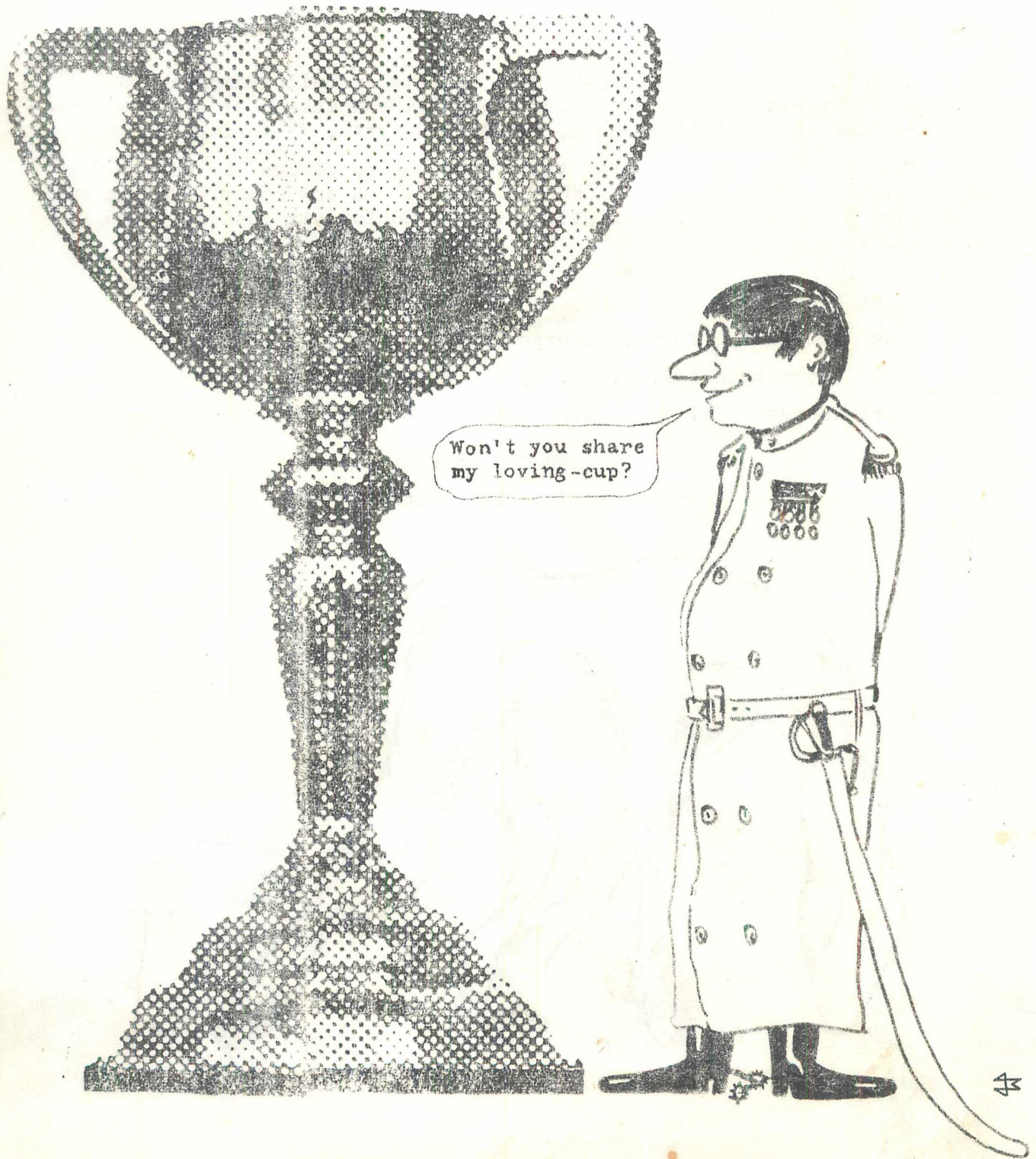


RATAPLAN

TWO

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTS



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RATAPLAN is edited and published monthly by Leigh Edmonds and Diane Bangsund of Flat 1, 166 Glen Eira Road, Elsternwick, Victoria 3185, and Bernie Bernhouse of 61 Military Road, Avondale Heights, Victoria .

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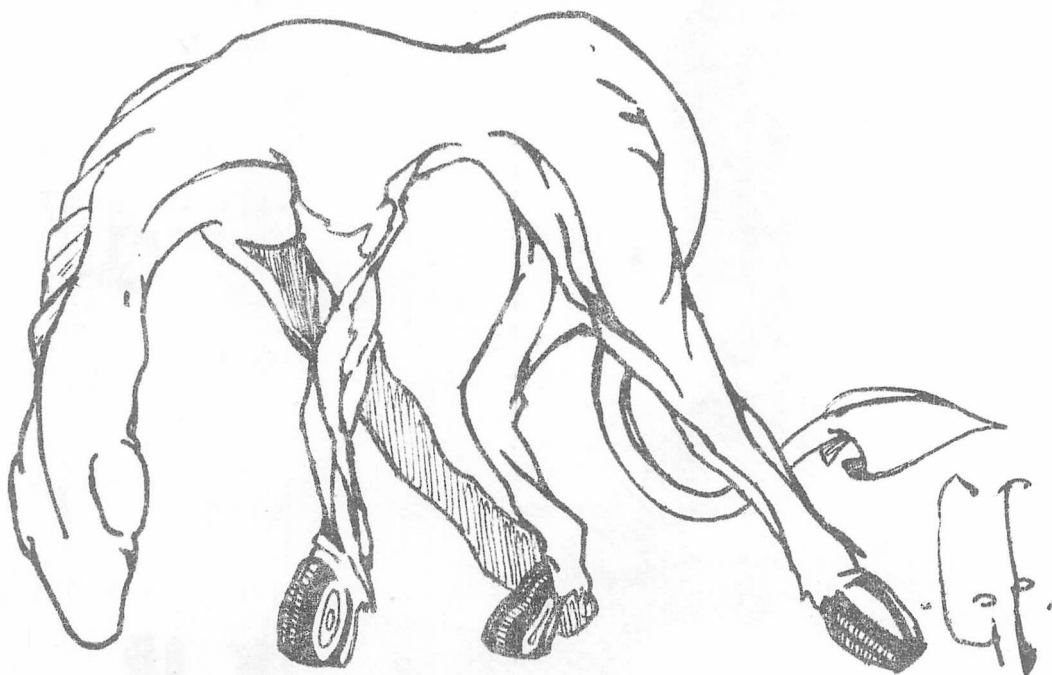
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Leigh

POOR OLD MELBOURNE:

Australian fandom is staggering. (When I say Australian fandom, I really mean Melbourne fandom...just shows how much I think about Sydney).

Good old ASFR seems to be on its last legs and could easily fold, or suffer something else. This is something which has been building up since the Easter issue (15) and which probably has its roots buried way back before even then.

The Melbourne SF Club is getting worse and worse with every passing week. There has not been a new and interesting face around there for months, and the old members are just not going any more. The reasons for this are manifold and it would take quite a time to detail them all (besides, anyone who has gone to the club will know most of them). The so-called renaissance at the club (sometime around the middle and end of last year) has fallen through and now the place is worse than I should think it has ever been. If it were to disappear tomorrow, who would notice?

Here in Glen Eira Road, things are little better. There is an utter lack of enthusiasm and fannishness. The flat in Redan Street might have been old and hard to keep clean, but it was certainly the centre for some of the most high powered fanac that Australia has ever seen. The whole atmosphere of this place is suburbia. I had promised myself that I would never live in suburbia, but here I am, and somehow, there doesn't seem to be any fannish life left in me, or any other kind of life for that matter.

And there it is, all reduced to three short and poorly written paragraphs. If we don't do something soon we are all dead.

SO, YOU NOTICED:

If you didn't notice, as from this issue RATAPLAN has three editors. There is me (you should remember me from the first issue). Bernie is hard to describe. So far his fanac has been limited to one issue of AUSTRAL FANTALES and things locally. He is seventeen and is interested in all those things which I feel I should be interested in, but just can't be bothered, (Philosophy, psychology and all good stuff like that, not to forget sex.) He is also hooked on PSYCHOTIC.

Diane is different (and I should hope so). She could very easily get nominated for the "Sweet Young Thing of the Year Contest" though that sort of conveys the wrong impression. True, Diane is Sweet, and she must count as young (even though she is the oldest of us three) but perhaps Thing isn't right, married is more like it. Pity about that.

Introductions over; we have nussed out some sort of policy. First off, RATAPLAN is going to be monthly, and you better believe it. With ASFR in such poor shape Australia once again needs somewhere for its fans to write and get heard. Unlike ASFR, we will not be concentrating on stuff, and a book review section will not become a regular feature (though the

occasional one might get printed).

The basis of RATAPLAN (and any other fanzine which attempts to come out on a regular schedual) will be the letters and the material which we three editors will write. We also want to print one or two articles of fannish interest, though the amount of this sort of material will have to be limited by the size of the letter column.

For some strange reason, I find myself limited to only three pages and there are still a few fanzine reviews to go, so I won't be able to say much more (which is a blessing because I'm fresh out of original thoughts).

Even though Diane and Bernie have been working on this issue, it is mainly my work. As from next issue we will all be working on the letter column (which should be fun- two lines of letter and a three page discussion between the three of us) but this time I have been the only one with a decent chance to work on it. I must apologise to those people who I had told that they were going to appear in this issue, especially Peter Kemp and John Breden. Due to having to find room for two more editorials, there was just no room for your contributions. Perhaps next issue....

Cheap Chippy Chopper

....which finds itself here because of the amazingly long letter column.

PHILE 6

Graham Charnock, 1 Eden Close, Alperton, Wembley, Middx., U.K.

A very depressing fanzine. Somewhere inside Chris Priest says that Ron Bennet said that this fanzine could become the focal point of UK fandom....perhaps a nice thing for the editor, but not for fandom. If a 'thing' like this can become a focal point fanzine, fandom might just as well be dead. Of course we know that English fandom is in a bad way, but I never hoped to see proof like this.

Charles Platt writes about the BuxtonCon and makes it seem pretty terrible. The only thing which he seems to have enjoyed at all is the GoH speech, the rest he reports through very foggy galsses.

Little else of interest except a two letter column in which both correspondents seem to be urging the editor and readers to be "meaningful". Charles Platt explains how fans are a lot of self deluded people who go around making half-baked statments and expecting everyone to be impressed by their depth of thought.

All through PHILE I was aware of the attempts to make serious comments on various things, nothing could be taken simply for fun. I makes me think that perhaps English fandom has collapsed because fans are all out there trying to find some meaning to life. They are not going to accept fandom and stf for what they are, rather, they have to analise and discuss until they find that there is nothing left.

SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES 73

Ken Rudolph, 745 N. Spaulding Ave., Los Angeles, California, 90046, USA.
RATAPLAN Page 4

For a long time I had heard about this fabulous SHAGGY, but never seen one. Now that I have seen this issue I am no longer sure if all that I have heard is true. Certainly it is good, but as to whether it is fabulous..... well, it's more or less a poor PSYCHOTIC. I feel that a lot of the blame for this must be due to the editorship, you would hardly know that an editor existed if it were not for his three or so pages as the front.



As in most fanzines, the letter column is the main point of interest. D.G. Locke makes comments about not liking pot and acid and how he deplores the reference (in an earlier ish) that this is going to be the new way with fandom (and how hippies make such good fans and vice versa). From the editorial reaction I would say that the LA fans are pretty touchy about their pot. Firstly the reply to the letter starts out by proving to us that pot is not addictive (Locke never said that it was) and then tells all about the prejudices which have grown up against pot and all those other drugs. Ted White causes some fun when he takes two thirds of a page in telling us about how he is persecuted by A.J. Budrys who refuses to review one of Ted Whites' books in Galaxy.

Vaughn Bode must be out to get himself a fan artist Hugo in 1969, so much of his work has suddenly appeared in so many places.

Sooner or later somebody is going to comment on all the violence in Bode's art, so I might as well get in on it. Off hand I can remember seeing about fourteen-fifteen pages of his work and have counted eight or nine violent deaths. I am not opposed to all this, but I think that I could be certain that somebody will, sooner or later. The strip in this SHAGGY impressed me in that at a first glance it appeared to be humorous, but on close reading it turned out to be a n old stf plot handled rather well, much better than I would have expected of the comic medium.

CRABAPPLE GAZETTE 2

Mike Horvat, P.O. Box 286, Tangent, Oregon, 97389, USA.

Not counting an article by Robert Conquest which just has to be a reprint from somewhere and another reprint from something called "Diaberie" and a reprint of Thomas Love Peacock, Mike has a pretty small fanzine. CG seems to be a good example of how to get Big Nmaes into your fanzine without really trying.

CARANDAITH 1 (Journal of the Australian Tolkien Society)

Mike O'Brien, 158 Liverpool Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000.

In actual fact this first issue was edited by Paul Novitski, but he has gone back to the US of A (where he belongs) and Mike has taken over from him.

Tolkien has never captured my imagination, so there is little in this to interest me. However, there are a few interesting comments on Australian fandom.

REX

Bernie

I'm sure that most of the devoted ASFR readers (me included) have now seen ish 17. For the sake of the deprived and under privileged, I'll explain; there are twenty-two pages of hypersensitive, metaphysical meanderings, all on "2001". Think of it, twenty-two pages of imaginative interpretations, and, if you were like me and thought it was just plain old rebirth of Man, in a different perspective well believe me, that definition is old hat. ASFR is the thing for you....buy it at your local church!

Like almost everyone else, I have a few qualms, theories and views of my own which I had intended to lump on Bangsund (there are a few corrections you know John) but instead I decided to write a sample, in cynical shadings, of what I think could be happening now.

Kubrick and Clarke, sitting together in an elaborate version of the old colonial style setting, genuine stroboscopic lighting gives that ALIEN touch.

Kubrick is sumrking at a plastic model of the space ship while Clarke continuously galnces at his watch and suddenly jumps up to point at the 3d window. "Here he is now" cries Clarke rubbing his hands.

"What, already," Kubrick moans, "my ribs are still aching from the last batch."

The postman saunters in and without a word dumps the mail on the floor and leaves. Clarke eagerly rushes over and begins reading a letter from the mound on the floor. Immediately he bursts into riotous laughter, he turns to Kubrick with an excited boyish grin, visibly restraining himself from spluttering and says, "Hey Stan, read this one, it'll kill you;" jabbing Kubrick in the ribs. Temporarily he ignores the pain from Clarke jabbing and furtively scans the letter. "This is rich," snorts Kubrick and as Clarke chuckles in the background. He begins to read it out aloud.

"...and then the lighting of the room, suggesting in a Jungian sense, illumination from the subconscious..." Suddenly Kubrick breaks up and, completely out of control with laughter, falls to the floor clutching his sides frantically. "Oh no!" he gasps "This is too much, these letters are killing me. Hey Arty, I guess its just too bad that Jung doesn't happen to have a subconscious in his psychology, maybe he meant Jungs Collective Unconscious?"

"I doubt it," replies Clarke loaded with sarcasm, "more likely he was siding with Freud, and he believed that the Aliens were still suffering from a castration complex!"

Kubrick, who was rolling crazily on the floor, regains a bit of his sanity, sits up and turns to Clarke with all the superficial expressions of earnesty. He begins to read again.

"...I am inclined to wonder if, when the men line up to have their photographs taken, the slab actually smites them with the radio signal, perhaps rather annoyed by their reaction. Being photographed with God! -- how thoughtless of these arrogant little bipeds! No I'm trying to be funny there!..."

"Its great isn't it," chuckles Clarke, cupping his hands over his mouth to prevent any frenzied dribbling. "Great?" asks Kubrick almost annoyed "Why this kid is phenomenal, he needs a guest spot on the Red Skeleton Hour for sure, this would be the best interpretation yet, its a scream!"

Clarke, just about to speak, is interrupted by Kubrick who breaks into uncontrol able fits of laughter. Both on the floor now, spluttering and giggling insanely, Clarke looks at Kubrick and says "Hey maybe Stan, we oughta put a real live symbolic meaning into our next film, can you imagine the response?"

"OH NO!"

+ + + + +

did you hear bout the shark that came to a screaming holt?

+ + + + +

Personally, I think that symbolism and interpretations can go too far, although I'm sure a psychologist would have an analytical orgy. A Bob Dylan L.P. is in some respects like a Rorschock ink blot test - you create and let them figure it out.

Or like a thematic apperception test where you might have a picture of a sombre old lady and her morose daughter (in my analogy with Dylan, it could of course be described in a song).

Now, to a pillhead, acid head etc., he would interperate it as, "Well the old lady had been saving up her used hypodermics, in the hope that fifty would be a trade-in (at the underground narcotics trade-in centre -- see your local dealer) for twenty TABLOID BRAND Meth. Well, one day after smoking some bananas, sniffing some nutmeg and eating some grass (Whew!)..." etc. ad nauseum.

Then again, a sex-starved nymphomaniac would say, "Fuck,....."

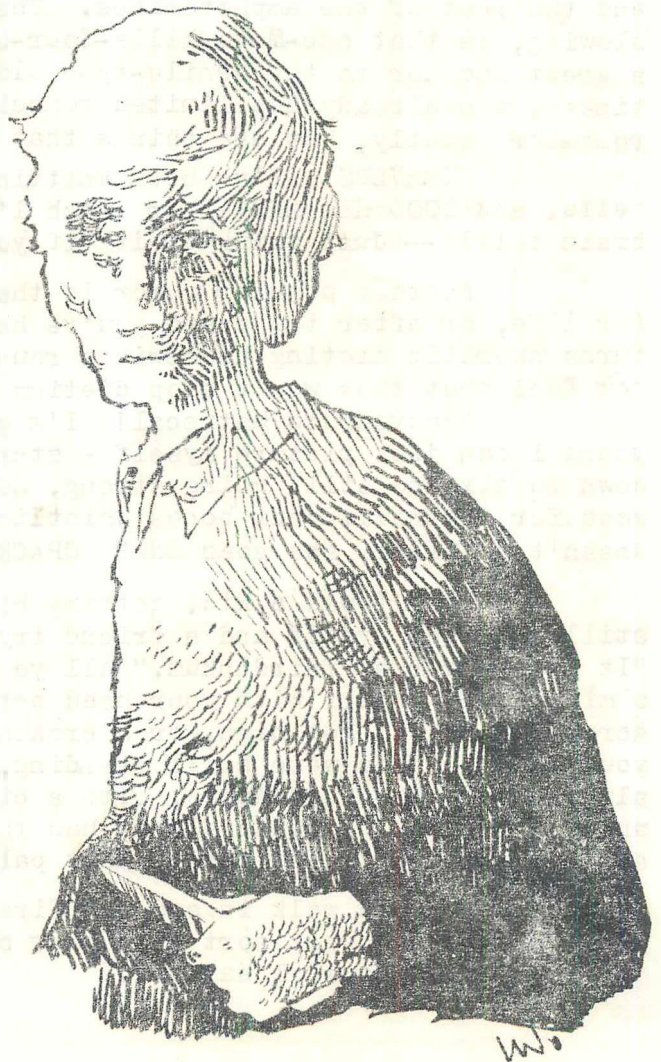
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And the same applies to Dylan songs. The opening lines to "Mr. Jones" are:

"You walk in the room, with your pencil in your hand, you see somebody naked and you ask who is that man?"

A bit further down we have lines like:

"And you don't know just what you'll say when you get home - the swordswallower comes up to you and



then he kneels, he crosses himself and then he clicks his high heels - he asks how does it feel - he says thanks for the loan of your throat - give me some milk or else go home."

Yes, well, I'll leave it up to you to decide that one,
BUNCHA QUEERS!

My point is, that interpretations only reflect the subconscious thoughts of the individual. When a psychiatrist, interviewing a patient, shows him an apperception card of two little girls throwing sand over each other and the interpretation is that one of the little girls has kicked the other in the teeth so that the other one decided to smack shit out of her, well then the psychiatrist can be reasonably sure that his patient has got quite a bit of aggressiveness.

+ + + + +

Can anyone help me out with a query? I a particular ish of PSYCHOTIC (22,23 or 26), some fantastic idolizer of Burroughs (Willy Burroughs) happened to drop the mane TOM PAINE. Also Dylan in "J.W. Harding" mentions how he was "breathing the air around TOM PAINE." Well, shit, unless this TOM happens to exhale Cannibus fumes, he must be one hell-of-a-DEITY!

+ + + + +

There have been some nasty propaganda-type rumors floating around about the effects or side effects (which ever way you look at it) of Meth and the rest of the amphetamines. The first of these and the most mind blowing, is that one-Meth-kills-four-brain-cells rumor, which is of course a great shocker to the senile-type old lady, who takes them to aid her ticker, who already has limited conscious perception, and who can't remember exactly, but she thinks that we have about 98.6 brain cells.

"HEAVENS! I've been knitting this pullover on only 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ brain cells, and GOOD HEAVENS after lunch I'll be down to my last quarter of a brain cell! -- Just think of it (if you still can)!"

Another popular rumor is that one-shot-of-Meth and your hooked for life, or after two years you've had it. Once again this sort of thing turns neurotic dieting housewives round the bend completely because they now feel that they won't stop dieting at eleven stone, their original aim.

"Heavens to Metrecal! I'm going to diet myself to death. In two years I can just picture myself - started dieting at sixteen stone, already down to six and still going strong, HORRORS!" You can hear her when she goes for a stroll...her bones whistling in the wind. When she falls she doesn't go SPLAT, she goes SNAP CRACKLE CRUNCH!

When I was a kid, getting high took a lot of ingenuity. I can still remember myself and a friend trying to convince a dubious onlooker, "It really works, fairdinkum." All ya have to do is hold your breath for a minute and a half with your head between your knees, then jump up screaming, "I'll get high, or a broken neck!" And, if that didn't blow your mind and you were still standing, there was always that reliable alternative, Coke and Aspro, with a cigarette made out of horse manure and tea leaves. Parents always had that worried look when we'd arrive in an ambulance, or walk in with that pale shade of green on our faces.

I would walk in and the first scathing question dad would throw at me would be, "What sort of bloody shit have you been smoking?"

What could I say.....?

TSENZIG

Diane

On March 12th 1946, I was born. On March 12th 1966 I married John Bangsund. Nothing unusual in these two events, nothing unusual happened between those two events and what's more nothing unusual happened for the next four weeks following our marriage, until the 7th Australian Science Fiction Convention, held in Melbourne over Easter 1966.

Not being greatly interested in S.F. at the time, I didn't attend the whole of the Con. so I didn't witness the exact moment that was to change my life completely and irrevocably. It was when John came home for dinner that Saturday evening that I first noticed the far away look that I would, I soon discovered, come to see on his face more often than not. Being, as I said newly married, I became somewhat worried at his appearance, so I, in my most feminine manner asked him if every thing was alright. "Fine", he said "every thing is fine".

After asking what was for dinner and telling me that we were having an extra guest he settled down to relate to me the events of the afternoon.

Some nut, he informed me, had stood up at the business session and suggested that there should be a Fanzine in Australia in which Australian Fans could have their views and articles published. It appears that John was then elected to the post of editor of this magazine. What I didn't find out until a few months later was that John was the "nut" who suggested it and that our so called best friend Lee Harding nominated John for the position of editor and financier etc., of this proposed magazine.

Well, that's how Australian Science Fiction Review started. The birth pains were long and numerous - where to get articles from, what type of paper and stencils to use, how to get the time to do it all, who to send it to, and so on.

Initially, I thought the magazine was to be a marvellous idea until it suddenly dawned on me that I didn't seem to have a husband any longer. My first reaction was anger, but after a month or so I decided, "If you can't beat em, join em". So I did, and am I glad.

I still don't see that much of John, but the look of delight on his face when he gets an article or a letter that he's been waiting for, the look of contentment and satisfaction after an issue has been sent out, the happy kiss on the cheek when he gets a letter from Chip Delany or Brian Aldiss, make all the loneliness and frustration worth while.

ASFR has gone a long way since its quiet beginnings and in my own way I'm grateful to it, for it has taken us with it. Taken us on a journey into the great and wonderful world of fandom with all its marvellous and interesting people.

Now, I myself am entering the field of fanzine editing, and I can only hope that it affords me the same pleasure and satisfaction that it has afforded so many others.

The Beheading of Basil Pott

by John Bangsund

Lighting his pipe, Desmond remarked (between puffs), "You know, old Sir Gilbert Midden - grandfather's grandfather, hm? - on my mother's side, of course. He conducted a literary magazine back in the early eighteen hundreds. Accumulated most of these books around you. Upstairs there is a room full of letters he received during his long tenure as editor, and a lot of rubbish as well. Our family never throws out anything, you know." He chuckled. "Otherwise I'm sure I would've been thrown out when I was a lad, eh?"

"Nonsense," I said.

"Be that as it may, I've been going through all Sir Gilbert's stuff lately - mainly for this work I'm doing on Keats, you know - and yesterday I discovered a most intriguing document..."

He paused.

"Does the name Edward Potter mean anything to you?"

"I... it's not... not an uncommon name," I said.

"Hmm. Well, the Edward Potter I have in mind was a clergyman who lived - oh, it must have been around three hundred years ago. And not very far from here. The only other reference I can find to him, apart from this, er, document, is in a letter written by one Jeremy Starke. You don't know Starke? Don't blame you, either. Minor poet, and a pretty awful one. Contemporary of Milton. In a letter appended to his memoirs - fascinating stuff, by the way, Starke's memoirs - he says something to the effect that a friend pointed out to him while travelling in these parts a lonely house in a woddied vale, surrounded by a tall hedge. 'There,' said Starke's companion, and I particularly remember these words, 'There dwells that other-worldlie Cleric, Mister Potter, with his fantastick Gew-Gaws.'"

"And this document...?"

"A letter," said Desmond, taking it from a folder on the table beside him. "I find it, as I say, intriguing. May I read it to you?"

"Certainly!" I said.

"Good. Well now, ther's no address on it, only a date - November 27th, 1820. The handwriting is very precise - quite without character - almost, one might say, mechanical. The letter is rather long - are you comfortable?"

"Quite, thank you."

He commenced to read.

To the Editor,

"Midden's Literary Messenger",

Honored Sir,

I have been much interested to read the comments published in your journal by a number of learned gentlemen concerning the recent volume written by the gifted Mr. Keats, and in particular their

comments on the poem intituled "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil." In all humbleness, Sir, I desire to make known to you the true events which lie behind that singular poem.

I do not wish to startle your gentle readers, even less your good self, nor would I have you dismiss my story as a jest perpetrated by some foolish humorist; yet must I reveal that I who write this am in truth not a man, but an engine fashioned to appear as a man and imbued with human intelligence.

My late beloved master, the Reverend Edward Potter, a man of great learning in divers branches of knowledge, and of skilled craftsmanship, did of his own genius devise and construct me. My form he so patiently and cunningly contrived that I did pass amongst men and was known as one of their kind. In jest he would say, "that he was the Potter and I the Pot", therefore "Pott" he named me; and since I did appear regal in countenance, he gave me the first name "Basil", which, as you well know, signifies "a king" in the Greek tongue.

I served my master many years, and as Master Basil Pott was I known to all.

Now it happened that the reverend gentleman did in his age fall ill, and died. In his will it was discovered that descendants had he none, and that his estate upon his death should be deemed mine. Thus his house and small grounds came into my possession, together with a moderate income, for which I had little use since my wants are so few. For sustenance I need but water and a little paraffin; no liquor can harm my working, nor yet food, but neither affords me pleasure.

For long I kept house in seemly order, and tended the garden in quiet sorrow. Sorrow gave way to contentment, and contentment to loneliness as the friends of my earlier days became fathers and grandsires and died. Of the new generations I made no close friends, but rather kept to myself.

Now at about this time I began to occasionally suffer strange and painful spasms in my head, whether because some internal member used in my construction had become defective or no I cannot tell. However I found after much experimental manipulation that I could relieve these pains by removing my head and placing it in a cool spot while I went about my daily chares. Naturally I kept the gates firmly locked at such times lest anyone perchance seeing my strange figure should be alarmed. One small urchin who happened to see me thus ran terrified to his parents, who cuffed him soundly about the ears for telling untruths, and told him "that assuredly Mister Pott had been but stooped over in his work", and that he must never trespass in Mister Pott's garden again.

At last my loneliness bore too heavily upon me and I began to seek new friendships. Now among these new friends there came to be numbered a fair and comely maiden of the district, named Miss Eliza Firth. In her company I enjoyed many hours of pleasant conversation when upon my solitary rambles. I met and walked with her. It soon became apparent that Miss Eliza was captivated by my still attractive person, and this became, for different reasons, a source of embarrassment to us both. At last one day she could no longer contain herself, and flung herself at my feet, poor creature, with protestations of love and imploring tears. To see her in such woeful plight I conceived it was my duty to assure her of my love for her, and it was true that I had affection for her, but oh! how I rue that day! My master had made me too human for my own good. Would that he had dismantled me, or taught me to do it myself! but such had not been his will.

Since it pleased Miss Eliza, I went a-courting, and soon visited her house, where I was acquainted with her father and two brothers, her mother having been dead those five years past. Her father was a dying invalid, poor man, and she the youngest child.

Now the two young men her brothers were very jealous of me, since they desired their sister to wed a childhood friend, a fellow named Jenkin, a plain but worthy youth. Often did I try to persuade Miss Eliza to favour young Jenkin, pleading, as I made pretence, that I was full ten years her senior, but she would hear none of this.

In the years that followed the maiden begged often to know of me when we should be married. My excuses were unfailing but did persuade her the less as time passed. Often I had resolved to reveal the sad and ghastly truth to her, but failed in courage when her trusting eyes were turned upon mine.

There came a time when old Mister Firth died, and William, the eldest son, became master of the house. Scarce two months had passed when Mister William, James his younger brother, and Jenkin the rejected suitor, became possessed of a daring and most brutal resolve, namely, to murder me.

Of this I became aware one evening at sundown, when furtively the three men appeared in my grounds, armed with knives. Now as it so chanced on this day my painful spasms had come upon me, and my head was even then lying apart in the cool grass while I replaced my implements in the shed at the farther end of the garden. The murderers soon espied my head lying and were astounded as to what stroke of fortune should have deprived them of their prey. Soon recovering their senses they rudely slung my head into an evil-smelling sack, and swiftly quitted the scene.

Long did I search and found not my head. At length, most sorely dismayed, I clothed myself in shabby vesture, concealing the part I lacked with scarves and a wide, low-brimmed hat. In vain I searched the highways, and for many days was engaged in fruitless search of the countryside.

In the meanwhile the three villains had hidden their grisly prize in a tangled ravine, and had gone about their business.

Miss Eliza daily grew more fretful and alarmed when I came not to her, and enquired distressfully of her brothers and friends if they had not seen me. Not for one moment did any connect me with the strange, shambling figure who ever wandered lanes and fields in hopeless search.

The maiden herself began tearfully to roam the countryside, crying pitifully for her lost love. On one such dismal day her small dog chanced to loiter in a ravine, whence she came to rescue it, and discovered her pet yapping excitedly at a sack which lay entangled in the weeds and brambles. This she opened and found my lost member, whereat she screamed and fell into a swoon upon the ground.

At length, somewhat recovered, she trembling carried her gruesome burden home, and stealing in, concealed my head within a brass urn, and covered it with a geranium. She then lapsed into uncontrollable weeping, piteous to hear.

I will not relate how after long search I came to discover where my head lay hidden, nor how I contrived to steal the brazen urn while Miss Eliza and all the house lay sleeping. Suffice it to say that once this task was accomplished I gathered together some money and personal belongings and disappeared the same night to a far country.

Many years afterward I chanced to learn how the maiden mourned

her loss for many months, and how sweet reason at length prevailed over the memory of her bitter misfortune, so that scarce a twelvemonth later she became wedded to the villainous Jenkin.

Now all this happened many years ago. In recent years I have lived in the midst of London's throng, contenting myself with the company of two or three select friends, and shunning like the plague all women. To one friend in an injudicious moment I confided my true nature and told the story of my unhappy adventure with Miss Eliza Firth. I believe Mister Keats had the story from him, or perchance from some other whom my friend, despite my earnest to the contrary, told it. Mister Keats romanticized the tale and altered it almost beyond recognition, as is his right as poet. He is said to have changed Miss Eliza Firth's name to Isabella since the former name reminded him, why I cannot tell, of the stable whereof his father was proprietor.

He has, however, retained my own name in a most ingenious fashion by doing away with the humble geranium which so grotesquely covered my head in that foul urn, and replacing it with some foreign herb called, like myself, "Basil". Hence he is able to present his Isabella acting in much the same way as I imagine Eliza to have acted, viz:

Piteous she look'd on dead and sense less things,
Asking for her lost Basil amourosly;
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
To ask where her Basil was; and why
'Twas hid from her: "For cruel 'tis," said she,
"To steal my Basil-Pot away from me."

I trust Sir, that the above will be construed as it is intended, namely, by no means as an attack on Mister John Keats, whose work I admire, but as a contribution to our nation's knowledge concerning the true sources of her glorious literature. And remain

Your humble servant,
Basil Pott, Esquire

Then: There was silence for a long moment when Desmond had finished.

"Well, what do you think of that?"

"Incredible," I said. "Quite... incredible. What do you, er, intend doing with it, Desmond?"

"Can't quite see the fine fuddy-duddies who will part with their ill-gotten guineas for my book making any sense of that, eh? On the other hand, it would be a shame not to publish it."

"So?"

"So... I say, wouldn't it be rather fun to send it to a science fiction magazine? Eh, Basil?"

— John Bangsund

A slightly different version of this story was printed in CANTO 1, edited by Lee Harding, 1964.



Department 85



John Foyster
12 Glengariff Drive
Springvale North
Victoria 3170

Dear Leigh,

Now that RATAPLAN is out I see no reason to publish the GRYPH - you do it so much more neatly. The appearance of this issue (doubtless due to the Banger Duper) is excellent and the layout shows ASFR a thing or two.

The contents are more than a little mixed, with the stuff from Baxter and myself a little out of place (which is not surprising when you consider the source....). I wonder how many people will recognise THE OLD HAY SAGA as the history of recent Australian fandom, not many I suspect. I imagine the composition as follows - Paul working out the plot and many of the names and John doing most of the writing - yup?

\$\$\$ (indicates editorial opinion I'll be bound)
Very good Mr. Foyster, take this blank diploma and the best of British luck. \$\$\$

John Baxter's article has a few misprints which I think you should not have let creep into an article of this importance. But if the names are used more than once then it usually turns out that one of the spellings is correct.

You are giving it to poor Bernie both ways - on the one hand I didn't get a copy of his SHOCK NEWS.... which left me out in the cold, and on the other hand Bernie was the foul fellow who sent me the information about APA-A. Bernie is definitely misunderstood. (In the case of his hand writing, it is easy to imagine why).

When I've been around fandom as long as Gary Woodman I'll try to tell you how to run your fanzine, but at the moment my inexperience disqualifies me.

Your cover shows Banger operating in the medium in which he performs best - keep the bugger at it. And you keep the b+1+g news for the very last page and the very last paragraph, shame.

I'd say some more about RATAPLAN but your head seemed sufficiently big last time I observed it.

P.S. I didn't enclose a contribution - tough

Lee Harding
Olinda Road
The Basin
Victoria 3154

Dear Leigh,

Well, here I am in my little stone cottage writing a letter of comment on RATAPLAN 1; whatever is the world coming to?

I'm mightily impressed. Do you realise - of course you must - that in one fell swoop you've put out the best single issue of an Australian fanzine this year? Also, you seem to have a very clear idea of what makes a fanzine successful - not to say great - and I would that a certain JB was one half as aware of what is needed.

\$\$\$ Sadly enough I have the feeling that I knew what it is that makes a fanzine successful. Now that the first issue is out and the letters of comment have arrived, I doubt that I can do it again. Perhaps this issue will be a bit poor but there should be a pickup with number 3

Your comments on JB are understandable but I think you are a bit off the mark. Though John is producing ASFR by the standard fannish means I think that he no longer regards it as a fanzine in the larger sense, not a fanzine in the sense of what RATAPLAN is. ASFR once had an image of lighthearted seriousness, but now I think that John has lost most of it and will have a very hard time getting it back, if ever. \$\$\$

I suppose that the most prominent difference between a professional and an amateur magazine is the amount of actual material written by the editor. Bangsund seems to think he's publishing a professional magazine (instead of a magazine for professionals, that's another concept entirely) and the lack of genuine written contributions to his own magazine is distressing. There is no genuine image to ASFR - but you have already established one with RATAPLAN and seem reasonably sure of yourself. Praise be. But enough of odious comparisons....

Although there were one or two things I

personally disliked about this first issue I warmly appreciated the way everything was presented. The cover drawing was excellent - good to see Banger back to the drawing board - although I did not care much for the lettering of the title. Laffed heartily at page 7b. The general lay-out was excellent, I dips me lid. But a little more - er - tact wouldn't go astray here and there. I mean, that carping about old Pat Terry may have been well and good but octogernariums deserve a modicum of respect - even if it sometimes seems ill deserved.

\$\$\$ You're right, tact could have been used, but I had promised myself that this time, just this once, I would write what I thought about people. It was bad luck for Pat that he had put himself out on a limb like that. I still think most of the things I said in the last issue, but I won't say them again, that's all \$\$\$

Paul Stevens could do with some heavy editing - also he might peep into your Partridge occasionally (so might we all damn it), and the fan-fiction wasn't my cup of tea although I endorse it in theory. But not too much of the stuff, eh? And I wish you'd organise your letter column better, indent your replies to correspondents, it's less confusing than dropping a few asterisks between sections. Like the fanzine reviews. Keep us all one big but not necessarily happy family.

Only yesterday I sent off my third ms. in as many weeks to Carnell. That'll show the old Bastard I mean business. Now all he has to do is sell the stuff, flog-flog-flog. Nothing big involved, just using up a backlog of short story ideas in training for the novel old Ted is waiting patiently for me to finish. With my luck by the time it is the vogue for subjective sf will have passed and some damned new Thing will be in command. Just my luck. What did you think of the del Rey article on "2001"? Damn fool man. It seems that between his own intolerance towards new ideas and Ballard's paranoid exclusion of all earlier forms, the best sf is being written. And with that thought in mind;

Good Luck with RATAPLAN. And I hope to see it regularly. And often. And soon.

\$\$\$ I never did get to read the thing that del Rey wrote, mainly because others had said that he hadn't liked the film and I was just about fed up with reading reviews of it by Americans who did not seem to appreciate it above the special effects and thought that the whole thing was a waste of time and money and that it was meaningless and that there was no reason for the last sequence. I had just about given up hope of ever reading a favourable fanzine review of it,

but they seem to be turning up now and I have some hope for US fans. \$\$\$

Alan G. France
241 Lawrence Street
Wodonga
Victoria 3690

Dear Leigh,

As John W. Campbell might say, down to brass tacks.

I find RATAPLAN a most welcome and stimulating genzine. The cover by the inimitable JB. I can well imagine being painfully created tongue in cheek at midnight. (For what other time would such a masterpiece of fine art be created?)

Your comments show depth and (gulp) maturity which makes me pocket my zap gun and usual frivolous persiflage rather thoughtfully, for it is obvious that the Leigh Edmonds of the "Modleigh" faaaaaanish era is no more and the scholaristic worldly and, yes, more mature L.E. has graced Australian fandom. I shall not say which is the better of the Edmonds, - both have had their really high points - but I will say that the Leigh Edmonds of RATAPLAN is more attuned to the present day world than before....

\$\$\$ BLUSH!! The reason for the late Modleigh is I suppose due to the fact that while you were in the black land of gaffa, he had no audience to play to. On the other hand, now that contact is resumed, I won't be changing back, I hope. It's very good to hear from you again Alan, and I hope that you stay around to brighten Australian fandom for quite some time yet. \$\$\$

Peter Singleton
Block 4
Broadmoor Hospital
Crowthorne
Berkshire
England

Dear Leigh;

By all means place me on your mailing list for RATAPLAN, you are sure to get a detailed LoC in return. Some fanzines fold through lack of LoC's, and a few discouraged faneds have actually expressed amazement at my desire to send a LoC on each issue they send me. This general apathy is indeed an unhappy state of affairs.

\$\$\$ I have heard that fandom in England is at a very low ebb and what you say above only helps to prove this to me. \$\$\$

So I'm known in Australia then? This puzzles me, because my distribution in Australia has been limited to a few LoC's in ASFR a few years ago. Perhaps the ish of NIEKAS in which I

detailed life at my previous hospital has been widely read in your neck of the woods. Of course, not many fans are in hospital on a long term basis and this condition alone could account for your familiarity with my name.

At the editor's express request, I'll be sticking a controversial, albeit expurgated, biographical note in Tom Reamy's TRUMPET No. 10, due out around the first of next year. This ish will also include contributions from Fritz Leiber, Harlan Ellison, plus a folio and full cover illo by the late Hannes Bock - one of my favourite artists. I'm certainly in the best of company.!

The commercial TV networks in Merry England were in the terrible throes of a major technicians strike last week, reducing them to running old films only. On Monday, August 12th the emergency film feature was George Pal's WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE. According to this film, the date of doom was scheduled to happen On - August 12th. As a result of this grotesque coincidence, there was a special announcement before the film and during each commercial break. The announcer earnestly assured his gullible audience that the film was made way back in 1951, was fiction and bore absolutely no relationship to current events. Shades of the old radio scare with H.G. Wells WAR OF THE WORLDS!

paul-david hovitski esk.
1690 E 26th Ave.
Eugene
Oregon 97403
US of A

dear leigh,

when rataplan first came I hurried thru to find my letter, & there it was & i am oh-er-so pleased leigh because, not only did you print it out of context, but you then proceeded to screw it up further by adding capital letters! be it known that the epistle's frivolous mood was the result of a terrible alcoholic wedding reception i'd just been attending, and leigh, uncouth, an-aesthetic melfan you, the lower case writing accompanied that unbuckled state of mind -- adding caps made it seriously foolish instead of casually so. see? (and don't you dare put this letter into that context. this is in lower case because the caps on my typewriter have been filed off by some fiend....)

\$\$\$ Not using capital letters is one of those terrible fannish things which I try to avoid wherever I can, but if you insist.... The other fannish thing I don't like using is these // // // //, so be warned. \$\$\$

the old hay saga was great, tho I suppose some of the finer points of subtlety were lost on me....also the green berets review by paul stevens; beautiful! y'oughta send a copy to the producers, i'm sure they would get a kick out of it (one way or the other)....

john baxter's chapter on fantasy films of the thirties was excellent indeed! being an sf/monster movie fan myself, i could judge many of his reviews from personal experience and many a curdled scream rang anew down the dark cobwebbed corridors of my memory....i've seen exactly two horror movies in all this past year in canberra; "mystery of the wax museum" and "murders in the rue morgue"....do the tv stations in other parts of australia have equally weak tastes for the macabre? if so i pity you people....

someday when scientists figure out how to render living matter invisible, i (if i am still alive) will laugh in the faces of people like john baxter who speak of the "scientifically ridiculous" movies (such as the invisible man). i mean, think of what they said about the marvels of buck rogers -- impossible things like elevators... more and more fantasy is being relabeled "science fiction" as time goes by and as more heretofore magical phenomena are being explained scientifically. when partaking of fantasy, whether in film or book form, ordinary present day beliefs should be dropped to let the imagination flow unhindered on the level of the reality presented. in the same way, ghost stories are not all fantasy/horror. the soul may very well be an entity in itself -- of pure energy that can exist separately from its host of living organic matter. such a scientific explanation of ghosts would (to my glee) bring many devout athiests and pious believers to heal..

Ron L. Clarke
78 Redgrave Rd.
Normanhurst
N.S.W. 2076

Dear Leigh,

Greetings and all that guff. I enjoyed RATAPLAN - a few comments follow. I'll go along with most of your editorial ideas - the fan who edits a fanzine to cater for everyone's tastes but his own is a nut case. Printing what you yourself like, I find, usually turns out to suit most peoples reading likes anyway.

With regard to the dubious title as to who is "Australia's central fan figure" - who gives a damn anyway? It's best to have several

active and trying to better themselves than to have the one person set up as the kingpin. I agree that JB is the most active fan in the publishing business and has great influence in fan circles overseas - but how can you pick someone as a 'fan' when there may be someone yet unnoticed by the majority who is working alone out of touch with the main big city groups?

\$\$\$ Ron, if you are refering, in your statment about "number one fan(s)", to what I said about Pat Terry, then I can only agree with you that there should be no one person who is cheif. I was complaining that Pat Terry had been given this 'honor'! \$\$\$

As to feuds - anyone who tries to start one or continue one can take a running jump as far as I am concerned, so I will say no more on the subject.

\$\$\$ Well Ron, I will. Sydney fandom seems to be terrified of any sort of disagreement within Australian fandom, and I just can't help wondering why. Anyone would think from the way that Ron just spoke, that I was going to go right out of my way, simply to get us fighting. I think that I have better things to do with my time than cause feuds with the Sydney fans....on the other hand I'm not going to be all sweetness and light just to be pleasing to everybody. \$\$\$

The reason THE MENTOR hasn't any humor in it the last few issues is that I haven't received any good type humor and I know better than to print mediocre stuff - either it is good or it is utter crud - I think funny humor (as apart from 'sick' or 'black') is much harder to write than straight material. If Sydney is lacking in a sense of humor, now how come Melbourne has never latched on to the 'Round Robins' etc?

\$\$\$ Because 'Round Robins' aren't funny perhaps? \$\$\$

As to who actually started the idea of the SSFF, Warren Glass was the originator of the whole thing. Without him asking Miss Betsy Holt about clubs in Sydney, the SSFF would not have taken the form it has, and it still might not have been off the ground.

Mervyn Barret
179 Walm Lane
London N.W.2
ENGLAND

Dear Leigh,

It was good to see something about the last Melbourne con. No one ever keeps me informed. I suppose that my friends all think that what with being in London and all amongst all these big name fans and so on that the Melbourne

scene can't have much in it to interest me. Not so. My fannish (?) activity here consists almost entirely of wangling invitations to parties given for visiting fans and making it to the GLOBE in Hatton Gardens on the first Thursday of the month.

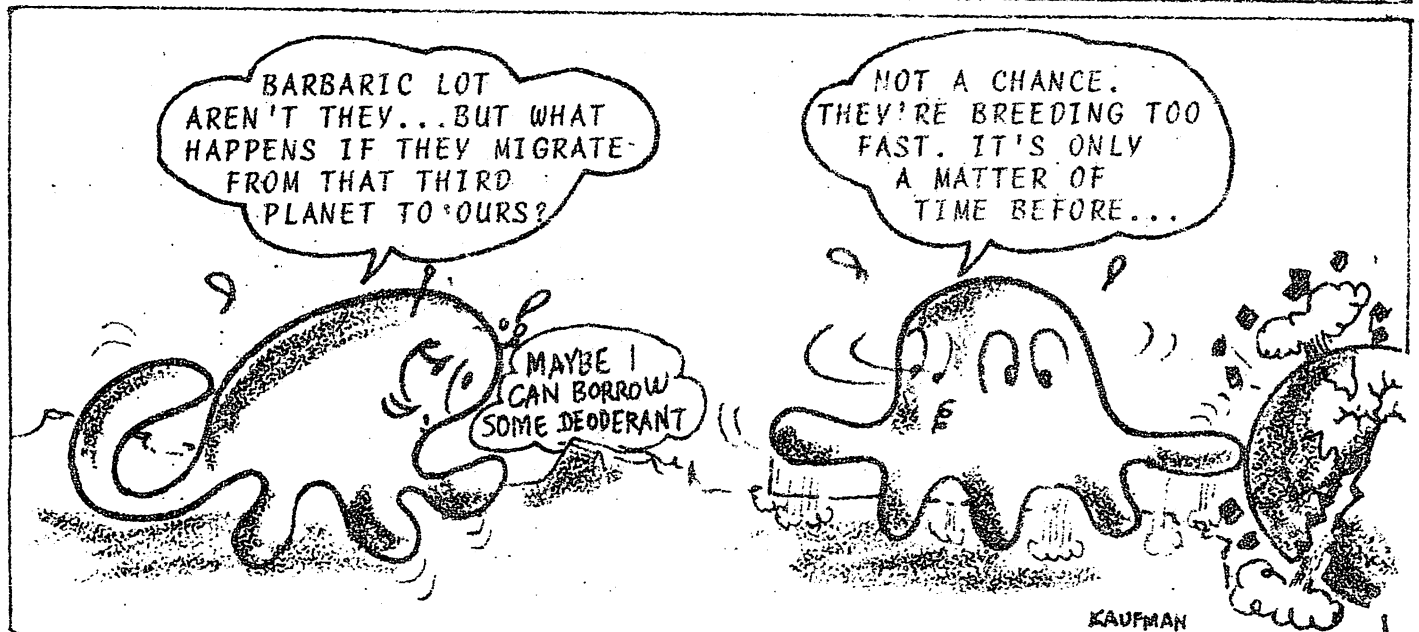
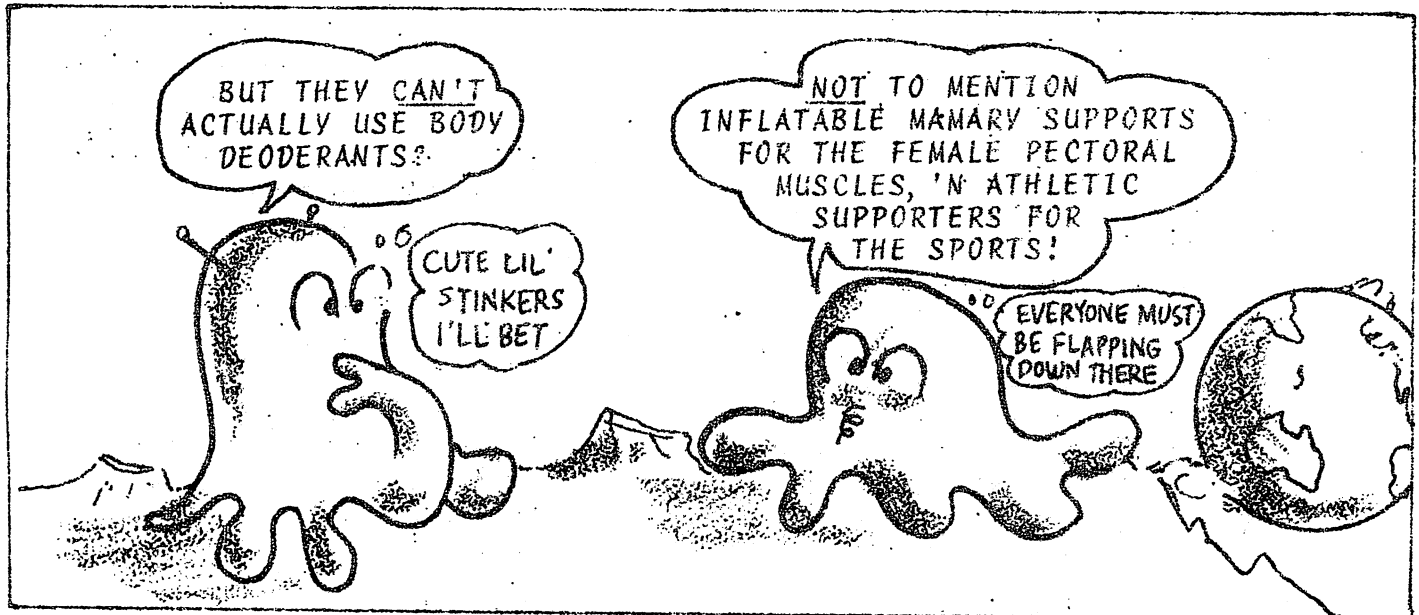
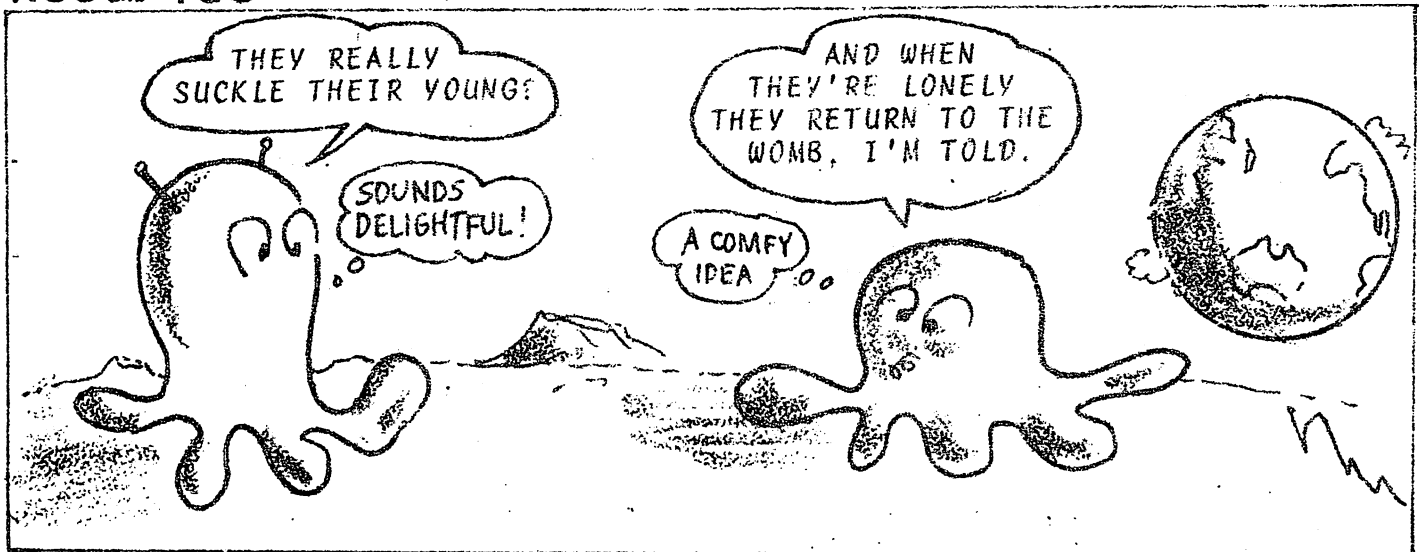
The first Thursday is today actually and so this day is a good one to be writing letters of comment...The Globe has been pretty good the last few times. A lot of new faces or not seen for a long time old ones have showed up during the summer months and there have been a lot of fans from outside England passing through. Many from Europe - France, Germany, Italy; a couple from Czechoslovakia - and several from the US of A. Bob Bloch was in London for a while - he was over here writing a couple of scripts for a TV series (something like the old Hitchcock series) - and L.A. fan Al Lewis was around for a couple of months.

I seem to be the only fan who hasn't seen 2001 yet. Ridiculous! I mean what with me being a mad movie fan and all. I'll have to wait now until I get back from Spain. I take off back to Ibiza for 2½ weeks on Sunday night. I really need this holiday. London's great but I'm getting so fidgety that I'm beginning to fear that if I don't bugger off soon for a while I'll turn to concrete.

So your trying to start an Australian Science Fiction Society. May I offer a word of advice? Don't.

Like I mean man, what can it do that can't be done and isn't naturally done by some individual fans doing their own thing. One of the splendid things about fandom is its vaguely anarchistic unorganisation. Organisations usually mean one guy doing all the extra work which is of marginal value until in the end he gets pissed off completely about the lack of co-operation and just blows the scene. Maybe though I'm just being unduly pessimistic on the basis of what I've seen of fannish large scale association type organisations. Maybe you've got something going for you that is hip and new and will really swing.

\$\$\$ As I can see it, the idea behind the ASFS (as it was to be called), was to provide a service, not for the fans, but the readers, the people who want to get various things (unfannish) like authors addresses and lists of stories and all stuff that most fans don't bother with. It was hoped that the ASFS could be organised officially so that it wouldn't be all one fans job, but it seems to have lapsed because it was just taking up too much time in committee meetings and in the organisational stages. I think that this APA-A we are trying to get formed, is about as much organisation as Australian fandom can stand. \$\$\$



KAUFMAN

As you've probably heard the next British SF Con is being put on by the London fans and will be at Oxford. Judy Merrill is down as the Guest of Honor. I will make it to this one. I must. I'd better start saving now though. Excuse me while I dash off and put a half crown in that little plastic box I have on top of the gas meter.

Jack Wodhams
P.O. Box 48
Caboolture
Queensland 4510

Dear Leigh,

Thanks for sending me along a No. 1 copy of RATAPLAN, The Magazine of the Arts. The Bangsund cover was a good one, you lucky fellow. And the figure on page 7b looked remarkably like a Thurber concept of Lee Harding. Was oddly taken by Rasmussen's squirling squidgy. With Razuvaev (great name, great name) representing the Old Wave, and Santos at the other extreme starking for the new, illustrators you sure have got.

THE
OLD HAY SAGA was
a load of grass
that shouldn't
have been smoked,
'cause look what
came out. Some
good bits in it,
but there always
is.

To
FANTASY FILMS OF
THE THIRTIES. Oh
boy, has Baxter
ever seen a heap
of weirdo flicks -

It is no wonder that in some circles he might be regarded as a nut. A guy with that much 'creepy' under his belt by choice, he must have leaked a glass glob out of his earhole now and then. May his book do well on the charts.

To Norma V. Williams and the Dowsing bit. Quote - '....so called intuition is logical reasoning taking place, at accelerated speed, in the subconscious.' Quote - 'But subconsciously I must have decided that I couldn't break enough.' Quote - 'I contend that some form of subconscious reasoning takes place in divining.' Quote - 'One does not have to have a formula knowledge of geology to form an instinctive 'feel' for country.'

Oh brother. What does she think psi is? Super speed subconscious instinctive reasoning - that, my dear girl, is psi. Explain to me instinct, huh? A salmon swims hundreds, maybe

thousands of miles to return to spawn in the particular stream where born. How? What force drives? What force orientates? Instinct. Nail down instinct and you win yourself a medal. And humans have none, huh? Instinct is the 100% genuine sixth sense that we hear so much about. It may be superthink, it may be subconscious perception, but as yet it is little understood, and none can give a satisfactory reason why. Instinctive, intuitive, a 'feeling', a 'hunch', it comes in a split second, can be rationalised in an hour or two, enough to put the mind at rest, but why bother? Why not use it? Why spend days logically deducing where water might be when a walk with a twig can say 'Right here, buddy'? If it works, for crying out loud, use it! So it is tenuous and inexplicable and fluffs a lot, okay. Have you never tasted a 'wrong' flavour? Smelt an 'incorrect' odour? Had your ears fail and misheard a sentence? Sure, instinct, psi, intuition, what you will, is as fallible as any other sense, but it is there. Don't knock it. Try to recognise it, try to comprehend it. It is fascinating.

Liked R.D.
Symons' GO AWAY.
More, more.

And oh dear,
may I never be so
reduced as to have to
depend upon STUPEFY for
my livelihood.

Ron Graham
Box 57, P.O.
Yargoona
N.S.W. 2199

Dear Leigh,

Thanks for
'Rataplan No. 1'. Typing and duplicating are very good and facilitate easy reading.

Jonh Baxter's contributions are invariably good and "Fantasy Films of the Thirties" is no exception. This article, in my opinion, towers above the rest and this is the highlight of the issue.

I read "The Old Hay Saga", but must admit that I failed completely to comprehend any of it. Cogitating over this I came to the conclusion that it was almost certainly due to my inherent inability to recall the motivations of my pre-teen years. I suppose you must have had some reason for printing it, but if so, it escapes me.

Reading Norma Williams' "Dowsing- The Good Oil", I was irresistably reminded of the man who died on the scaffold yelling "I'll be danged

if they're gonna hang me!" Now we know that dowsing is only good old "applied commonsense". What about getting Norma Williams to likewise investigate telepathy, precognition and telekineses? Perhaps, these too, are only manifestations of "commonsense"! If so, we will only have to find the explanation of "commonsense" and we will know all about E.S.P. (Who's that talking about "Roses by other names"?)

I seem to be chronically allergic to the so-called "huQor" in fanzines and it was much to my amazement that I found I thoroughly enjoyed Paul Steven's review of "The Green Berets". Cogitating over this, (I do a hell of a lot of cogitating!), I decided that it was because I had liked "Flowers for Algernon" so much.

Please get Breden to do more art work for you. Even if my name isn't "Jack", I'd gladly gird my loins and climb his beanstalk any day.

You have my grateful thanks, Leigh, for so ably pointing out that Mike (Lots) Moorcock no longer describes "New Worlds" as a 'science fiction' or even a 'speculative fiction' magazine. I would hate to have that heap of pornography listed among science fiction magazines! Personally, I do not care how much pornography Moorcock prints or how beautifully he presents it, but it grieves me immensely that he has fouled the once honored name of "New Worlds" by coupling it with the cesspool of scrapings now offered up in that magazine. I often wonder if those responsible for the Arts Council finances ever take the trouble to read scatology they are subsidising.

I enjoyed, as always, the fanzine reviews and the letter column. If you ever get around to publishing another RATAPLAN I would like to have one.

\$\$\$ Ron, I was a bit amazed at your attack (?) on New Worlds for despite the fact that it publishes a load of Pornography, it is the only magazine which has kept up with today. All the others, the US magazines, are back in the late fifties or early sixties. As to the Arts Council reading the stuff which they are financing, I suspect that what is being published in New Worlds these days is exactly what the Arts Council like to read. New Worlds seems to compare with the rest of the "art" which is coming out of England these days. Cesspool...? \$\$\$

John Ryan
12 Barkley Street
Fairfield
N.S.W. 2165

Dear Leigh-

A brief and very belated note of thanks for RATAPLAN No.1. Not having my ear, too closely to the fannish keyhole, these days, I wasn't aware that such a 'zine was in the works. Therefore, it came as quite a suprise....and a very pleasurable one at that.

I shocked Gary Mason and, later, John Brosnan by telling them that as far as I was concerned RATAPLAN was a better fanzine (perhaps should have said "more enjoyable") than ASFR! As you can imagine, this statment didn't exactly charm them. But, with all due respect to John Bangsund's fine fanzine, it's the real truth, as far as I'm concerned. But, then, I'm not an sf fan...so a good percentage of ASFR is "wasted" on me. Bangsund's editorial's are great and odd parts of the lettercol takes my interest. Beyond that.....

As I read through Baxter's FANTASY FILMS OF THE THIRTIES I found myself wondering how in the hell you managed to get someone of Baxter's fame (notoriety?) to contribute such a detailed study to a first issue. Having been burnt a few times, I'm one of those people who refuse to contribute to practically any first issue.... E.R.B. Digest being about the only exception... and I kept wondering what sort of hold you had over Baxter, what secret from the past were you dangling over his head etc. Of course, the last page revealed that it hadn't been written especially for RATAPLAN...but you can still take a bow for hav'ing snared the rights to print such an interesting piece.

\$\$\$ You are just about the only person from Sydney who has had a nice thing to say about RATA (excluding Ron Clarke), not that I was expecting it to go over big, since I had printed all that stuff about Pat Terry. You gotta admit that he was asking for it. Seems that Pat is the Big Fan up there.

I consider RATAPLAN to be a better fanzine than ASFR, but then a fanned who doesn't think that his fanzine is about the best there is won't ever do very well. \$\$\$

Gary Mason
Warill Road
French's Forest
N.S.W. 2086

Dear Leigh,

Firstly, I'd like another copy; this one has been terribly mangled with the protection afforded by that silly little wrapper. I am unsure how much money is left from my ETHERLINE II subscription; if there is enough, you can take the money out of there — or I'll send you some more.

And, f'heaven's sake, send it in an envelope this time!! I'll pay for it, if you wish, or I'll even provide the envelopes myself --- but I will not accept fanzines which have been torn and mutilated because they were folded into a scrap of paper, or had their back covers used as an address label.

\$\$\$ You would have two more issues of RATAPLAN coming to you at the lower subscription rate, and you will be getting those two in whatever manner we are going to send them to you in. If you like to provide envelopes, you are welcome, though you could put a four cent stamp on the envelope as well because we are getting the very maximum of weight through for our five cents, in this manner of posting.

Your statement that you "will not accept fanzines which etc.," fairly croggles me. Do you think that you have the right to receive fanzines just because you want them? Think again. Gary, you get a fanzine from us if, when and how we wish to send it...and I can see this getting nasty, but. \$\$\$

And RATAPLAN should interest me "enough to respond with a letter of comment or perhaps an article"? Gad, what a nerve. I may recall that I have never received so much as an acknowledgment, much less a letter of comment, on any of the BRAMSTONS I have aimed at your house. You may get one anyway, though. I was pretty disgusted with that tasteless, groundless and tactless attack on Pat Terry in your fanzine review column. So Pat Terry is responsible for what the editors of SCIENCE FICTION TIMES print? So a speech, a round of applause and goodness-only-knows-what-because-I-still-haven't-received-anything-that-looked-like-the-Con-report-I-paid-\$1-for is more of an honor than the sort of cash money that pays for the return airline ticket to Melbourne? So from where you stand Betsy Holt, John Bangsund and John Danza had more to do with the success of the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation than did Pat Terry? Well, I don't know where you stand, but it sure isn't on the committee of the SSFF, because from here Pat Terry appears to be one of the most essential and important and most-loved members of the club. The three people you mentioned are not even members of the club, and Betsy Holt and John Bangsund have never been --- although both would certainly be welcomed at any meeting.

And Sydney fandom isn't lacking in a sense of humor; Melbourne is lacking in a sense of seriousness.

\$\$\$ I said that Pat Terry only did as much as the other three in helping to found the Foundation, not less as you are trying to have me say. I did not blame Pat for what was in SFT, did I? \$\$\$

Fred Patten
8943 East Arcadia Avenue
Apt. 14
San Gabriel
California 91775

Dear Leigh,

Thanks for the first issue of RATAPLAN. It's always good to see a new fanzine coming out, particularly one with news about an area of fandom that's still terra incognita to a lot of us. Your relations with Sydney sound like those between the LASFS and San Francisco Bay Area fandom, or between 2 New York fan clubs (any 2). Personal contact does help eliminate feuding, yes.

I hope your 8th convention is a success, despite this slow start. After a long period of quiet, Aussie fandom has come alive again (you've been there all the time, of course; it's just that we haven't been getting fanzines from you until recently), and is beginning to build up a good reputation for fanzines and Con activity. With the new push to make the World S-F Convention a WorldCon in fact as well as in name, and with a string of successful Cons to your record, you should have a good chance to bring the WorldCon to Melbourne in '75. It's hard to make plans seven years in advance, but I'd like to travel to Australia for a WorldCon, and I'm sure a number of others would, too. It's going to be interesting to see how many American fan support Heidelberg for the '70 WorldCon, and (assuming it wins) how many of us are actually able to attend it. I'd guess that that'll be a fairly accurate portent for the kind of support Melbourne's bid will get.

Mike Moorcock may care what NEW WORLDS looks like; unfortunately, his tastes don't agree with mine as to what an s-f zine should look like, regarding story or art. I'm frankly an admirer of the Old Wave in s-f. I wish that someone with my tastes had Moorcock's opportunity with format and slick paper reproduction. (Of course, Carnell's work with NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY were to my tastes, and the zines just didn't sell. But I understand that Moorcock is having his own problems with circulation, which aren't entirely due to his printing and distribution problems, so I wonder if his New Wave is really that much more popular than Carnell's more traditional tastes?) As for Bug Jack Barron, I haven't read it yet, and I'm in no particular hurry to do so. I'm familiar with Spinrad's mania to use s-f to "tell it like it is today", and I wonder if he's really unaware that other authors have been telling it like it really is without having to resort to s-f to do so. Like Norman Mailer, for one.

I have the feeling that I'd enjoy your faan-fiction more if it weren't so ingroup. The excerpt from Baxter's book on Hollywood is better, though I wish he'd gone into more detail in his description of most of the films. (Still, if this is only one chapter from a book designed to cover every type of film Hollywood made in the '30's, I can see why he can't afford to devote too much space to any one film genre.) And for all his raving over "The Devil Doll", I think it could've been an even more effective picture if Browning had stuck closer to the plot of the book on which the film was supposedly based - A. Merritt's Burn, Witch, Burn.

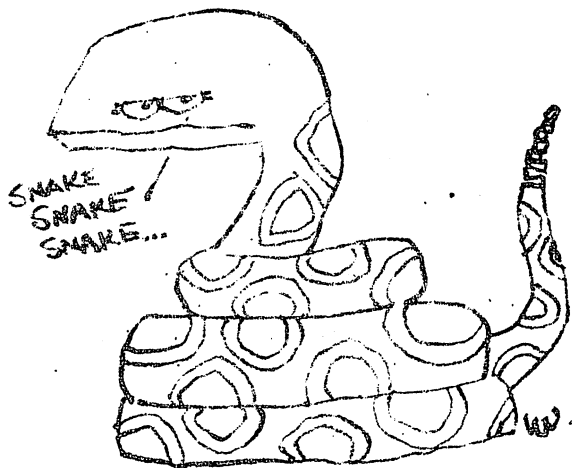
Harl Vincent wasn't entirely delighted with the publication of his paperback novel, Doomsday Planet. He attended LASFS meetings fairly often for the last couple of years before his death, and he complained several times that his manuscript had been badly cut. Not, apparently, because the publisher thought the cuts were necessary to improve the story, but just to make it shorter so that the publisher wouldn't have to spend so much money on paper and ink to print it. Harl Vincent began writing again more as a way to spend time during his retirement than for a need to earn money; he was delighted to find that his stories were still popular, and he was disappointed that what was done to Doomsday Planet made him look like a bad craftsman, even if it was reasonably successful commercially.

Peter J McInerney
11 Humber Place
Avondale
Auckland 7
New Zealand

Dear Leigh,

New Worlds is getting to be the best spf (I suppose that this translates as speculative fiction which puts NW in a good position, it being the only 'zine to so bill itself) magazine but the standard of fiction is usually "pretty poor". My God, pigs would make the best astronauts if only they were equiped with rockets, what in god's name is a fiction magazine meant to base its reputation on?? But apart from the semantical indiscretions on your part, I would contest your utterances about artwork and format.

On a rather minor level there are no wash drawings or paintings as illustrations in the only large style issues I have at hand (173-179) (I do not include reproductions used in articles on art) and I should like you to compare Analog which often includes both wash drawings and monochrome paintings as illustrations pluss of course a full colour painting as cover which,



also unlike NW, is remarkably of wordage. NW seems to rely on monatges and composites and line drawings with some work done in charcoal or crayon. While I will concede that some of these efforts have been quite successful (those for Camp Concentration were on the whole not bad) most of the composites look amateur and all but a couple of the ink drawings are (the only examples of these which have been acknowledged by their perpetrator are those of J Cawthorn, and his lack of ability (I won't say talent) is embarrassing.)

If you are looking for handles to fix, I think the closest approximation for the monatges at least is Dada and this movement was prominent in the years following the first world war - hardly original, nor even new.

Once again compare the other prozines. Analog employs John Schoenher who is highly talented with pen and brush (although I admit he doesn't always employ his full talents), Kelly Freas who has a well developed sense of humor and high technical competence, as does Leo Summers although he is not quite in the same league as far as originality of technique goes. The Galaxy r, Corp. mags have Jack Gaughn, another highly talented artist but unfortunately, one who doesn't seem to always put enough effort into his work; also Vaughn Bode a truly great comic artist. I will agree with you on the poor reproduction and paper of these publications however, and their covers are usually completely devoid of merit. F & SF while having no story illustrations, has a high standard of cover art. I won't mention Amazing etc., but I'm sure you'll forgive me.

Apart from such ramblings, I don't think much of the attitude of a magazine which rails as the perversity of modern art but is using sensationalism to the full; note especially the cover of 178 and also Michael Moorcock's comic strip 'article' on the Fad for the Bad. I'm not sure whether the 'acid head' blurb and the

prominent display of Barbarella (supposed to be a 'bad' movie) were intended to raise sagging circulation, but I hardly consider it praiseworthy and if Mr Moorcock thinks he's outgrown science fiction that's okay by me. I think that SF benefits from his dis sociation. I wouldn't want you to think that I'm some sort of flightless southern reactionary either, the 'good old days' (of anything) invariably weren't so good, and no backward or even status quo attitude is acceptable especially in such a supposedly forward looking genre. However the New Wave and its parent journal seems more a small club of literary backslappers than a significant movement (in any direction except down).

Enough of this though, before I finish, I have to congratulate you on RATAPLAN which is, apart from my disagreements voiced above which aren't with your magazine anyway, a "truly creditable performance by one so young" but don't hit me please, its great and keep up the standard, you'll get no complaints.

\$\$\$ I wilt before that barrage of high powered logic. But Peter, you've got to admit that the two novels which were serialised in New Worlds, do give the magazine some reason for existence. They were only the best two novels to be published last year. \$\$\$

Guyler Warnell Brooks Jr.
713 Paul Street
Newport News
Va. 23605

Dear Leigh,

Much thanks for the RATAPLAN - it looks a little like ODD or SIRRUIISH, somehow.
\$\$\$ GASP, BLUSH. \$\$\$

The OLD HAY SAGA was great fun, almost like a Goon Show, even though I am sure I missed a lot of the in jokes, as I don't know much about Australian fandom.... I don't even know whether you are a he Leigh or a she Leigh....

\$\$\$ See the cover, that's me. \$\$\$

Baxter's article was good. I have always wanted to see THE UNHOLY THREE. I didn't realize it was made twice with Chaney, the silent version in '25 and the sound version in '30. I've never had an opportunity to see either version. The book is good, though it has no real fantasy elements.

Norma Williams' article on dowsing is a little confused, I think. I don't believe that Campbell ever suggested any correlation between the material of the dowsing device and the subject being dowsed for. In fact, I thought he

speculated that the detection took place in the mind of the dowser, the forked stick, or whatever, merely serving as a subconscious directed "crutch". But this still doesn't settle the question of whether there is some "psi" talent in operation, or whether, as Norma claims, it is merely the subconscious action of judgement and past experience. Campbell claims that the method is successful in location of buried pipes of various sorts - surely the operator would not always be familiar with where these might be. Some of them could have been in the ground since before he was born.

RATAPLAN was quite large enough without including a review of THE GREEN BERETS, which is a crude propaganda film and would be better ignored, especially since it isn't even remotely sf or fantasy.

\$\$\$ Talking about "crude propaganda films", the last Star Trek episode we had here (you do get ST, don't you?) was the one where Kirk and Spock etc. discovered the planet where there is a repeat of our history except that there was germ warfare around 1990. Remember, it ends with Kirk spouting all sorts of American junk about democracy and equality. It was terrible and called, if I remember, THE OMEGA GLORY. I swore off STAR TREK, after that, but it turns out that the one next week is the one with Romans in crash helmets and with sub-machineguns. I'll be looking as usual. \$\$\$

You owe me 15p for using "new news" on page 41. As editor of the NEW NEWSPORST NEWS, I have exclusive world rights in , perpetuity to this and all related puns. I will accept another copy of RATAPLAN in lieu of...

+ + + + +

WE ALSO HEARD FROM,

MICHAEL O'BRIEN, who wanted to know why it was that Paul Stevens article in APASTRON put me off while I printed an article on the same subject in RATAPLAN.

GARY WOODMAN, who wanted to know what had happened to the 28 page letter of comment he had sent me. It never got to this end of the postal service so I assume that the GPO has an aversion to 28 page LoG's, don't send any.

The NATIONAL LIBRARY who want two more copies, I don't have any left.

BOB BROWN, who enclosed a photo which was taken in 1928 somewhere in Melbourne and asked if I could find out where it was. Well bob, it turns out that what stands on that site is our new cultural centre. I haven't got a photo of it yet though but I will as soon as possible.

