group of fans paid a pub lunch can handle collation of 1000 mailings on a weekend. Maybe a bit more. But 15000? At some point it becomes impracticable. You need full time PAID staff and the costs (and the nature of the BSFA) change. Without sizeable resources, it would be potentially disastrous for the BSFA to "change radically" as Ian Sales wants. I, too, would like his vision to be reality, but in practice, I hope for a steady but slavish increase in membership and profile.

Collating is very good for the stomach muscles and the pub lunch is great — made better by the company and the chat. But collating is very hard work and regular attendees like Keith Freeman, who organises it, and Alison Cook or Brian Stovold deserve more credit.

Seeing that Pat mentioned a possible influx in membership causing problems, it is interesting to see Sandy Brown's reaction. He was the membership secretary before Jo Raine.

from Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre G72 9NA

One of the main problems of the BSFA is its generalist viewpoint. Other organisations (such as the Philip K. Dick Society) are concerned with a single subject and prospective members know exactly what they are going to get — information on their favourite subject.

The BSFA cannot be all things to all people. I think we should stop trying to change something which we cannot change. Apart from which, not all SF readers are interested in reading about SF, they would prefer to be reading SF. It is surely elitism to claim that reading about it is preferable to reading it.

Ian has several worthwhile things to say, but I must take him to task on one — advertising. Having been Membership Secretary for eight years, I kept detailed lists of where new members read the advert that they had responded to. For the last full calendar year (1986), yes, the biggest single entry was for the adverts in Methuen paperbacks. And the second largest was for the adverts in Arrow paperbacks, which had been discontinued four years earlier. These figures were 80 and 60 respectively — not much perhaps, but the total of new and rejoined members was only 290.

We had also placed paid adverts in *Starburst*, *Space Voyager*, *White Dwarf* and (presumably free ones) in *Foundation* and *Interzone*. All this and we only got 290 new members?

But the killer is yet to come — we had a free mention (unsolicited) in *The Radio Times*, which at that time had a circulation of 4 million! From that we got 36 enquiries. Yes, 36. Even double placing adverts get more response. So don't tell me (or rather, your present Committee) that we should advertise more!

Perhaps we should put a different emphasis on the adverts? One of the pet ideas I recently passed on to the Committee was Freepost. I thought it was really cheap and worth a trial for a year. Or should we concentrate on glossy adverts for a glossy product, with commensurate expense? What do you mean "Trade Descriptions Act"? There's no point in making it out to be something it's not — they'll suss it out for the price of a sample mailing.

And all our ads have told it as it is, but we still (or should it be "therefore") get a low response rate.

No, Ian, it's not "absolute rubbish" that greater print run means greater cost. At present, for 10000(inh) members, we can usually get enough helpers to collate, staple and fold, at no cost (bar pub lunches and travel expenses for committee members — Ed.) But if we have 20000 members, we must then go to the printers for that job — and we have to pay for it. Yes, there's obviously a point at which the increased cost is outweighed by the increased income, but how do you propose that we finance the magazines until that point is reached?

As an (unrecommended) example, suppose we print a reply-paid flyer, and get it in a magazine of 60,000 circulation such as *IASFM* or *Analog*. It costs us

£120 for the printing, £40 for the postage to the US, and an unspecified amount to have it bound into the mag (say £400). After all, the magazine publishers print the magazine to make a profit, not because they like SF. This totals £560. To make it worthwhile, we have to get not less than 1000 new members (remember the *Road Times* mentioned above?) If we get less than that, how do we pay for the next mailing?

No, Ian, don't think that your committee have their minds in neutral. I've heard most of these arguments before, they've been costed and you can't do anything without money. And no, I don't have the answer either. If I did, I'd be rich. Some members generously put their hands in their pocket and paid for adverts in their favourite magazines. Sorry, folks, but they didn't bring in many new members either.

Concerning an annual overview of the SF scene, that was done in (I think) 1976, and I for one, looked forward to the next one. But there were no takers for the editorial job of bracing people to write for it, never mind typing it up. But then, that has always been the BSFA's problem — there's no kudos in it, and no money in it. All the writers and editors are unpaid. So we cannot try the ideas that a professional magazine can. And anyway, in the format that Ian proposes, we don't run much (if anything) on Star Truck or Blake's Six or SevenEighths in BSFA magazines, and that's what the general public perceives as SF. They don't think of *Dark Star*, they think of *V*. Unpleasant, but true, I think you will agree.

No offence intended, Ian, but if you gave me a list of "recommended" SF books, I and most of the people I know would tell you to "Sod Off!". I'd probably do the same to people who told me to read Jane Austen or Leo Tolstoy. I've got better things to do with my time than read your favourite books, just as you have better things to do than read mine. I recently lent a couple of books (LeGuin and Tiptree) to an Asimov fan to see if she liked quality. Would it come as some surprise to you to find that she did not? And I'm prepared to lay good money against you getting substantially more than your present 60 members, unless you start showing movies (but then you are targeting two classes, not one).

And lastly, as far as I'm concerned, forget about a BSFA Post Office Box — I've been passing on enquiries (perhaps not as diligently as I should, but that's another story) to Jo Raine for four years, which is three times as long as the previous incumbent did (but that, too, is another saga).

True: The most recent membership list contained a new member who had heard of Sandy and the BSFA from a recycled Edmund Cooper paperback. Kev McVeigh also received a telephone enquiry from someone keen to join the BSFA, who had gone through Directory of Enquiries, via Forbidden Planet in London, who found him Kev's address in a recent "Vector".

However, now for some constructive ideas. First, from a fellow student:

from Pete Darby, The Two Hollies, Harwich Road, Great Bromley, Colchester, Essex CO7 7UL

Well, spot the neo with Ian Sales. Change the world, we're all fuddy duddies, etc? Well, a little advice. The leaflet drop probably won't look as good as a decent fagline. Leaflets come through doors like an Indian restaurant toilet gets through bag roll, and they tend to get as much respect. Much as I hate to say it, yep, it's "built at a local level" time! Sixty in his society? Okay, say ten active. Enough to organise panels, quizzes, guests ... anything to pull crowds. Once things get big enough, start informing local *What's On* guides (radio, papers etc). When that level's built, get them to join the BSFA (after getting people to conventions, etc). Then, they, the members, the popular base, not some "elite groups/cliques" (remember kids, cliques are defined by those outside them. Apparently, I'm in so many cliques, I don't talk to anybody these days ...)

And a couple of short, succinct and probably very good ideas written before departing to Texas:

from Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA

Ian Sales's *Agenda for the Nineties* rightly says we must get out there and hustle. One way everyone can help is to go and introduce yourself to your local library staff. The staff at our branch proved immensely friendly and approachable, allowing us to look through their re-order booklist for our

recommendations on SF and Fantasy, and we will ask them about noticeboard space for BSFA and Friends of Foundation literature and flyers.

One suggestion for Maureen's collection of back issues of *Matrix* would be for members to ask for spare copies if their local library would give them shelf space on their periodicals rack.

Because "Matrix" is a newsletter, it dates very easily, perhaps it might be more appropriate to have copies of the other magazines in libraries — for example, I very much enjoyed Diana Wynne Jones's "Why don't you write real books?" in "Vector" 140 or Colin Greenland's "The People for SF" in "Vector" 104 on the launch of "Interzone" or David Wingrove on the SF of Ian Watson in "Vector" 86.

Collating was mentioned above — the ideal exercise to get fit? Anyone who has done a stint will know that finding an alternative must be a high priority, especially as the site itself will be demolished in 1993. Not a minute too soon:

from Pam Baddely, Farnborough

You need to be fit to work that manual collation machine — and that hut was pretty cold then (Spring), so must be appalling in winter months. So many clubs I know have the job done professionally: some are smaller, others larger than the BSFA yet don't charge any more for membership, some appreciably less. This is the biggest stumbling block to expansion of the club and frankly, if loyal supporters such as Keith Freeman decided to pack it in, the club would just fold because nobody else would be willing to take it on, month in, month out. It's about time that the burden was lifted from them.

As far as the rest of the proposals go, how easy is it to get distribution by newsgroups, Smiths, etc? Not that easy, I suspect. Again, a pro-magazine is a nonstarter if it relies on voluntary labour for any part of the process.

Finally, a mournful prediction of possible marginalisation. Even an optimist must be aware of the most pessimistic scenario.

from Geoff Cowie, 9 Oxford Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2UA

If one takes a bullish view, the BSFA could become much bigger and more ambitious, so that helping run it could become more of a career move than an onerous duty. It could have better and glossier publications that sell competitively outside the membership. It could promote SF, hold workshops in conrunning, writers' workshops etc.

In the opposite scenario, the BSFA becomes poorer and less influential, till it withers away or some crisis occurs, e.g. a wild-eyed enthusiast with lots of money launches a rival SF club and with an ambitious advertising campaign scoops most of the BSFA's supply of neofans and much of its income. The USA is ahead of us in respect of various trends, and if there's an equivalent of the BSFA over there, we don't hear much about it.

There is an increasing trend for enthusiasts to launch or subscribe to news and review magazines that are covering much the same ground as the BSFA's publications. If *Vector* and *Matrix* and doing the job, then why do we need *Critical Wave* and *Connotation*? There are also things the BSFA has never tried to do e.g. running conventions (an increasingly popular area).

With more money, the BSFA could afford better produced publications, more attractive to the fans, and produced with economics of scale. With more members, it could engage in more activities. If the Association doesn't appoint itself a role, it is likely to find one day that it hasn't got one.

I'd refer Geoff to Rob Hansen's histories of fandom, which show that the BSFA used to host the Eastercon — not only the biggest convention of the year, but in those far off days, there were perhaps two conventions held every year.

As far as memberships go, there's both good news and bad. As you'll have seen from page two, less people are joining, and they're far outweighed by people leaving. This is quite likely to be a result of general belt-tightening as the recession deepens. On the bright side, however, we've just sent off a full page advertisement to Gollancz for the "New Worlds" anthology, which should be appearing in libraries up and down the country, RealSoonNow.

In the next issue, Kev McVeigh will respond to Ian Sales as part of his regular column and give his ideas for promoting the BSFA. He has asked for a copy of all the letters printed here, so that he can respond individually.

SF in Advertising: For the Kids?

from Dennis Thorp, 190 Horton Road,
Fallowfield, Manchester M14 7QP

Joe McNally's review of SF flavoured commercials overlooked the advert for a certain lager. (I'm not being coy. I can't remember the name of the stuff, which says something about either the effectiveness of the advertising or my ageing memory cells).

It features a wonderfully squalid mob of ragged, downtrodden, 'orribly oppressed peasants straight out of any space opera about the miseries of life under the Vegan Tyranny or the Hruntan Empire. They are wearily rolling massive stone spheres up a series of Piranesi-type inclines, finally to plunge downwards so that the whole pointless labour can be repeated. They stare, incredulously, through a window at jovial revellers quaffing Blank's Lager. A crash of glass, predatory, outstretched hands ... Mercifully, the commercial ends before anyone can come up with the old joke about "The peasants are revolting!"

On the whole, one of the better efforts in the genre.

Those lucky enough to live in Dublin can also listen to Radio Rock 104FM who are broadcasting an advertisement for Churchtown Video Store. *Forge the store, listen to the background: it's a paraphrased section of H.G. Wells' "The War of the Worlds".*

Mindbridge: The Final Word?

As Steve Grover pointed out in a previous letter, the last chapter of Joe Haldeman's "Mindbridge" is a single page and easily overlooked — but does that excuse a complete edition being printed and sold with that page missing?

from Steve Grover, 10 Seyton Lane, East
Kilbride G74 4LJ

John Jarrold may very well be "grateful" to me for pointing out the fault in *Mindbridge*, but he didn't reply to any of my first half dozen or so letters on the subject. Perhaps he would like to write to *Matrix* again and tell us how many thousands of faulty copies have been sold and how many people have, therefore, been cheated by Orbit? And perhaps he could break that figure down, approximately, into those who bought a copy before I first let Orbit know of the problem, in August '89, and those who have been cheated since?

The company he represents has a legal — not to mention moral — obligation to supply its customers with products of "merchantable quality". A book without its final page of text does not pass this test, and the fact that he cannot reprint *Mindbridge* is totally irrelevant. He should, at the very least, publicise this fault widely and offer all those who respond the same deal he gave me: two new books from his current list. But as he obviously plans no further action (?), I reassert that [effectively, and with at least the tacit agreement of Joe Haldeman] he has decided that the problem will be solved when this edition is sold out. It will not be, and his compacency and disregard for his customers are disgraceful.

The Inhumanity of Star Trek

Gene Roddenberry has just won a humanism award, but at least one person argues that his scripts have strong racist overtones:

from Christine Campbell, Glasgow

I think it is very wrong to give the android in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* a character with the super-human abilities he has (e.g. extra strength) this whiter-than-white colour of skin.

If there was a reason for it, fair enough, but I find the argument that future science (which can produce warp drives, etc.) can't stretch itself to a realistic flesh tone rather unconvincing.

Do people really think that having this white-superiority advert scripted in as the favourite character all the time is a fine example of "humanist feeling"? The award is a joke.

That point of view had not actually occurred to me — in "ST:ING", I tend to see how characters relate to each other peacefully, interacting to the personality rather than the exterior features.

On The Time Machine

The last editorial considered H.G. Wells' "The Time Machine" which was filmed showing a completely different philosophy to the original. K.V. Bailey considers this, and casually mentions that not all cannibals constrain themselves to eating flesh.

from K.V. Bailey, Triffids, Val de Mer, Alderney,
Channel Islands

The Time Machine has perhaps been the most discussed, interpreted and influential of Wells's "scientific romances". Film versions and their originals can (as the Nicholas/Shaw/Hibbert correspondence on *The Handmaid's Tale* demonstrates) be substantially different creations. This is true of *The Time Machine* (George Pal's film and the book) but in one respect I believe the two are closer together in the kind of "reality" they propose than Jenny would allow. Agreed, they are both metaphors, both modern myths, Wells's focusing on the impasse of a human evolutionary and entropic condition, Pal's on the solution provided by a sort of "American Dream"; but both, within the parameters of fictive playfulness, equally invite the reader/spectator's belief — or at least suspension of disbelief. Wells's time traveller's auditors may profess unbelief; yet not only Weena's gift of flowers but the displacement in space of the machine, corresponding precisely to the distance between the lawn of its "landing" and the White Sphinx of its interment, substantiate his story. The "objective" narrator (distinct from the traveller) has a final experience of conviction when he enters the laboratory to find it imploding as machine and traveller disappear.

Certainly, Wells doesn't intend to portray his time traveller as a charlatan, bewildered though he may be on his return from the future. When he (the traveller) invites the sceptics to consider, if they wish, his story to be a fiction, but nevertheless to consider it, he is primarily intent on defusing a stubborn prejudice. Wells was then much intrigued by theories envisaging spatial figurations of time, and the first chapter of *The Time Machine* (1895) contains a fictionalisation of some of the serious argued speculations of his early journalistic essay "The Universe Rigid" (1891), which crudely anticipated the four-dimensional space-time continuum of Minkowski and Einstein. It is just such concepts that George Pal's "effects" develop cinematically. Thus, in respect of fictive "reality" novel and film are closely akin.

I particularly like the three books Jenny suggests to accompany the Traveller when he returns to the eight hundred and third millennium A.D. God knows what the Eloi would make of Mrs. Proudie. Perhaps they would (correctly!) perceive her as being cannibalistic.





The Periodic Table

Two con previews, one slightly more speculative than the other, and a pair of con reports illustrating the divergent evolutionary paths followed by West Coast and German conventions.

Wales in '92?

Pete Presford has joined forces with John F. Haines, Pete Crump and Steve Sneyd to propose a "Small Press Convention" in North Wales one weekend in late June or early July. He's thinking of a small gathering, probably in The College. There will be a SF/Fantasy theme (more details in October, when he has thought the idea through and has feedback from his friends) and there will be space for people to sell things, also a table to sell spare magazines at, say, 10p each. That might be enough to fund a small convention magazine. The area he is thinking of has several motels, B&Bs and hotels. A. Cooney, who ran the first Small Press Convention in Liverpool, might possibly be a special guest.

Eroticon Six Claire Brailey

There have been many rumours about Eroticon Six — I asked Claire to illuminate the con philosophy for the exclusive benefit of BSFA readers. It will take place October 4-6, Tollgate Motel, Gravesend, Kent, room rate £23 pppn twin/dbl, probably £29.50 single, room bills payable in advance.

It seems sensible to begin by dispelling some popular misconceptions:

- 1) Despite the name, Eroticon Six is not a *Hitchhikers* con — unless, of course, anyone finds *Hitchhikers* particularly erotic ...
- 2) Eroticon is not a media con. We are aiming to cover any form of SF which contains erotica, including film, fiction, art, tv, fan fiction and anything else that seems relevant. In actual fact, there is little overt erotica permitted on tv and eroticism in film is often developed too far into actual pornography, so there is perhaps less emphasis on media primary sources than on anything else. This is, in fact, something we hope to discuss at the convention for those who are interested.
- 3) You do not have to be erotic to attend! Nor do you have to be a pervert. The emphasis and interest is on erotica; we hope pornography will only feature as a discussion point — although we expect that individual attendees will disagree with our definitions of erotica and pornography, and we hope that they will present their opinions.

Storm Constantine is a confirmed guest. In addition, we plan to stage other talks, panels and discussions including the science of sex, SM in SF, censorship, "slash" fiction, pornography, sexism, sex magic, visual erotica, and the future of eroticism in SF. There will also be competitions, an auction, workshops on fetish costume, bodypainting, and (non-erotic!) massage, book readings, turkey readings — for which there seems to be an almost inexhaustible supply, a disco, a film and video programme and a fetishism party on the Friday night at which attendees are invited to depict their own — or somebody else's — favourite fetish, if they so wish. I won't say "Come as you are".

The rate is £22 attending, £15 for one day — deliberately high, I am afraid, to discourage the idle pervert — or indeed the active one — as although we would be very pleased to welcome fans who have not previously attended a convention as well as all the dogged veterans (if you will forgive the expression) we would prefer all our attendees to understand the nature of convention behaviour. Owing to the nature of some of the films, all attendees must be over the age of 18. There will be no walk-in registrations.

Baycon — Con of the Bookless Dealers' Room (San Jose, 24-27 May) Steve Rothman

With a slight feeling of trepidation induced by reports of the hotel food and the tone of the P.R.'s weapons policy statements which indicated that there were people who not only brought automatic weaponry to cons, but were likely to

use them, I pulled into the car park of the Red Lion Inn on Saturday morning. Any doubt that I might have come to the wrong hotel, or on the wrong dates, were laid to rest by the car licence plates (PEGAS, DRKOVER, FOXWERS) and bumper stickers ("My other car is a TARDIS", "UFOs are real — the Air Force doesn't exist" or "If you can read this, you're in phaser range") were displayed on the vehicles there. Final confirmation was provided by the couple in Tudor garb who strolled leisurely past the ranked Pontiacs, Chevys and Toyotas.

Having registered, I soon met a friend and followed to a panel on "Bad Science in Science Fiction". This subject, which in Britain would have been employed by Bob Shaw or Dave Langford to have the audience rocking in laughter, was treated rather too seriously as A Bad Thing and something to be eradicated. Shame. Next, I watched some of a SCA demonstration — fans in armour tourneying away under the flightpath to S.J. International Airport — and a slide show by an employee of George Lucas' ILM. I had just time to check-in to the overflow hotel before rushing back to catch the forthcoming movies presentation featuring "teaser featurettes" (trailers to you and me) on *Robin Hood*, *The Rocketeer* and *Terminator II*. I had a quick look round the art show and dealers' room before dinner. There were some books tucked away among the swords, videos, *Star Trek* fanzines, belly-dancing costumes, wands, jewellery, Japanese toys, bumper stickers (I must admit I was tempted by "Werewolf on board: do not moon") and trinkets.

For dinner I met up with a group of over 20 people who descended on a Japanese restaurant. I normally find being plunged into such a group of (mostly) complete strangers highly intimidating, but on this occasion I enjoyed a good meal and good company. We returned in a convoy of cars and, such was the size of the con and the size of the hotel car park, were immediately separated. Party time! Encountering a friend, we ventured up to the "party floor". After a few false starts — we weren't dressed appropriately for the black leather and studs party — we ended up in the L.A. in '96 bid party.

Sunday morning, I ended up having a long conversation about nuclear fusion and overpopulation with one of the artists.

At the George R.R. Martin interview, someone did eventually mention *A Song for Lyra* and *With Morning comes Mizzfall*, but only after 45 minutes' talk about the possible *Wild Cards* film and about *Beauty and the Beast*. George contrasted attitudes to censorship — the British cut the violence, the Americans cut the sex (to a ludicrous extent in the case of a religiously owned or run station) and commented on the state of U.S. TV: *It's sitcom city out there: 'He's the Pope, she's a pimp. They're cops ...'*

The afternoon was more like a proper con for me: I spent it in the bar.

The Sunday night open party scene was pretty dire: groups of half-a-dozen watching videos, furry fandom, hackers, etc. I had been warned that the *Church of the Sub-Genius* were around, but I didn't encounter them. Instead I spent most of that evening at a quiet private party where we interrupted our conversation to watch the Westerner promo video on Baycon TV (four channels, \$15 charge for the hotel to hook your VCR up to their system!) This was a really professional job based around a fake newscast with actual Vancouver TV personalities, a William Gibson interview, a newscast from correspondent C.J. Cherryh on Cyteen, fake commercials and a Klingon security team hustling a camera crew away from their ambassador.

So how did this compare to a British con? For a regional con, Baycon, at around 2,000 attendees, was obviously larger than an Eastercon, but was surprisingly friendly. The main difference is the continuing American custom of room parties rather than a late bar. I personally find a bar infinitely preferable as you don't have to wander hotel corridors searching for parties or walk in on rooms full of total strangers, but at \$3.50 a beer, I can see why the Americans stay away from hotel bars.

Baycon also needed a social focus (aka the bar).

As for programming, there were many more media-related programmes, but this may reflect the availability of film professionals and movie trailers for programme events and not solely the tastes of fans. Surprisingly, there was no film programme as such (there may have been videos, especially anime, I'm not sure) and movies were shown on the hotel TV network. Which was great if you weren't in another hotel.

The similarities between US and British cons, however, outnumber the differences. This was a gathering of many hundreds of fans, all out to have a good time, and fully succeeded as such.

So that was an American convention. It seems that British fans are beginning to venture further afield to cons: Roger Robinson casually mentioned that he would be going to Intercon in Oslo in a group including Paul Dörner; even Steve and I were considering Hilcon in Rotterdam as an alternative to our

normal annual winter weekend in London. The ad, overlaid should give some idea of the attractions of Hillcon, with the added incentive that most people there will speak English (if that is an attraction). The following gives a brief idea of a European con:

Anne and Terry go to Dusseldorf

4th Science Fiction Days NRW July 6-7, Dusseldorf
Wilf James

Few European cons are held in hotels, so all the congoers usually have to find their own accommodation nearby. Generally, foreign visitors are given as much help as possible and most often crash space is offered to fans who have travelled a long way. I crashed with my friend Udo Emmerich. He was worried about the number of fans who would be wanting to stay in his very small fifth floor flat, but as it turned out, only eight other fans turned up, so there was just enough space for me.

Germany is a pleasant place to visit in the summer. Dusseldorf is a reasonably-sized city which shows hardly any signs that it used to depend on heavy industry. The Old Town is now a pedestrian area, where nearly every frontage is a pub, a restaurant or an ice-cream parlour. The area is so popular with Dusseldorfers in the evenings that foreigners are hardly noticeable in the crowds which throng the streets. And the area is popular for a very good reason — both meals and drinks are sold at very fair prices — a good meal and 330ml of beer for less than £5.

The con was held in a smallish conference centre and the Guests of Honour were Anne McCaffrey, Terry Pratchett, Ian Watson, Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller and Paul Williams. However, although it would be wrong to say that the talks by the Guests were the programme (and some of these clashed with each other), the programme was a bit thin by British standards. About 150 fans attended the con, so it was relatively easy to meet the Guests and have a chat. Anne McCaffrey had studied at Dusseldorf University and knew the city fairly well — and I managed to hear Anne reading from her latest book about

Pern. Apparently the low-tech inhabitants of Pern discover what amounts to an electronic library left by the original colonists. The library is controlled by a voice-controlled computer system and is powered by solar power. I'll leave the other details I heard as a surprise for anyone reading the book. Anne told a group of us afterwards that she produces different editions of her books for her British and American publishers. The Americans are better at typesetting but want to change things. The British are poorer at typesetting, but print her books without wanting to make any changes.

I managed to catch the two talks by Terry Pratchett. He was as amusing as ever in his talks about aspects of Discworld. Apparently, Luggage is the most popular "character" among his readers. Next in line comes the Librarian — who has never appeared on a Discworld cover. Because of the nature of his books, translation into German is not an easy task, so the translator has had to invent German equivalents for his characters and expressions. Bilingual fans have found that both editions are worth having because the humour in each is equally good, but different.

The conference centre had a cafeteria where reasonably-priced meals and drinks were sold — 330ml of beer for 70p. Strangely, the room from the self-service counter to the dining area went through the dealers' route! All German beer is Real Ale, incidentally, it has to be under German law.

Although the con was rather "quiet" by British standards, it had a good atmosphere and (as usual) congenial conversation caused many fans (including myself) to miss programme items. Martin Easterbrook, who is now mainly resident in Belgium, said that his lack of German did not prevent him from enjoying the SF Days as much as I did. Altogether it was a good con, and I'm sure that Martin would say as I do that any British fans who had gone to it would want to go to other German cons. I've heard since that Martin plans to go to Barcon in Berlin in September, which rather proves my point.

Details of German conventions to come follow. I was asked to be the British publicity representative for FreuCon '92, and shall be pleased to give details of any others — contact me, Wilf James, at 106 Jarden, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 2NZ.

Barcon (September 6-8, Stathaus Bocklerpark, Prinzenstrasse 1, Berlin. Membership DM35. Guest of Honour Herbert W. Franke and many honorary members. Details from Bernhard Kempen, Karstener Strasse 29, D-1000 Berlin 62).

FreuCon 1992 (this translates as JoyCon, as it is in Freudenstadt, City of Joy) in the heart of the Black Forest and the con committee aim to make the con live up to the name of the city. April 24-26, 1992, Kongresszentrum, Freudenstadt. Guests of Honour Iain Banks, John Brunner, Norman Spinrad, Daniel Walther. Membership DM45, but special rates negotiable for British members. Contact Wilf James for the latest information or alternatively write send membership money to Achim Sturm, Woltersburger Mühlenweg 10, W-3110 Uelzen, Germany).

SF Tages NRW 1992 (SF Days North Rhine Westphalia 1992, July 4-5, 1992, Konferenz und Schulzentrum, Niederkassel Lohweg 16, W-4000 Dusseldorf. Guest of Honour Brian Aldiss. Membership before December 31 DM25 to Heinrich Sprock, Morikestrasse 7, W-4320 Hattingen, Germany).

This may be a convenient place to list another two European conventions, one in Holland, and the other in Czechoslovakia.

HILLCON (November 22-24, £17 attending, Atlanta Hotel, Rotterdam, details from Van eeghenstraat 97, 1071 EX Amsterdam, The Netherlands). Guests of Honour Orson Scott Card, Dan Simmons. Fan Guest of Honour Kees van Toorn.

This is the Beneluxcon, an annual convention which rotates between Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. This year, the Dutch national pride is at stake. After the success of ConFiction in the Hague, they are aiming for something a little smaller.

DRACON (December 6-8, Dum rekreance, near Brno Dam Lake, Brno, details from Dracón, PO Box 36, 612 00 Brno, Czechoslovakia).

Vasil Kriz recommends this location and the high standard of the accommodation and Cyril Simsa seconds it: *I've met the Brno posse, and they struck me as an efficient and fairly professional bunch he writes and I can vouch for the fact that it's a very pretty location.*

The programme will probably have a high SF content and though some parts will inevitably be in Czech, there will probably also be simultaneous translation on request.

You Saw ConFiction? The Hillcon II Paper You Enjoyed ConFiction?
17th Beneluxcon, November 22-24, 1991

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- or: pay at the convention itself. In either case: send us also a letter, addressed to: Hillcon II, Van eeghenstraat 93, 1071 EX Amsterdam - in which you state that you like to join the convention. You may also make a reservation for a hotel room (singles f 100,- - doubles f 75,- per person per night, breakfast included).



Hillcon II - the only sequel for which you didn't need to see the prequel!

Contour Mapping

WINCON II (August 16-18, £20 attending, King Alfred's College, Winchester, details 38 Outram Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO5 1QZ). Guests of Honour Bruce Sterling, Brian Stableford, Josef Nesveda and writing workshop with Gwyneth Jones.

The programme includes an examination of what happened to the future — 2001 is only a few years away and there are still automobiles and primitive space travel; there will also be a strand on storytelling, comparing the techniques of film and book.

ALBACON '91 (September 27-30, £20 attending, Central Hotel, Glasgow, details from K. Heenan, 2/1, 1155 Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow G41 3NG). Guest of Honour Alan Dean Foster.

Lots of late shows and parties plus 24 hour film show.

OCTOCON (October 3-4, £12.50 attending, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, details from 23 Rushbrook Court, Templeogue, Dublin 6W). Guest of Honour Geoff Ryman.

The second annual Irish SF convention will feature a Radio Play, starring the Goh and a popular film programme.

EROTICON SIX (October 4-6, Tollgate Motel, Gravesend, Kent, details from Claire Briaire, 17 Guildford Street, Brighton BN1 3LS). Guest of Honour Storm Constantine.

See above for fuller details of this convention aimed to celebrate the erotic and sensuous in SF.

NOVACON (November 1-3, £15 attending, Excelsior Hotel, Birmingham, details from Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 4SH). Guest of Honour Colin Greenland.

Annual convention held by the Brum group where attendees vote for the Nova awards, created by Gillian Field, for the best fanzine, fanwriter and artist of the year.

X-ASM (November 29-December 1, £12 attending, The Hotel Metropole, Leeds, details from Jenny Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP). Guest of Honour M. John Harrison.

The programme will include an optional whisky tasting as well as a large dose of *Disparate Fun*™ (including a foot-rub workshop and a Ping on the Inklings: generic sybaritic hedonism combined with serious SF discussion).



The Plaintive Wailing of a Deprived Fan

Antony J. "Doppelganger" Shepherd

The latest BSFA mailing plops through the letterbox, and if it escapes a prolonged Shih-Tzu attack, I open it and start to read. I look and see if there are any new books I might want to buy.

"Hey" I think "This might be worth buying" but will I be able to pop out to the shops and get it? Well, it depends. If it's a film or TV tie-in, then in about a month, I may find it in the "New Books" section. For example, I purchased *Better than Life* at Speculation, but didn't see it locally until five weeks later. If it's the latest Pratchett paperback, then in a few weeks' time, it may turn up. The paperback edition of *Good Omens* took a good three weeks to migrate from Sheffield to Barnsley. If, however, it's something like (glances through *P.J. 90* for inspiration, but doesn't really find any. Picks one at random, er ...) Raymond F. Jones's *This Island Earth* (Well, I quite like the film and wouldn't mind reading the book ...) then my search would be in vain.

The other evening, I was looking along my bookshelves, and I realised that out of the last dozen books I'd brought, eight had been bought at conventions and one in Sheffield. Only three had been bought locally and one of those had been ordered.

I seen to do most of my book buying at con, so why? Well, the nearest bookshop with a good selection of SF/Fantasy/Horror is in Sheffield, a good half hour train ride away. That adds a quid to the cost of the book if I only buy one; if I return empty handed, then I've spent trainfare just to browse.

There is a W.H. Smith's in Barnsley and they do have a SF/Fantasy and indeed a Horror section. They have a few books, usually a handful of Really Big Name authors who regularly hit the best-seller list, a Shireload of Identikit Fantasy (you know "The Sometime of (the) Something (Part n)" by "Comparable to Tolkien at His Best" (That's Reg Tolkien, dyslexic signwriter from Chester-le-Street) and a Shuttle-full of *Star Trek* novels (The only good *Star Trek* novel, incidentally, is *How much for just the Planet* by John M. Ford, because it's more of a *Trek* Parody) but very rarely do they have anything I want to buy.

This is, after all, the shop who for a whole year had a copy of *Good Omens* sandwiched between *The Prophecies of Nostradamus* and *Your Future in the Tarot* and it has to be said that the W.H. Smith's bookstall at Sheffield Railway Station has a wider selection of books.

So I can place orders for books (I can still remember the look on the saleswoman's face when I ordered *Bimbos of the Death Sun*). I could even buy my books by mail order, but I don't really like buying books sight unseen. I like to pick up a book in my hand, look at the quality of the book's manufacture, heft its weight, flick through the introduction, read the blurb on the back cover and generally feel the book before I part with my money.

I have a similar problem with magazines. Can you buy *Interspace* in Barnsley? You gotta be joking! Occasionally now and again you can pick up an issue of *Fear* and if you're very lucky and scrounge round it might be possible to fall across a two month old copy of *Starburst* once in a blue moon. Ian Sales in the last *Matrix* mentions several US magazines sold in this country. Not round here they're not. I can subscribe to magazines, but again I like to have a flick through a magazine before buying it — I'd just like to have the option.

So the next time you lucky people are standing in your bookshop struggling to decide which book you're going to buy from a huge selection, just bear in mind those of us less fortunate people who may have to travel miles just to have a choice.

Beyond Frankenstein?

Dave Gillon

Science Fiction writers seem to have an irresistible urge to play God; from Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein through to C.J. Cherryh's Dr. Ariane Emory, writers have created characters to meddle in things that — traditionally speaking — Man was not meant to know. When Shelley wrote her famous work in 1816, Charles Darwin was still fourteen years away from the voyage of discovery aboard HMS *Beagle* which would lead him to the *Origin of the*

Species. Gregor Mendel, who carried out the pioneering work into what became Genetics, would not even be born for another five years. Nowadays, things are different, genetics is taught in GCSE Biology and less than forty years after the discovery of the DNA double helix, the new science of Genetic Engineering is seldom far from the headlines. In the space of 175 years, mankind has gone from being unaware of evolution and the processes that drive it to being in a position to possibly control its future path.

Frankenstein now represents an outdated approach to modifying the human organism, changing its gross structure while leaving the basic functioning of the body unchanged. By comparison with the surgeon's scalpel of genetic engineering, it is on a level with the barber-surgeons and their amputation saws. Genetic engineering functions at the most fundamental level of the organism and is thereby able to implement far more profound and wide-ranging changes; perhaps more importantly, these changes will be passed on to the organism's descendants.

Both approaches have left their mark in the genre; Shelley's novel waves the flag for the Victor Frankenstein, but arch-cyberpunk William Gibson's character Molly Millions with her inset mirrors and retractable claws is a modern example of the Frankenstein approach to the further evolution of the species. Here, though, we start to move into the realm of the pure cyborg, a topic perhaps best left for another time.

The softer, more elegant approach of the geneticists has all but dominated the output from this sub-genre in recent years. Always in the news, usually shrouded in controversy, the attractions are obvious and a glance at recent winners of the major SF awards shows just how side the penetration has been: *Blood Music*, *Falling Free*, *Cyteen*, *The Child Garden*, *Take Back Plenty*, all involve genetic engineering to greater or lesser extent. Cherry's *Cyteen* offers perhaps the least radical approach, with the Azi workers simply being bred from selected genotypes. Bear's *Blood Music* by contrast represents a total surrender to the implications of the technology with mankind swept away before the onslaught of Vergil Ulam's intelligent cells. Even in Cherry's novel, the changes have been fundamental, Ariane Emory has used the whole of Union's Azi population as an experiment in isotogenesis, creating an ethical problem to match the complexity of those in the real world. Other, less radical, effects are possible, Iain Banks' *Culture*, one of the more memorable appearances on the SF scene of recent years, comprises humanoid who have been totally transformed by genetic engineering. They can change sex at will, *glad* any of a massive selection of drugs, they have the ability to mate successfully across species boundaries (not to mention augmented sexual abilities) and yet they remain recognisable human and more effective tools for their author because of it. Perhaps the most likely direction for human genetic engineering is seen in Greg Bear's recent *Queen of Angels*, here "transforms" have become common, people genetically engineered to match a personal aesthetic preference or the requirements of their work.

So, after all this speculation on the future, how close are we to any of these situations, and is there a downside?

Genetic engineering is currently based on gene-swapping: a useful gene found in one species is isolated and then installed in another that lacks it. This obviously depends on a suitable gene being available, but as the science develops and our understanding of complex biochemical systems grows, then inevitably genes will begin to be designed from the ground up, allowing the creation of mechanisms which did not previously exist in nature.

Human genetic engineering is still in its infancy, the first handful of experiments starting within the last year or so. Without exception they represent attempts to counter genetically linked diseases by adding the required genes to cells from the patient and then reintroducing them into the host. With diseases like Muscular Dystrophy and Cystic Fibrosis to be conquered, it will be a long time before geneticists can turn anything more than casual attention to the prospect of engineering new abilities into *Homo Sapiens*; however, when they do have the leisure to consider the potential, the necessary tools should be there. Just starting is genetic engineering's equivalent of the Manhattan or Apollo projects; the Human Genome project is a worldwide effort to map the structure of the complete human genome, to identify the location of each gene on each chromosome. Once we have that, and eventually the knowledge of what each of those genes represents, then anything may be possible, from intelligent cells all the way through to mermaids, cherubs and human forms we can't begin to imagine.

The downside? It's quite simple, the Frankenstein Complex. Shelley's book has had a long-lasting and unfortunate effect on the thinking of the masses — Victor Frankenstein is the archetypal mad scientist — and there seems to be a widespread mistrust of any attempt to modify something from its "natural" state, conveniently ignoring Darwin's demonstration that the natural state for an organism is one of perpetual evolution. It may be that this conflict over ethics, reflecting a more measured debate within the profession, will prove to be the most fertile ground of all; Cherry's *Cyteen* has already demonstrated

that it is possible for SF to tackle the "big" ethical issues and S.M. Stirling's disturbing "Draka" trilogy closed with the chilling image of a slave-owning society with its divisions perpetuated by genetic engineering. Greg Bear's *Sisters* (in *Tangents*) showed the medical pitfalls that may await us and both that story and *Queen of Angels* dealt with the prejudices which may arise. As other tensions evolve, so will the stories to deal with them; the future should be interesting.

SF Mini-Guide: Consequences Phil Nichols

What often distinguishes SF from the anything-goes of fantasy is the presentation of consequences: the logical follow through from the question "What if ...". This is particularly true of the many forms of "alternate worlds" and "alternate history" stories. The SF writer's obsession with how things might have been (or could presently be, in some time line that runs parallel to our own) is perhaps related to that other SF concern, the future and what it may hold.

The most clinical of these stories, to the extent that they must be meticulously researched, can be the "What would have happened if ..." stories. If ... the dinosaurs had never been wiped out: Brian Aldiss' *The Malacia Tapestry* (1976); Harry Harrison's *West of Eden*. If ... England had remained Catholic: Kingsley Amis' *The Alteration* (1976). John Brunner's *Times without Number* (1961); Keith Roberts' *Pavane* (1968). If ... the Axis powers had won the Second World War: Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962); Sarban's *The Sound of his Horn* (1952); Keith Roberts' *Weinachtsabend* (1972). Considering the "high concept" that many of these stories embody, it's surprising that Hollywood has never taken to this kind of story.

Freed somewhat from the shackles of true historical consequence, many writers have enjoyed playing with history, in the "What would happen if we could change the past?" story. If ... the dark ages could be presented: L. Sprague de Camp's *Lost Darkness Fall* (1941). If ... a present-day dictatorship could be ruled out by preventing the emergence of Christianity: John Boyd's *The Last Starship from Earth* (1968). If ... worlds had to battle for existence by attempting to maintain the histories which produced them: Jack Williamson's *Legion of Time* (1952).

At the other end of the scale are the stories involving little or no historical speculation, but which show us a world which just happens to co-exist with ours. If ... a widower discovered that, in a parallel universe, his wife still lives: Bob Shaw's *The Two-Timers* (1968). If ... an empire had to struggle to maintain its reality against the alternatives imposed upon it by its adversaries: Barrington Bayley's *The Fall of Chronopolis* (1974).

And finally, let's not forget that alternate realities surround us every day: the different world-views held by each of us may put us all into separate, but parallel, universes. If ... you found yourself in a world shared by someone else's perceptions: Philip K. Dick's *Flow my Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974). If ... you found your own perceptions inseparable between "reality" and "fantasy": Christopher Priest's *The Affirmation* (1981).

This has been a ramble through some of the Alternate Realities that have stuck in my mind. If you'd like a (non-exhaustive, but fairly detailed) list of others, please write to the address below, enclosing a sae.

In the last issue, a couple of gremlins got in and spoiled K.V. Bailey's piece on H.G. Wells. The *Land Ironclads* somehow came out as *The Land Overclads* ("image conjured up of Martian robots bestriding the tropics wrapped in fur and mufflers") — KVB and that final sentence should have read "Patrick Parrinder's survey H.G. Wells is particularly good on his science fiction, and so (exclusively) is John Huntington's *The Logic of Fantasy*. [The spell checker has been shot — Ed.]

Next issue: mini-guides to Michael Moorcock and Keith Roberts. Got a question? Want to help the Information Service? Write, enclosing a sae, to: Phil Nichols, 57 Orange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PE.



Media File

Tales from Tinsel Town

Ben Wharton

Having written in this column for two issues, I thought it was about time I came clean and confirmed the nagging feeling you've had since I arrived on the scene. Yes, that's right, what I write is bullshit. In fact, what anyone writes in this column or similar columns in numerous publications is bullshit.

Why?

Because until we sit down in a cinema and see the released version of a film, what is said about it before the public showing is highly suspect. At best, pre-release news is mildly misleading, while at the worst it is completely fabricated or based on out-dated news and rumours. Not that you can really blame anyone for this as the majority of the world's mainstream films are subject to the conflicting personalities, visions and agendas of the Hollywood development system. For example, all you have to do is to look at my last column: everything written about *The Ticking Man* is still true, except for the rather important last line. Bruce Willis has since dropped out of the project and the film is now in limbo. Once the main element (star, director, writer) of a project disappears, producers get cold feet - especially when the screenplay they possess isn't up to much. What's \$1 million between friends?

Speculation concerning up-coming projects sometimes needs no help from sensationalist column writers. Ever since the *Star Wars* series ended with *Return of the Jedi* people have asked whatever happened to the six other parts of the envisaged nine part tale. Finally, George Lucas gave in and has signed to produce another trilogy. Which trilogy of the two yet to be realised will be filmed remains to be seen as do the production and release dates. The fact that a treatment (a scene-by-scene structured narrative) of story three has floated around for some time means nothing. Don't hold your breath.

Hollywood is full of shelved projects and screenplays waiting for the right people to become interested in them. Virtual Reality is a subject whose time has arrived but has until recently never made it to the big screen. William Gibson, regarded by some as the trailblazer of the V.R. genre with his cyberpunk novels, has written screenplays for *Burning Chrome* and *New Rose Hotel*, both based on previous short stories. James Cameron has acquired the former while Kathryn Bigelow was slated to direct the latter. But will we ever see them? Don't ask me. Instead, we must turn to Stephen King's story 'The Lawnmower Man' for our first taste of computer-manipulated human experience since *Brainstorm*. Jeff Fahey stars as the slightly dim man who becomes the ideal guinea pig for scientist Pierce Brosnan. Brett Leonard directs a script by Gimel Everett.

Stephen King may not have been allowed to adapt 'The Lawnmower Man' for the screen, but gets a consolation prize with the script for *Sleepwalkers*, yet another variation on the theme of space vampires. Mädchen Amick, of the now deceased *Twin Peaks* tv series, but of the perhaps yet-to-be-born feature film, stars.

Green then red-lighted films can be a costly business. Pre-production expenditure on script re-writes, set design and construction, hiring of crew and numerous other elements that get to get a film off the ground have to be accepted as pure loss. *Radio Flyer* cost Columbia Pictures \$10 million before they took the film from first time writer-director David Evans and shut down the production. Some classic Hollywood dealing later, Richard Donner (Mr. *Lethal Weapon*) came aboard. The story involving the relationship between two brothers, abused by their step-father, who escape into a fantasy world to deny the horrors of their real world, was toned down by the \$5 million tag director (care of the now demoted Evans) and trimmed in the special effects department to keep the \$30 million picture within a 'reasonable' total \$40 million range. Conflicting visions, conflicting agendas...

Actor-writer-director Paul Mazursky is well versed in the game playing of Hollywood from first-hand experience. He knows the shit you have to take and sometimes make to survive in the industry. Mazursky's latest script *The Pickle*, points up the horrors of the system by telling the story of an out of work director who helms against his better judgement and artistic vision a film about a flying cucumber. Of course, when the film becomes a huge hit at the box office, the director played by Danny Aiello is a little surprised - shades of *Spring Time for Hitler*!

In the pseudo-reality of the 'real' Hollywood, a surprise hit two years ago was *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*. Now the same writing team of Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon bring you *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*. With some creative pull from the project's stars, Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter, the writers manage to avoid the sequel formula (i.e. telling the same story) desired

by the producers and wrote the problems involved for Bill and Ted when they are replaced by evil robots, killed and sent to hell. Playing a game of Battleships with the Grim Reaper might give you a flavour of the sequel's humour if you haven't already experienced it for yourself. Making his feature directing debut on this very silly film is British film-maker Peter Hewitt.

Matheson and Solomon haven't rested on their laurels. Also from their word processors comes *Mom and Dad Save the World*. Development attitudes went against the expected this time. Fearing that their SF comedy would seem too expensive to producers, they added a note to their script suggesting that it could look very B-movie, that you wouldn't need to spend as much as you might think - but once Solomon's former karate teacher (I) got a producer interested, and a director (Greg Beeman) was signed, the film went the other way and ended up looking more professional than the writers could have hoped for. Teri Garr stars as a housewife trying to salvage her marriage during a holiday when she is abducted by the evil Emperor Spengo who falls for her while planning to destroy the Earth. Jeffery Jones, the unexceptional husband, must do his best Flash Gordon impression to save the day (and the universe!)

If only the rest of Hollywood could rise to the occasion...

The Quatermass Fragments

Ian Mundell

There were two sorts of exhalation at the National Film Theatre during its recent programme of television SF from the 1950s and 1960s. One was of bemusement, following the final item - the only known remains of 1961's *A for Andromeda*. Lasting a mere three minutes, it shows a man get into a car and negotiate a deal with a rather obnoxious German.

The second exhalation was of exasperation, following a showing of the first two episodes of *The Quatermass Experiment*. By all accounts, most of the population of Britain let out similar breaths in 1953 as each of the six episodes of this seminal serial loosed its grip on the audience. However, while they only had seven days to wait for the next episode, the NFI audience and the rest of the world will remain frustrated, because these are the only surviving episodes.

Like much of early television, *The Quatermass Experiment* went out live and little effort was made to preserve the programmes for posterity. Even the introductory sections to each episode - recapitulating the events of the last - were re-enacted. These first two episodes were filmed directly from a television screen at the time of broadcast, the resulting image being poor in some places for obvious reasons. If any other episodes were recorded, no known copies exist today.

Complete runs of the subsequent tv series - *Quatermass II* (1955) and *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-9) - exist in the archives, although the quality is again variable.

The situation did not change much with the introduction of video taping in the early 1960s, since both the BBC and ITV carried out a policy of wiping the tape for re-use. *A for Andromeda* was a victim of this practice, the surviving fragments being short sections on film, which was used for location work. According to the British Film Institute, there is some 12 minutes of this footage, although none of it is particularly informative as to what is going on.

The series, written by Fred Hoyle and John Elliot, tells of a radio signal from the Andromeda galaxy, which instructs scientists in the building of a super computer; this in turn provides instructions for the creation of a living being. With its early appearance by Julie Christie, as the artificial human, *A for Andromeda* is one of the great lost treasures of British television SF.

The BFI is currently investigating rumours that one of the seven 50-minute episodes exists in the hands of a private collector, although whether the BFI can have it or not is confused by the illegality of the collector having it in the first place.

The failure of the BBC to preserve *The Quatermass Experiment* belies the effort it put into the series, which set out to be considered, adult-oriented SF as the producer, Rudolph Cartier, stated at the time, the intention was to lift this production above the level of the strip cartoons and magazine thrillers.

Nigel Kneale, who wrote the series, went on to produce some of the most intelligent SF in the history of TV, including three more series with Quatermass, an adaptation of Orwell's 1984 and a handful of one-off plays. Throughout his work, there is a tendency to kick against the tropes of American cinematic and written SF - Every one full of hero worship said one of the characters in *The Quatermass Experiment*.

Instead, he flavoured his science with the occult, often from Celtic mysticism, and balanced it with a keen sense of current events. For instance, *Quatermass*

and the Pit took its lead from the rebuilding of London after the war, and the strange things which were being unearthed. Instead of Roman ruins or unexploded bombs, Kneale had the builders find aliens, which in turn led to an explanation of a local daemon legend.

Kneale was also notorious for his dissatisfaction with how people treated his scripts. In the past, he has criticised producers, TV programmers, directors, studio audiences (they are only interested in a free show and laugh in the wrong places) and the TV companies. He took his name off the credits for the film *Halloween III*, reduced by the producer from a Celtic/occult restoration of All Hallow's Eve to a conventional slasher pic, and attacked himself for the poor script of 1979's *The Quatermass Conclusion*.

It is in this light that the magnitude of our loss in not having a complete run of *The Quatermass Experiment* becomes apparent, since it is with this treatment that Kneale has expressed most satisfaction. Although the familiar film version - *The Quatermass Experiment* (1955) - contains a splendid performance by Richard Wordsworth as a mutating astronaut, and launched the whole Hammer Horror boom of the '50s and '60s, it is not the same thing. The director, Val Guest, had not seen the original, and cut Kneale's four-hour script to 85 minutes, favouring a "chase" plot line and using the practically catanonic American actor Brian Donlevy as Quatermass.

In the BBC original, Quatermass was played by Reginald Tate with the same intellectual restlessness which goes with the best portrayals of Sherlock Holmes. Among this laconic and somewhat rebellious scientist revolve a dozen or so other characters - the astronaut's wife, her lover, a foppish journalist and his bulldog editor, two paranoid Scotland Yard detectives - which give a degree of depth to what is really a very basic plot of a space flight which goes wrong.

The budgets were minute and the technology primitive (the cameras were vintage 1936, with only one fixed lens), which threw the burden of carrying the plot firmly on the script and the actors. With long, unmoving takes, often of just two characters talking in a field of shallow-focused grey, every gesture and accent becomes significant.

Despite some daft moments - a keen young rocket scientist checks the hull temperature of the returned space craft by slapping a palm on the metal - *The Quatermass Experiment* is still television SF at its most satisfying. It is astonishing to think that the genre degenerated to flopping lamely around in gravel pits after such a distinguished start.

The Annie Nightingale Request Show SciFi Special (Radio 1, 7pm, 23/6/91)

M.J. Simo Simpson

The Radio One Request Show quite often features records of a slightly "odd" nature which would otherwise never receive airplay. Barnes & Barnes' *Fish-Heads* is a frequent request, as is Spizzner's *Where's Captain Kirk?*. For one week, Annie devoted the whole show to SF-related records, and the result was somewhat interesting.

The major problem was simply one of time; in a two-hour show there is only room for about 30 tracks, and she said one letter had listed 115 possible choices. Several obvious tracks were missing (she had received a request not to play *Star Trekkin'!*) including *Doctor in the Tardis*, *Ghostbusters* and *I lost my heart to a Starship Trooper*. However, she did play *I'm an Urban Spaceman*.

There were very few SF themes among the tracks played, although *Science Fiction Double Feature* and Vangelis' *Blade Runner* were included. Similarly, there were surprisingly few records about specific SF series (the aforementioned Spizzner's track and *The Times' I helped Patrick McGookan Escape* are two I recall). Most of the songs were simply about space or rockets or aliens, and often the links were very tenuous (the show opened with Madness' *One Step Beyond*).

There were some big names present - the Fab Four's *Across the Universe* and (predictably) Bowie's *Space Oddity* - but the show tended to concentrate, as it usually does, on punk/new wave/alternative music, this ranged from the B52's *Planet Claire* to The Orb's ambient *A Huge Ever-Pulsating Brain That Rules Time and Space from the Centre of the Universe* (or something!)

As I say - the limited time prevented a thorough look at SF music, but the selection chosen showed the variety of artists who have drawn on SF themes for inspiration. I'm just annoyed that she didn't play my request of "Weird AF" Yankovic's *Yoda*.

Venus and Marx

Ian Mundell

A review of *Aelita* (Yakov Protazanov, 1924) - Part of the National Film Theatre's season on the cinema of Julia Solntseva, actress, feminist director and widow of Alexander Dzenko.

To Western eyes, in 1991, *Aelita* is haunted by the ghost of H.G. Wells. He stands at the shoulders of the men in the radio hut as a mysterious message floats over the air-waves, he holds the corners of the chart as Los says to Spiridonov: *All we need now is a substance to counteract the force of gravity. Scientists by day, they spend their spare time designing a space machine.*

But when it comes to real SF - the journey to Mars, the alien culture, the revolt of the Martian slaves - Wells stays back on Earth, minding the lab, and polishing the radio valves.

There is something in this depiction of Russian science at the beginning of the 20th century which fits the Wellsian idea of the scientist better than any other reality. The great German universities of the same period were vast science factories, institutions for the systematic destruction of ignorance. American scientists were technological entrepreneurs, while in Britain the lingering idea of the gentleman scientist mixed with that of the self-made science enthusiast - such as Wells himself. *Aelita* shows Russian science as a mix of all three, thriving in the matrix of revolutionary change.

Los and Spiridonov toil for the state by day, and play at astro-engineering by night. When Los's private laboratory is requisitioned to house refugees, he simply moves to the attic. Similarly, to build his space machine he fits out a warehouse for a workshop, takes on men to fill it, and advertises for potential cosmonauts by posting bills on the local lamp posts.

Eminently practical, completely flexible, these men are scientific pioneers and ideologically sound to boot. Whether such people ever existed is, of course, another matter. In Michael Moorcock's book *Byzantium Endures* (1981), a young Russian of the same period describes his rise to scientific genius-hood following early inspiration from reading H.G. Wells in imported copies of *Pearson's Magazine*. The atmosphere in this novel is similar to that in *Aelita*, but there is probably a common factor more significant than Wells. Bullshit.

Moorcock's central character, later to become the Colonel Pyat of the Corneliuss chronicles, survives mainly on braggadocio and self delusion. In narrating his story, there is seldom any evidence for his scientific prowess or academic triumphs.

Similarly, the space machine in *Aelita* is treated with scorn by Los's colleagues and as a mere diversion by Spiridonov. The trip to Mars is itself a dream, brought on by overwork and Los's repressed emotions (before leaving, he fantasises shooting his wife, whom he wrongly suspects of infidelity; the Martian revolution follows his encounter with the previously frigid Queen Aelita, played by Julia Solntseva). It is entirely likely that the everyday scientific conditions presented as genuine in *Aelita* were also a fantasy, brought on by the revolution.

The Martian scenes in *Aelita* have always attracted the most attention from cinema historians, because of their use of contemporary technical design techniques to represent the alien culture. The "Constructivist" treatment of the set emphasises vertical rather than horizontal space, with inclined walk-ways, platforms on several levels and taut bundles of wire cutting the action into discrete planes. The machines, such as the remote telescope Aelita uses to observe the Earth, look like abstract sculpture, while some of the Martian clothing is distinctly mechanical. In no sense is this Mars the dream of Wells' *Home Counties* scientific socialism.

Although there is no overt connection between Wells and Aelita, the plot bears more than a passing resemblance to Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), but is apparently from a 1922 novel, also called *Aelita* by Alexei Tolstoy! there is no denying the intense SF resonance of the earth-bound sequences - it is so familiar, so like home.

ELO Part II and the Moscow Symphony Orchestra

(NEC, May 28/29)

Martin Potts

I think a review of the reformed ELO is relevant to these pages due to the numerous SF elements of their act and albums in the past. From the "hard" SF of *Time* to the surreal of *Eldorado* and the spaceship logo that is now a part

of rock legend, SF has often been a strong element in their brand of rock and roll.

The stage line-up comprised the new album group: Bev Bevan, Mik Kaminski, Louis Clarke, Neil Lockwood, Pete Haycock and Eric Troyer plus Kelly Groucott and Hugh McDowell from the "old" band. Bevan, Kaminski and Clarke were also in the original ELO, but a name until now synonymous with ELO, Jeff Lynne, is no longer associated with the band - however, I think I can safely say that after the reception at the NEC, he is not missed.

The spectacular performance began with *Turn to Stone* and it was clear from the start that the new vocals of Lockwood and (particularly) Troyer would more than adequately cover the Jeff Lynne era. And on the whole the new songs were strong enough to stand alongside them, particularly the single *Honest Men* and the album track *The Night has a Thousand Eyes*.

The set was split into three parts: the first being the band playing ELO tunes old and new. The second was the 80 piece Moscow Symphony Orchestra with a selection of rousing classical pieces and the finale of band and orchestra together playing ELO music as it was meant to be played - electric guitar alongside full orchestra. The lighting effects, laser show and clever staging enhanced the music to the right degree, particularly for the wonderful (and unforgettable) "unfolding" introduction of the orchestra during the *Eldorado Overture* and the predictable but still overwhelming *Roll Over Beethoven* endpiece.

As you may have gathered, I have never been to a concert like it. The mix of rock and classical music worked so well when it could so easily have failed, but as Mike Oldfield showed on his *Exposed* tour too many years ago, it is a combination in which both the audience and players seem to revel. A special mention should be made to Kelly Groucott and Mik Kaminski whose band *Orkestra* have kept ELO's music alive for a number of years. If ELO Part II repeat the format again, I heartily encourage you to go see for yourself. Rating 100/10.

The Rocketeer (12)

Directed by Joe Johnston (Warner Brothers, 1991)

Ian Nathan

Unashamedly aiming to take up the vacuum of ultra-profitable comic-book hero franchise left by the departing *Indiana Jones* sequence, *The Rocketeer* falls short of the mark. But it certainly does possess an up-tempo buzz that has been lacking from many of the other summer blockbusters, what's missing is that certain little quality, that peculiar mix of humour, style and effect, that Spielberg would have brought.

In true blockbuster fashion, the actors are completely out-performed by the effects, but here it's a tad worse than usual; the players really seem a lacklustre bunch. And it is left to Johnson's glittering production values, naturally awe-inspiring visuals and a quirky, appealing script to raise the entertainment quota.

There's little shame in the jingoism of the whole affair either, with a whirlwind of dashing heroes, beautiful starlets, faithful mechanics, Nazi spies, dullard FBI men, grotesque hoodlums and, of course, the rocket-pack. Truth, justice and the American way (again) shoved right down your throat. There's enough breeziness and comedy to overcome the shortcomings, but *The Rocketeer* as an icon is about as feasible as the plot.

Ultimately *The Rocketeer* fails to be anything greater than an energetic and appealing diversion by stumbling in two key zones. Most obvious is the failing of the cast to inhabit their characters, as if expecting some post-production special effect to be applied that will turn wood to flesh - "let's just touch Bill up with a bit of Method spray there: Jennifer needs a coating of relax powder throughout the scene". Timothy Dalton as the cast is affably an exception, but still fits loosely into his role: Neville Sinclair Hollywood idol cum Nazi spy.

And even if the concept of a rocket man is in itself original, based on Dave Stevens' graphic novels, the approach is ruefully past and Johnson is stylish and efficient, but not at copying his mentors, Spielberg and Lucas. Still, there's no worse a plagiarism than that and *The Rocketeer* remains worth a ticket to the stalls and a bucket of popcorn, even if not a place in the cultural text-book.

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes

(Shown on BBC1 on Saturday mornings as part of *The 8.15 from Manchester*)

M.J. Simo Simpson

The amazing thing about this cartoon series is that of all the people who watched it regularly, probably only about half a dozen really understood it (and I could give you their names and addresses!)

The original film version of *Attack ...* was made in the early '80s and won a Golden Turkey. It was intended as a parody of '50s SF B-movies, in which a town was terrorised by deadly tomatoes, but it careered off in all sorts of directions plot-wise. A few years later, a sequel appeared (*Return of the Killer Tomatoes*) which introduced us to Chad Finletter (nephew of the first film's hero) and Tara, a tomato in human form who had been created by the mad (sorry: angry) scientist, Dr. Putrid T. Gangrene. This second film was better than the first in every respect and it is from the sequel that the tv series has spun off.

Chad and Tara are both a lot younger in the cartoon, so that the target audience can identify with them. This does not really affect the plot, but it does mean that Tara never refers to the several hundred sexual positions which she knows! Gangrene's assistant, Igor Smith, also reappears - a clean-cut but stupid surfing dude who longs to be a newscaster. The real newscaster is Whitty White (of KRUD) who is one of several recurring characters.

The basic plot set-up is this: Tomatoes have been banned in San Zucchini since the Tomato Wars, and Chad and Tara now help out at Finletter's Tomatoless Pizza Parlour, aided by Tara's "brother" FT (Fuzzy Tomato, which is what he is). Everyone except Chad thinks that Tara is human and FT is some weird looking dog. Outside the town live Dr. Gangrene and Igor, plus his (un)trustworthy hench-tomatoes, Zoltan and the Gang of Five (Zoltan has a penchant for pretending to be somebody different each episode, ranging from James Cagney to Gangrene himself).

Each week, Gangrene creates some new tomato-style menace to threaten San Zucchini, and therein lies the series' great strength, because each week parodies a different movie or tv series. So we had *Invasion of the Tomato-Snatchers* in which Igor drove around in a van marked "Giant Pea Pods"; we had a *War of the Worlds* parody, featuring death-ray-wielding Martian Tomatoes; we even had a *Tomato Terminator*. Each week, the tomato menace is repulsed by Chad and Tara, aided by Chad's Uncle Wilbur and the Tomato Taskforce.

On top of the main plot, there is some superb dialogue and sight gags, many of which refer to the series itself (in a *Moonlighting* sort of way). Plus there are references to all sorts of other films and series from *Dick Tracy* to *Twin Peaks*. The animation was a little sloppy at times, and there was one dull episode, but on the whole this was one of the best cartoon series to come out of America for a long time. Rank it alongside *The Real Ghostbusters* and classic *Scooby Doo*.

Iron in the Soul

A review of *Tetsuo: the iron man* (Shinya Tsukamoto, 1989)

Ian Mundell

Being a superhero means being beautiful. It can be skin deep, as with *Superman*, or perversely macho as with *Swamp Thing* or *The Incredible Hulk*. The extraordinary powers which go with transmuted flesh must reside in an attractive form or any pretence at "heroism" disappears.

Tetsuo: man of iron is a Japanese movie which puts the opposite case, documenting the chaotic transformation of two ordinary men into "men of iron". It is not a pretty sight.

The first man is a young delinquent who courts extraordinary powers in a most straightforward way - he wants limbs of iron, so he inserts an iron rod into his leg. This primitive graft festered, but the punk gets his wish when, struck by a speeding car, his persona is thrown into an apocalyptic inner space where he can control metal.

Like the world of collisions J.G. Ballard depicted in *Crash*, there is a strong psychosexual element - the driver and his girlfriend couple directly after disposing of the punk's body - but here it is largely swept away by the transformation of flesh to metal. When they make love again, it is not the girlfriend's feline eating that drives the man into a frenzy, but the contact between the fork and her teeth.

The disembodied punk finds he can control the driver through a sliver of metal which entered the latter's cheek during the crash. First he sends nightmares - a fellow passenger on the metro develops an iron hand and pursues the driver into the depths. This metal prosthetic is nothing like the cheerful clockwork of *Edward Scissorhands*, but rather the result of a lucky dip in a smelting works.

When the transformation begins, the chaotic nature of the new flesh becomes clear. Although it broadly mimics the human form, the relics of its past life as ironmongery show through. As the driver and the punk fight it out in a deserted, prefabricated world, their increasing powers are marked by the appearance of engine parts and electrical components in their anatomies.

By the time they agree to join forces and rule a world of iron, they are already just two components in a single, shapeless man of iron.

It is not just the anti-superhero stance of *Tetsuo* that makes the film difficult, but also the structure. Its fragmentary narrative is shot in grainy monochrome (*Tetsuo* could well play manic to *Eraserhead*'s depressive) with much swelling of prosthetics and pixelation - the rapid stop-motion technique best known in SF for *The Wizard of Speed and Time*.

The point the film has to make is a good one, even if it does subvert the ideals of the superhero narrative. If your flesh gets transformed, it is unlikely to stop conveniently at a point giving you superpowers, yet leaving you with a body which looks good in a monogrammed lycra bodysuit.

The vast majority of mutations are lethal, while most of the rest produce no noticeable change - that is why evolution takes so long. Let's face it, opposable thumbs were a pretty major breakthrough, but they are unlikely to get you into the Fantastic Four.

As for metallic cancer, the only sensible ending is that the sufferer will disappear into a heap of shiny de-differentiated tissue. And it will not be a pretty sight, no Sir.

Tetsuo: man of iron opens at the ICA Cinema, London, on Friday, September 5, for five weeks.

Skywatching Mark Ogier

Two mediocre sequels have been heavily touted as "top of the bill" during the past couple of months on the two satellite movie channels. First up was *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, which has to be the weakest of all the Trek films (with the possible exception of the infamous Motion picture). The most entertainment value now lies in playing "spot the wrinkle" as the principals begin to look more and more like their aged selves in the original TV episode *The Deadly Years*.

The second dose of mediocrity, albeit backed with some superlative special effects, was the second instalment of *Back to the Future* saga. In place of the wit and originality of the first film, we are treated to a frantic race through time, with lots of loose ends and unresolved paradoxes (if Doc and Marty return from the future to find the present has been altered, how come the bad guy who altered the present has been able to return to the same future whence he came?) But at least this disappointing sequel paved the way for the hugely entertaining final instalment, which will hopefully materialise in the next few months on The Movie Channel.

The above have been just about all that the Movie Channel has had to offer in the way of SF this month. But Sky Movies has provided richer pickings in terms of quality, if not quantity.

In my self-imposed mission to seek out strange films - to boldly review what no reviewer has reviewed before - I have once again come across at least one movie that has provided a pleasant surprise, one that was an unusual diversion, and one that was a pure golden turkey.

To begin at the top, or as near to the top as this month's films came, I expected nothing but drivel from the film *Stranded* (1987), starring no less a luminary than Maureen O'Sullivan as a grandmother who, with her rebellious granddaughter, is held hostage by a group of aliens.

Yawn. I thought, yet another piece of predictable xenophobia. But I was wrong. Despite the aliens (five in all) having what appeared to be a leather clad female version of *Spiderman* to protect them (and get the plot rolling by blowing away a delivery boy), they were a sympathetic bunch who, for a change, had not learned to speak the language before their arrival.

Before long the whole town is on the march to destroy the invaders, with the sheriff trying to protect the innocents inside the house who are actually quite happy to stay put, once they have learned that the friendly aliens are fleeing from some nasty monster on their home world. Why they fled to the living room of a home in small town America remained a mystery.

Despite the corny set-up, there was some genuine tension in parts, as the sheriff came to understand the aliens' plight and found himself having to fight off a less than helpful woman from the Department of Defence, whose only thought was to capture the aliens at all costs. Events finally come to a head, the DoD women is revealed to be a member of the nasty race who are pursuing our alien friends (if they're able to disguise themselves as humans, why didn't they just disguise themselves as another "goody" alien?), and

Maureen O'Sullivan steps in to save the day. The film has a definite B Movie feel to it, and I found its simplicity and approach strangely disarming.

Which is a lot more than can be said for *Spontaneous Combustion*, a slice of dross from the man who brought us the dubious delights of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Tobe Hooper.

Apparently, when America was testing the first atomic bomb, a young couple were sat no less than 200 yards from the detonation site, having been injected with a new drug to suppress the effects of radiation. It all appears to work, until nine months later when the wife gives birth to a young boy, and she and her husband promptly self-destruct in a burst of pyrotechnics.

The boy grows into the actor Brad Douir, who has survived for a couple of decades without realising that he has an unusual gift - whenever he gets angry, the subject of his ire has a habit of incinerating. The plot deteriorates from there, with Mr. Douir chasing around trying to figure it all out, while the bad guys - who have kept his origins from him for all the usual reasons - attempt to destroy him.

It's all pretty desperate stuff, but the poor plot is not helped by what has to be the worse performance in a lead role that I have ever seen. Mr. Douir gives new meaning to the term "wooden" and his attempts at anger and passion are the stuff of amateur dramatics. The real stars of the film are the special effects men, who turn in some spectacular set pieces. But I suspect that few people will remain with the film long enough to see many of these.

Falling half way between the above-average and the appalling was *Pulse*, starring Cliff de Young as the father of a family who find themselves victimised by a crazed electrical circuit. The basis for this unlikely, even ridiculous, premise is never really explained. All we see is lots of close ups of circuit boards and solder flowing from one part to another - this presumably represents the "intelligent" circuit adapting itself.

The first part of the film is the usual "denial" phase, where the protagonist refuses to accept what is going on, while the latter sees him convinced that all is not well and setting about destroying everything electrical in sight.

It's all quite fun, if a little shallow, and typifies the sort of genre offering that Sky Movies excels at showing - the sort that received little or no cinema release, and would probably have remained firmly on the shelf were it not for the problems of having to fill around 140 hours a week with films.

Strip Search 2 Andy Sawyer

The original *Strip Search* exhibition, mounted by the London Borough of Camden Arts and Entertainments, was reviewed by Jessica Yates in *Matrix* 88. Now *Strip Search 2* is on the road, taking in Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and several other cities.

The exhibition takes the same form as *SS1*, with examples of comics art from the classics - Little Nemo, Krazy Kat, Dick Tracy, Dan Dare - through the "underground" to the "New Breed" largely but not entirely fuelled by a wave of brilliant Britishers who themselves have been inspired by the cult status of comics in Europe and Japan. A special feature here in Liverpool was a room of local art coming from the highly active Cartoon Workshop led by Ian Hering of the City of Liverpool Community College (who led two sessions devoted to the practicalities of making and publishing comics).

It was interesting to see comic strips mounted as "art" and two things immediately struck me. First, the development of Leon Bazendale from the Beano to "I love you, Baby Basil" and secondly, whether viewing panels divorced from their narrative sequence in an art gallery is a "higher" artistic experience from reading them in comics. It did seem that many of the original illustrations came across better this way; for example, in one sequence from *North by West*, from the Liverpool Cartoon Workshop, the larger panels were much more effective than the blurred, smaller reproduction in the comic itself. Probably this is no more than a warning against assuming that comics are crap because the abilities of the artist are not always shown to their best advantage.

The launch of the exhibition, in mid-June, coincided with the first issue of *Blaze*, a mutation of the newswire *SpeakEasy* (which remains within its middle pages) into a fully fledged and footslogging comics magazine for *Cyberpunks*, literary outlaws and other angelheaded hipsters.

Meanwhile, *Strip Search 2* is on the move. If it comes to a city near you, it's well worth seeing, with a superb catalogue which should act as a worthwhile reference source long after the exhibition has left town.

Grossly Exaggerated

Roger Waddington

Of the making of books there is no end; and apparently none more so than in the realms of Science Fiction. The shelves are filled to bursting with sagas in umpteen volumes, swords and sorcery, movie tie-ins and something that saves all thought, novels set in a shared world; and after all, that's the business and the profit of publishers. And faced with this plethora, the casual reader might well be forgiven for thinking that all there is to Science Fiction; and why look any further when there is a guaranteed supply of new titles, coming up month after month?

Certainly there seems little thought given, or access to, what used to fuel the imagination of readers, the magazines, often with equally lurid covers, that once took the place of books in the reader's universe, following that same monthly schedule. Indeed, given time and evolution, it was seriously doubted that such anachronisms could survive this modern age; but while magazines like *Analog* and *Amazing* might seem to some like lumbering survivors from the age of the dinosaurs, there's an increasing number of new publications wanting to join them, to fill that apparently insignificant niche in the market, to provide the short fiction that, according to the publishers, never sells.

R.E.M. is the latest to dip its toe in the market, though the self-declared aim is to outdo *Interzone*, which, so quickly the years go by, has now become *The Establishment*, staid and unsurprising, with the other magazines, like *R.E.M.*, queuing up to take its place in the creative world; though whether they'll ever gain that share of the market is another matter. In design at least, it goes all out to make an assault on the senses, to break away from the *Interzone* mould; using an Atari computer and a Calamus design package should maybe evoke my partisan spirit, but from here it just looks like a severe attack of the DTs, and hopefully by next issue they'll have settled down.

Scheherazade, on the other hand, is more modest in its approach; booklet size and thickness as opposed to the A4 layout of *R.E.M.*, but with a glossy black cover, its title and logo picked out in gold, as the only illustration, it could well make the greater impact on the bookstand. And for its size, it loses nothing in the quality of its stories. The editorial policy is fiction written by and for women, but doesn't exclude men; the lead story *The Phoenix Farm* by Haydn Middleton, comes from a second-novel male author and it is perhaps best described by the fashionable phrase "magical realism", if any fault, that of being too short for its theme, as is the case with *August in London* by Sue Thomason, which surely deserves expansion and a *F&SF* or *Asimov's* sale, at least for further exploration of the culture of the Aur. The longest story in *Dark* by Deirdre Connah, but even that finished too soon for me; Tegna, one of the few characters in recent reading that I could cheerfully follow, that makes me look forward to further adventures. There's perhaps a slight drop in quality with *Storing up Trouble* by Fran Polanski, which is more typical fanzine fiction, not so much professional; and also an interview with Jane Gaskell, not least of interest for the hint she drops of further *Atlan* novels.

The Lyre is another first issue and one which ensured that it had enough stories to fill the issue, with a short story competition and an amazing £100 first prize; and apparently money to burn by offering so much a word as well; though the editor and publisher, Nicholas Mahoney, having checked his wallet, has now had to offer very much reduced rates. Still, it's a gesture rarely seen in fandom; and it's maybe an indication of the quality of the stories that the prize had to be split three ways. The overall winner was *The Phoenix Experiment* by Eric Brown, second *Small Steps* by Keith Brooke and third *The Miracle Worker* by C.N. Gilmore, which would have been my judgement as well. There's also something indelible by Simon Clark *Stan Laurel Directs the Crucifixion of Christ (Slapsack and Straight)*, which would certainly be rejected by any wider-circulating commercial prozine on the grounds of taste alone; perhaps the nearest equivalent, in impact and intent, not to mention mixing the sacred and profane, might be *The Assassination of John F. Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Bicycle Race*. But then among the usual mix of reviews and the like, the feature article is an interview with Ramsey Campbell, conducted by Andy Darlington. If there can be any criticism of *The Lyre*, which perhaps is going more for the traditional than *R.E.M.*, it could be for being economical with the truth. On the front cover, it promises fiction from seven authors; what you have to wait to get inside to see, is that three of those authors are only represented by Drabbles, those attempts to convey a successful SF story in 100 words; no more, no less. Which is something along of the lines of expecting a meal, and being given a sample to taste instead.

Though faced with those burgeoning bookshelves, faced with the impossibility of reading any more than a fraction of the publisher's output, the answer might be to invest in a copy of *Quantum*; or even a subscription. It is an American publication which you are more likely to find in the specialist shops or through the mail-order dealers, and subtitled *Science Fiction and Fantasy Review*. Famous authors on the cover, such as Kim Stanley Robinson's reprinted

introduction to Lucius Shepherd for a con programme book, Michael Bishop discussing his own work, an interview with Connie Willis; but here's everything you need to know about Science Fiction without actually reading it; the details and synopses of books, the ideas the authors wanted to convey, and all packaged in an entertaining mix. And titles as well that have yet to find a British publisher; so why not amaze friends with your knowledge of the American scene, and bluff your way in SF?

And for the cynical among us, who regard sequels to novels as just another chance to cash in, another trip to the well, and think the effort would be better spent on something more original, *Clarke's Odysseys* [see *Notice Board*] might be required reading. It takes the three episodes that Clarke has written (so far), the original 2001, then 2010 and finally 2061, and finds something of interest, something to discuss, in each of them. They have been published before in *Vector* and in *Sideral Times*; but bringing them together does help to give a clearer picture of Clarke's original intent; and maybe, a reappraisal.

Clarke's Odysseys: Peter Stockill, 8 Barsby Green, Berwick Hills, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS3 7NX (£1.25 a copy).
Quantum: Subscription Agents, New SF Alliance, PO Box 625, Sheffield S1 3GY (£2.50 an issue, £9 for 4 issues).

R.E.M.: Arthur Straker, 19 Sandringham Road, London NW2 5EP (£7 for 4 issues).

Scheherazade: Elizabeth Connah, St. Ives, Maypole Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 1HL (£1.75 an issue, £6 for 4 issues).

The Lyre: Nicholas Mahoney, 275 Lonsdale Ave, Intake, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN2 6HU (£2.20 an issue, £5.75 for three issues).

BSFA Profile

Jo Raine

After Andy Sawyer's article last issue, where I inadvertently made him several years younger than he actually is, to his combined pleasure and embarrassment, it is the turn of Jo Raine, who deals with new members.

I'm 27 years old, and happily single. My day job is a Database Manager for Cleveland and North Yorkshire TAP (Training Access Points to the uninitiated) which means that I spend long hours in front of a computer screen updating education and training information, or on the telephone trying to persuade lecturers that "learn wordprocessing" is not an adequate course description. I live in Hartlepool, and yes, in answer to many people's question, I did move next door but one to where I used to live (and where my parents still do live), but work in Middlesbrough and Northallerton, which leads to the surreal experience of travelling to work by British Rail on a daily basis. Surreal, in that you are never sure whether you are actually going to get there, or at what time. The British Rail timetable for the Coast Route must be one of the greatest works of fiction ever.

I've been Membership Secretary for the BSFA for just over four years, though sometimes it seems a lot longer. This involves processing enquiries about the BSFA, feeding information to other Committee members, getting together updated mailing lists etc. I receive on average 20-25 letters a week - the current record is 51 - and everyone gets a reply... eventually. A surprising number of enquiries come from abroad, as far away as Japan and Brazil, for example.

Hobbies: reading (virtually anything); writing (mainly fantasy/sf); people watching: following the fortunes of the England cricket team; politics, religion and conservation - not necessarily in that order. I became a Muslim three years ago, and the Gulf War notwithstanding, can usually get my mind around the sometimes peculiar restrictions that religion tries to impose on your world view. I also describe myself as a feminist, which leads to some peculiar mental contortions on occasion, not to mention fairly fierce arguments.

Favourite authors: at the time of writing - Mary Gentle, Pat Murphy, Janet Kagan, Judith Moffat, Philip K. Dick (did anyone else notice that they spell his name wrong in the credits for *Total Recall*), Tim Powers, Michael Moorcock, Dan Simmons - I could go on for some time.

Music: almost anything: at the moment 15th century church music, Dead can Dance, Copland, The Mission, Prefab Sprout and the Pogues. An eclectic mixture you'll agree.

TV: I'm beginning to miss *Twin Peaks*, and happily rediscovering *Blake's 7*, spending my wages on the tapes as soon as they are out, oh yes, and the Clangers - ecological SF at its best.

Well, this is me. Anything else you hear about me is purely fiction - probably.

Notice Board

For sale: *Clarke's Odyssey*, a booklet discussing 2001, 2010 and 2061. Have I discovered what 2001 is all about? Am I pretentious? Read me and find out. Please send £1.25 payable to Peter Stockill to: 8 Barsby Green, Berwick Hills, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS3 7NX.

Help wanted: As part of a programme to develop materials for 16+ school and college students and adults, I am currently collecting material from popular and specialised journals and magazines. I would be very grateful if any BSFA readers would be prepared to contribute to this programme by forwarding a small number of current or back issues of suitable magazines. A limited budget precludes the possibility of payment, but any materials used will be fully acknowledged. John Keen, School of Education, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.

Wanted: Copies of the Gollancz Classic SF series from #38 onward. I am gradually replacing my collection, so would ideally like to pay half cover price (or less). Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AY.

For sale: T-shirts with the official Juno logo on, as worn by Helen Sharman. Sizes XL, Large, Medium, Small, price £6.50 each, available from Andrew D. Douglass, Space School, Brunel University, Cleveland Road, Uxbridge UB8 3PH.

Wanted: new members for Apa-Centauri. Apa-Centauri is an established group of between 20 and 30 people who write something for group consumption at regular intervals. Members are mostly American, but foreign members are very welcome. Details from Carmen M. Graham, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA.

Competition Corner

Roger Robinson

Results of Competition 94 - "The Jumbles" by Annie Gramme

This proved to be a popular competition, with lots of (usually nice) comments accompanying the entries. As I hinted in the preamble last issue, lots of you guessed that Bester was involved in parts 2 and 3 before you got down to the business of unscrambling the anagrams. I thought that this would probably be the case and, as several of you noted, a great help in limiting the bibliographic searches required to find the last few authors. Also, the initial letters of the authors in the order given spelled the phrase E SMITH MENDEL HALO, and although this is a nonsense phrase it again proved helpful.

Answers to part 1 -

Hep Zack, a neat trendy moll	Kemo and the Crazy Planet	Elliott, E C
Put in heel	Up the Line	Silverberg
Dangers in Gor	Dragonsinger	McCaffery
S.S. got fatter	Soft Targets	Ing
See TV - sense hex	The Seven Sexes	Tenn
Fed the left cheat	The Daleth Effect	Harrison, H
Tie weight in axle	The Exile Waiting	McIntyre
Raided the bistros	Deathbird Stories	Elmsom
Rid single woman green	Ringworld Engineers	Niven
Goon fighting a swede	White Fang Goes Dingo	Disch
Dante arranged orchestras	Star-Anchored	
	Star-Angered	Elgin
Last tory role	Solar Lottery	Dick
So gather pickle oil	Rocket Ship Galileo	Heinlein
Don fried mountain ape	Foundation and Empire	Asimov
Steam parts	Past Master	Lafferty
Hush one's sad twin	Shadows in the Sun	Oliver

One (slight) apology - it really should be *The Ringworld Engineers*, but this omission fooled no-one. The difficult ones as I expected were the Eliot and the Elgin, although not spotting the Heinlein spoiled an otherwise good entry. In this section of the quiz, there were 3 fully correct entries and 7 with just one missing. One entry missed 2, and another 4 - a very high standard all around. The total entry was a promising 16, although a couple of these were more letters of comment rather than full-blown attempts. This in itself is encouraging as I rely on feedback to let me know what you want - and it is obvious that SF-related word games are popular.

All the entrants got part 2 correct - *The Demolished Man* by Alfred Bester.

For part 3, you were asked to make an anagram of *The Stars My Destination* and this gave some weird phrases, as well as some fairly appropriate comments on the book. When I set this part, I noticed that STORY, HISTORY, MYTH and NOMAD were all to be found, so I expected some good anagrams. Here are some of the entries by the also-rans, in no particular order:

Stain on my head, it rests
Story is Tinted Man's Hate
An asteroid sent its Myth
Nomad is at rest in the sty
A Man tested in this story
Has Nomad tint yet, sister?
Stray Nomad is in the Test

A. Buchan
Terry Hunt
Steve Grover
Andy Mills
Paul Lennox
John English
Rob Jackson.

Although on the face of it, some of these do not have anything to do with either the story or the author, there were some amusing, and tortuous, explanations added to the anagrams.

The anagrams supplied with the 3 all-correct entries were:

Tort rate is man's Destiny
One hat rated saint myth
Death to nasty ministers

S.C. Hatch
K. Marsland
Colin Greenland

and the winner by a VERY small margin is the legalistic phrase supplied by S.C. Hatch - who you may remember won the last competition as well!

A hearty round of applause to all entrants - especially the 3 of you who entered just to ensure there was my regular one new entrant. Apart from those mentioned above, entries were received from Nigel Parsons, Daniel Buck, Václav Kriz and your co-ordinator Kev McVeigh. A special mention must be made of the entry from Nick the Hat and Cosmic Dave whose Besterian use of letter layout allowed them to get the phrase "Synaesthesia - the Mind Distorts".

Competition 95 - "Des.Res."

After the bibliographic and lexicographic excesses of the last competition, a nice gentle cerebral challenge this time. In the current economic climate, there are grave problems in the Estate Agency business. In spite of this, the agencies continue to heap hyperbole on metaphor when they describe their wares. For this month's competition, you should write no more than 150 words describing one of the following "Properties for Sale":

A flat in Ballard's "High Rise" block
Gormenghast Castle
A Tutor's apartment in Unseen University
The teco-overloaded house in *Demon Seed*
One of Jack Vance's Houses of Izlm.

The usual £5 book-token for the winner, and there are three surprise prizes for contestants most likely to be the Uriah Heeps of estate agency. All entries and comments to **Roger Robinson**, 75 Rosslyn Ave, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 0RG, by September 13th, 1991.

Stop Press

Bits and pieces which arrive at the last minute - the Leeds Film Festival will have a round the clock SF spectacular on October 18-20; Thomas Ligotti is the featured author for *Weird Tales* 303, which will be shipped in October; Dave Langford ponders the growing "evil Satan" status of the BSFA among con-running fans, which has been getting increasingly intense ever since the *Confraternity* cock-up (of not presenting awards there), to the point where an innocuous meeting topic about conventions has provoked a great and wrathful "What right have they got to criticize us?"; various Doctor Who events in London including TV episodes on August 22, a special on August 7 and 21 and films on August 14 and 28. The source, who pleads don't ask me to cover them, please! carefully doesn't mention where they are: probably MOMI.

Looking ahead, Peterborough SF Club will be celebrating both the Tolkien centenary and also the 80th anniversary of the publication of a collection of Ghost stories by the then local Vicar, B.G. Swain. Finally, the Comic Book Retailers Association will be launched officially at UKCAC (the weekend at the end of August and beginning of September). Founders include Dave Hodson, Phil Hall of Squonk, Mike Conroy of *Edge of Forever* and representatives of AKA, Scotland.