

ack 6-14-76



RATAPLAN THIRTEEN

RATAPLAN
THIRTEEN

C O N T E N T S :

INNUENDO AND OUT THE OTHER
John Bangsund

4

DEPARTMENT 85

Ken Ford
Jack Wodhams
Margaret Oliver

10

ACTIVE APATHIST NEWSLETTER
Ken Ford

16

GETTING DUFFED!
David Grigg

18

(Anything not otherwise attributed is by THE EDITOR)

The Cover is by Mickey Dennis and John Bangsund and
Valma Brown made the interior look a little prettier.

RATAPLAN is edited by Leigh Edmonds of PO Box 74,
Balaclava, Victoria 3183, AUSTRALIA for EAPA.
Copies are also available for articles, letters of
comment, as trade and for money (\$1.60 for four).

A U-Boat Publication
December 1973

The reason that John Bangsund is going to appear first in this issue is not because his article is the best I have to offer (it might be but I don't think it would be in my best interests to say so) but because it is the longest piece I have for this issue and since I don't know how much room it's going to take I'll put it here so that I don't run out of space later on. This, of course, is the only sensible thing to do and while it might not be in accordance with the approved method of producing fanzines (as layed down by the Fanzine Control Board) it saves time.

I have gathered that one of the marks of a good faned is that he lays out his fanzine well. Good layout is, I have been led to believe, a matter of putting all the articles on pages properly, putting the 'graphics' in the right places and generally taking care. If these are all the marks then I'm simply not your ideal faned. The way to produce a fanzine is to take an handful of articles and letters and a couple of dozen stencils and then transfer the words from the paper onto the stencils. If there are any pictures to go in aswell that a bonus and there will be pictures in this issue somewhere as soon as the electronic stencils come back from Noel Kerr. But that might not be for a few pages yet so just wait on.

As everybody knows there is a DUFF campaign being run this year to take a lucky Australian fan all the way over the water to the United States in time to attend DISCON II. I am standing in this and so is John Bangsund as well as Paul Stevens and Sue Clarke. The article that John has written stems from this campaign.

I was sitting at my desk at work one day, doing the usual Public Service sort of things, when the telephone rang and on the other end of the line was John Bangsund. We chattered for a bit and then came up with the idea of switching articles on each other, he write an article for me and I write one for him - it seemed logical enough since we had nominated each other.

John was quick off the mark and I got his article within a couple of weeks, I, on the other hand, took my time but all the same got around to it in the end. I was quite pleased with the result since I had to write about something I know nothing about and if you want to read it all you have to do is to get yourself onto the Bangsund mailing list (which is probably not as easy as it sounds). Of course John might not print the article claiming that it is not good enough for his high standards. He might be right but just to ensure that he does print it I'm writing this so that you will all know that John has swindled me if he doesn't. That would be dirty pool. And if he can play dirty I can too. Ofcourse he's had a lot more experience at this sort of thing than I have but I hope that I can learn fast.

Anyhow, no more beating about the bush.

7th October 1973

Dear Leigh,

I said I would write you an article about Jesus, and I don't feel like it, but I'm going to try anyway. I'm going to pretend that this is a stencil instead of a sheet of white paper and compose it on

stencil. I wonder what I will say? Meantime, thanks for RATAPLAN and your vigorous support of my DUFF candidature, and I look forward to your article on Hell. love to Val, and now I have no excuse not to start writing this article. Hmmm.

Cheers,

John

INNUEENDO AND OUT THE OTHER

Some years ago, when Leigh Edmonds was still reading science fiction and didn't know much at all about music and s-x and so on, Dick Bergeron was a regular columnist in Shangri-L'Affaires, and in one of his articles Dick said some enterprising fanzine publisher should grab me because my stuff was readable and funny in places or something, and when I read that I sat back and waited for the flood of letters from enterprising fanzine publishers, thinking quietly about all the things that I could write about which would be readable and funny in places. It never arrived. All that happened was Leigh asked me (probably so my feelings wouldn't be hurt) to write a column for Rataplan, and Mervyn Binns reminded me that my sub to the Melbourne SF Club was overdue. I forget whether I paid Mervyn, but I did write a column for Leigh and it was called Innuendo And Out The Other. So is this. I'm not sure what it means but there's a nice ring about it, and it gives a feeling of continuity, which is always good to have in a fanzine.

Actually Leigh invited me to start writing for RATAPLAN again because we're supporting each other for DUFF. Secretly I think he thinks his chances will be better if everyone sees me writing for him. I think that because I have asked Leigh to write for Philosophical Gas, not because I particularly want him cluttering up my pages but because lots of people like him and when they see him writing for me they'll think I'm pretty terrific and vote for me. That's the theory, I think. I'm a bit confused, but I think that's why we're writing for each other.

Anyway, when Leigh suggested this I asked him what he wanted me to write about and he said 'Jesus.' and I said okay, so this is going to be an article about Jesus. After reading the last SF Commentary I really felt like writing about the usuform robot as a symbol of cultural attrition in science fiction, but I guess that can wait.

I thought I'd better do some research for this article. I heard there was a film on at the local drive-in about Jesus, so Sally and I went to see it. It was called 'Godspell'. It wasn't bad - you know, it had its moments - and the music was rather jolly in places, but it was a bit of a dead loss as far as research is concerned. I've read the book, too, so that sort of spoilt it a bit. The book is called 'The Gospel According to Matthew'. It's in the Bible, just in case you want to look it up at all, at the beginning of the back of the Bible. It kicks off the bit at the back called the New Testament. All I learnt from 'Godspell' that was new to me is that Jesus wore braces and looked sort of androgynous. Those things aren't mentioned by Matthew or his buddies there in the New Testament, so that's something I learnt from the film.

There was a real great Western film on with 'Godspell', and it was called 'God May Forgive You, I Won't'. Despite the title it wasn't very religious. It was made in Italy, and it was all about this little Western township and some ranches and so on down in Calabria, and a whole lot of Italian cowboys and innocent bystanders killing each other and getting killed because of the deeds to the ranch or something. There was a lot of intensity of feeling it. These cowboys - and some ladies, too: there were several ladies in it - kept on narrowing their eyes and darting fiery glances at each other, which was pretty intense, and then they'd get back to the shooting and stuff. Right at the end there was no-one left alive hardly, except the hero and his lady, and they rode off into the sunset together in a horse and cart, but just before the hero got into the cart - I think the cart was the kind they call a sulky - he looked back at the inert and bloody corpses of the sixty-odd cowboys he'd just shot up with a machine gun, and his eyes narrowed for the last time, and then he chucked his revolver away. I thought it was pretty silly actually, because there he was riding off into the sunset with his lady in that sulky - and he didn't have a gun! The whole film showed that people in those parts were pretty mean, and chucking away his gun like that left him rather vulnerable, to say the least. Still, I suppose he knew what he was doing. Maybe he'd killed all the mean people, so he didn't need a gun anymore. That might have been the whole point of the film, come to think of it. Kill enough people and you won't ever need to kill anyone again. If that was the point, then it was a political film, sort of - a kind of allegory, if you follow me. I know it wasn't a religious film anyway, even though God was mentioned in the title.

A funny thing about Western movies, especially at drive-ins, is that when you go to the Gents at interval all the blokes going in there and coming out seem to be sort of swaggering and alert looking. You get the feeling that if you bump into one of these blokes he won't say 'Sorry' - he'll say 'Outa ma way, hombre!' or maybe even punch you or pull a gun on you. It's a strange effect that watching Westerns has on blokes. They walk into the Gents exactly the same way as you've seen all those cowboys walking into the Saloon - eyes narrowed, trigger finger itching, ready for anything.

That's a sociological-behavioural observation of my own. I was thinking about writing an article or a book about it, but it seems a bit slim to base anything lengthy and meaningful on, so I'll leave it with you as an observation. I talked to Sally about it, and she says that ladies going into and coming out of the Ladies don't seem to be swaggering, or ready to gun down anyone who gets in their way, so this seems to be a peculiarly male thing. That's a funny thing about the sexes, that men and women seem to be different in so many ways. I've been thinking about writing an article or a book on that, too, but I believe it's been done before, so I probably won't.

I've seen quite a few Western movies lately, and I've liked practically all of them. The only ones I haven't liked are the ones that are fraught with deep significance and meaning for our troubled times and so on, because they disturb me and get me wondering all over again what the

world is coming to. I don't know whether you would call 'Soldier Blue' a Western, but that's the kind of film I mean. If I want to think about how nasty and stupid and vicious people are I can do it easily, just by reading the papers. There are so many people around who seem to think that if you kill enough people then you don't need to kill anyone ever again and everything will be just fine. You can read about them in this morning's papers.

But when I go to see a Western I don't want to see a profound and disturbing evocation of Man's inhumanity to man and so on: I just want to be entertained. I want to see lots of hard riding and straight talking and sharp shooting, and no messing about with Deeper Issues. A good old-fashioned story, in other words, where the hero chucks his gun away in the last scene and rides off into the sunset - and you know no-one's going to spoil the story by killing the hero stone-dead before he gets a hundred metres down the road. That sort of thing only happens in real life, and I don't like real life intruding on my escapism.

I don't go much for opera, but I like some, and the same thing applies to opera. It would have spoilt Wagner's 'Tristan und Isolde' entirely if he'd allowed real life to intrude for example. I mean, if Tristan and his lady had swallowed the poison and just said 'Gak!' - as they probably would have in real life - instead of singing about how bad they felt and how much they loved each other for a while, wouldn't that have spoilt the opera? I think it would.

Westerns are a kind of of opera, in a way. So is science fiction. When you read or watch or listen to all these things - depending on the medium - you don't want real life; you want a story, with lots of hard riding and straight talking and sharp shooting and so on. Definitely no 'Gak!' You want to escape from real life into a fantasy world where things are larger/smaller-than-life, where you can be entertained and not need to think. It's not really escapism when the hero and/or heroine says 'Gak!' and dies.

I seem to have talked a lot about Westerns in this article about Jesus - and I haven't finished yet. Bear with me.

I watch, and occasionally read, Westerns the same way most people seem to read science fiction. But the science fiction I prefer, oddly, is the stuff that tells me something about the human condition. I have read less sf, probably, than most of you who are reading this, but I've read more than your normal average reader has. I've read a reasonable proportion of the classics of the genre, and a whole lot of unmitigated rubbish, and a few books that aren't regarded as classics but should be. Anyway, these days I don't read much sf, but when I do it isn't the pure escapist stuff, but the stuff that attempts to tell me something worth knowing about real life. In other words, my attitude to science fiction is precisely to me attitude to Westerns.

This probably just means that I regard science fiction as more important, more useful or something, than Westerns (or opera). This could lead to a discussion of the relative importance &c of the arts,

but I refuse to be waylaid because I'm writing this article about Jesus and real soon now I must get to the point, if I can find it.

It's a long time since I read a Western, but recently I read one called 'The Cowboy and The Cossak' by Clair Huffaker. I liked it. It was just great. It's about this bunch of hard-ridin', straight-talkin', sharp-shootin' cowboys from Montana who find themselves driving a herd of cattle some thousands of miles through Siberia and Russia back in the 1880's. They are accompanied by a band of Cossacks. The cowboys and Cossacks move from mutual distrust to the deepest respect and closest comradeship. They match skills, face dangers together, knock each other around a little and end up buddies. It's plenty moving. I'm looking forward to the film. It's a modern sort of Western, though. In the first few pages you strike the Negro Problem, the Jewish Problem, the Mexican Problem, the Indian Problem, suspicion of foreigners, suspicion of culture, the generation gap and a whole heap of other contemporary preoccupations. Also there's lots of bad language. You might say it's a kind of New Wave Western. Certainly it's a long way from Larry and Stretch or Zane Grey. Anyway, Mr Huffaker says that it's his attempt at building a kind of bridge between America and Russia, and - good on him! - I reckon he's succeeded, at the level he has attempted. I hope he makes a million.

The only trouble I have with this book is that although it builds a kind of bridge between East and West and all that, it relies still for its excitement and very being on the old, old, plot of Us versus Them. Mr Huffaker has done a very good job of persuading the reader that Russians aren't really Them - they're Us. But to do this he had to create a new Them. And he has used the Tartars as Them. Don't misunderstand them: I can't recall many Westerns - or if you really put me on the spot, any - in which Negroes, Mexicans, Indians, Jews and Russians, as well as Americans, are the good guys. But it seems that there just has to be a conflict between Us and Them, and since all these unaccustomed folks are now Us, someone has to be Them, and it's the Tartars that fill the bill. The Tartars were probably responsible for no more atrocities than Americans, Russians, Indians or anyone else, but in this book they are Them - the fiends, the inhuman barbarians.

I guess it doesn't matter all that much. There is no Tartar Liberation Movement that I know of. It's just a pity - and a comment on where we really are: at (which is where we've always been, and probably always will be) - that liberated and understanding and bridge-building as we are, we still need a Them to set against everything-that-is-good (however flawed, and therefore human and admirable) that is Us.

During the Korean War (so the story goes, and I read it in Readers Digest so it must be true), there was a certain prisoner-or-war camp, in which were interred many American soldiers and a Catholic priest. The bloke in charge of this camp was a particularly brutal Chinese sergeant named Chang. (I'm inventing the names, but I really did read the story.) He was so consistently and ingeniously brutal that the priest was moved to write in his reminiscences of that experience: 'Our Lord commanded us

to love our enemies, but I am sure that when He said that He did not have in mind Sergeant Chang.'

I am just as sure that Jesus had Sergeant Chang in mind, and that that priest was utterly wrong.

I am not a Christian. I'm not sure what I am. When I listen to Simon and Garfunkel singing

'Cathy, I'm lost,' I said, though I knew she was sleeping,
'I'm empty and aching and I don't know why.'

the feeling matches mine exactly. I have no answers. Offhand I can't think of anyone who does have the answers. A couple of hundred years ago, if I'd been around then, I might very likely have felt that Jesus had the answers. About 1900-odd years ago I would have been sure of it.

On this day, Sunday, 7th October 1973....

Last night I was talking to a lovely Chilean lady, and she said 'I am ashamed to be Chilean. My people are stupid, stupid.'

.... I have no answers to just about anything...

Today I heard on the radio that there is renewed fighting in the Middle East - Israel on the one side, and Syria and Egypt on the other. Last night I talked Last night I talked also with three Egyptian friends. I like them a lot. Muhummad says he will go back to his country and fight, if he is needed. When he said that, I remembered my Jewish friends in Melbourne, men younger than me, who went to Israel six years ago to fight; young men, hardened, with the physical and mental scars of warfare; young men, strong, intelligent and as idealistic as Muhummad; young Australians and my friends.

.... but I love Sally and I love my friends...

The lovely Chilean lady said that it was strange that Pablo Neruda should die just now, and I agreed with her. I find it hard to believe that he died naturally. She said they ransacked his house, destroyed his books and his few possessions. 'They burn everything that is left-wing, that is Marxist,' she said. 'They are so stupid! But you cannot burn ideas! And my people will not let the military rule them for long!'

.... and if Jesus or anyone else can tell me why I and my friends feel lost, empty and aching, I will listen. I will listen, but I might not agree.

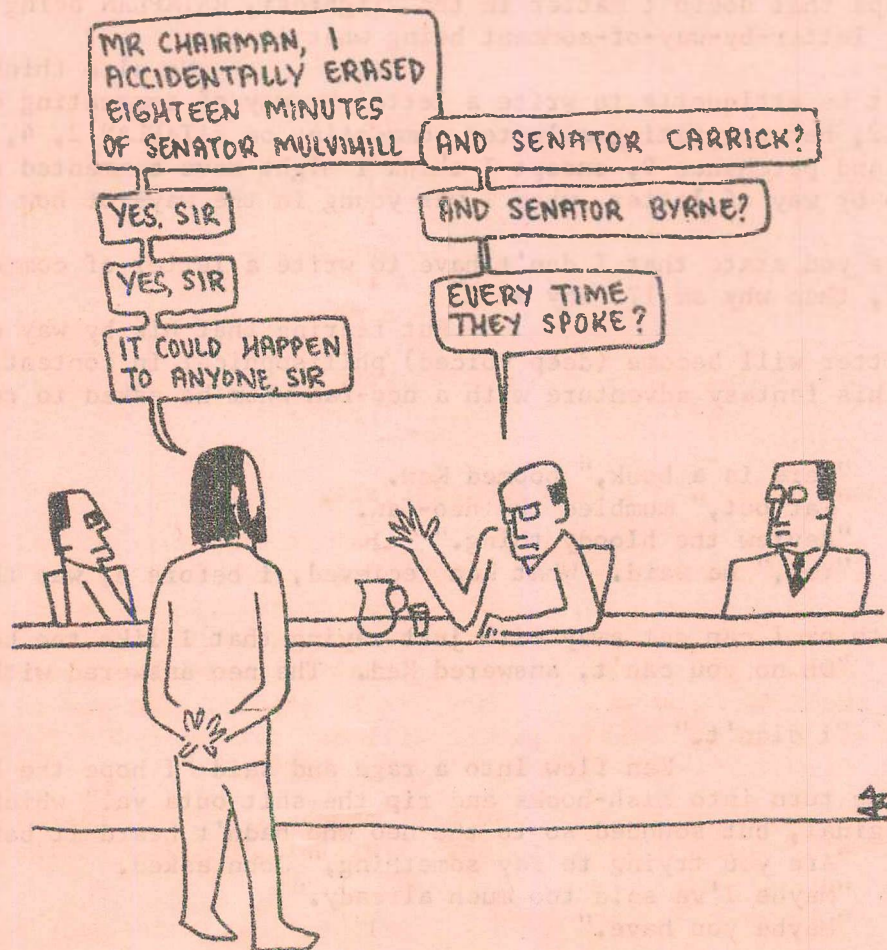
As I said, I am not a Christian. But I believe that when Jesus said 'Love your enemies' he meant exactly that. Because I am not a Christian, I am not obliged to believe or practise that. Because I am me, I do believe it and try to practise it. Someone (I would be delighted if you could

tell me who) said "We have seen the enemy, and he is Us, not Them."
That's my article about Jesus, Leigh.

* * *

Thanks for the article John.

A little while after the article arrived from John he rang me and asked what I thought of it and I said I thought it was pretty good but John had his doubts. We chatted a bit about other things and he decided he'd think about it and let me know. A few days, or was it a couple of weeks, later there was another telephone call and John had more or less decided what changes he wanted made and so I took it all down and then we got to talking about other things once again. "Hey," he said, "would you like a cartoon, a sort of political thing." "Okay," said I and the picture arrived in the mail the next day. You can't say he isn't eager to please.



Having disposed of John Bangsund for the remainder of this issue (I hope) we can now get on with the letters and, contrary to expectations, there are more than enough of them this time.

Ken Ford
11 Mandall Avenue
Ivanhoe 3079

Dear User of the French Letter Seven,

What a stupid thing it is for me, sitting in my place of ~~yakka~~ (excuse I, one must even spell sl ng words proper) yakker with a head-ache down to the glands in me neck, to decide (by the way, have you lost the flow of this sentence yet: I should think that you would have by now, it being my custom to include many asides, and I might add, bracketted jottings, that sometimes even I lose track of where I am, sometimes) to write a letter by way of comment on RATAPLAN 12.

Me thinks it may help the stated undertaking if I read the aforesaid magazine in question, but on the other hand, methinks that perhaps that doesn't matter in the slightest, RATAPLAN being what it is, and my letter-by-way-of-comment being what it is.

Me also thinks that it wouldn't be etiquette to write a letter by way of commenting on RATAPLAN 12, before writing a letter commenting on RATAPLAN 2, 4, 8, 10 and 11 and perchance 9, except I think I might have commented on this issue by way of letter, when I was young in the ways of how fandom works.

Since you state that I don't have to write a letter of comment by the way of, then why am I? Why am I?

But fearing that his by way of comment letter will become (deep voiced) philisophical in content, Ken remembers his fantasy adventure with a neo-fan whom he asked to review a book.

"Here is a book," boomed Ken.

"Far out," mumbled the neo-fan.

"Review the bloody thing."

"Yes," he said. What Ken recieved, i before e, was this review:

"I think I can get away with just saying that I like the book".

"Oh no you can't, answered Ken. The neo answered with a P.S.:

"I didn't."

Ken flew into a rage and said "I hope the hairs on your arse turn into fish-hooks and rip the shit outa ya!" which wasn't original, but sounded so to the neo who hadn't heard it before.

"Are you trying to say something," John asked.

"Maybe I've said too much already."

"Maybe you have."

So much for Felix Werder, James Pendberthy, John Alderson, Ken Ford (who gets two mentions) and Bruce Gillespie who gets a mention in

nearly everything these days.

So, says Ken, I don't need to write you a letter Leigh, all I need to do is flick a chip in your direction one Wednesday night like, and everything will be just "hunky-dory". (A quote from a play that).

Ken adds an afterward which goes something to the effect that perhaps that's what they mean by serial music. I don't know what he's going on about. Who ever heard of a discussion of serial music in a fanzine.

Anyhow, I regard this letter as an example which all budding faneds should use as a letter not to publish in their letter columns. Those of you aspiring to the fannish heights should go back and read it again and then answer the following questions:

Does it have anything important to say? Is it from somebody whose presence in your fanzine will lend it prestige? Is it entertaining?

Of course the answer to all these questions is NO. This leaves another question; "What was I doing when I printed this letter?"

Passing right along we have a letter chock full of deep meaning and all the things which make a vital letter column.

Jack Wodhams
Box 48
Caboolture
Qld 4510

Leigh,

Romans came out of nowhere. Rome was founded most probably by a Greek version of the Pilgrim Fathers some 2½ thousand years ago. Rome knew war from its inception, was occupied by Gauls hardly a century after it was supposed to have been founded. So Romans were composed of all sorts, like liquorice. It was a tradition that they maintained until the end.

What has this to do with Australia? Well, in later centuries the Roman tradition was promulgated by the British. This is to say, people born within the Empire were regarded as citizens of the Empire, regardless of cultural differentations. This meant that men of vastly disparate customs and upbringing could, and did, become generals and emporers in service to the entire Roman dominion. The Romans were not a race, they were an idea - and in many ways not a bad idea, at that. The Romans did not suffer from that malaise of exclusiveness known as nationalism.

Classically, the xenophobic antithesis of the Roman idea is given us by the Jews. It is an aspect that qualifies my attitude towards Jews being singularly privileged entities. Hebrews should have disappeared as a race, even as have Hittites and Gauls and Vikings, et al. Peoples come and go. Saxons and Jutes and Mericans and Normans, and others, became a breed, called, to save argument, 'English', after the Angles, the most

obscure of the invading tribes. Their name, in fact, is the most notable part remembered of the Angles, and this could be an early example of British diplomacy in action - naming the child after a friend of the family, rather than invite wrangling by matched groups of powerful relatives.

Human beings are universally cross-bred, and ethnic purity is a chimera. An English race is a figment, as is an 'American' race, or a 'Bolivian' race, or a 'Mali' race. As the world progresses, as personal communication and interchange and migration becomes an ever more speedy facility, so do ethnic considerations become ever more academic. Countries have vanished and many new nations have appeared, even in our lifetimes. The Jews should have been swallowed and absorbed ages and ages ago. That they were not, that they have so stubbornly clung to a redundant identity, has been at cruel cost that I cannot persuade myself has ever been worth the indemnity.

Hungry for an identity, Australians may appreciate how a once moderately successful tribe might be reluctant to lose theirs - even, unfortunately, unto the point of fanaticism self-perpetuating. But possession and dispossession are continuing facts of life, change an integral part of life. From their very origins the Jews cannot claim an ethnical purity, and it is impossible to untaint blood - once a mongrel, always a mongrel. Some, like Spaniards, or Mongolians or Javanese, are more cross-bred than others, but, in general, a 'race' un-infiltrated by foreign stocks, for a period only as long as a thousand years, is so extremely rare as to be virtually non-existent.

It is an inescapable realism that women have always been one of the most prized spoils of war - to the Russians in Berlin, and the Americans in Japan, as much as to the ancient Israelites. What intermingling of genes there has been in Viet Nam - Polish, Irish, Negro, etc, the native people will never be the same again. And speaking of 'Negro', there is no such 'race'. The American black man can no longer identify himself as Bantu, or Swazi, or Kikuyu, or Ashanti (in old Shanti town), or any other of the coloured African races that once existed, and still exist in part. The American black man, as the West Indian, is raceless, is a 'Negro', which, really, is a fine basis for brotherhood.

If we could have 'tantoners' as well as 'Negroes', and on to 'Russets' through 'Bronzers' to 'Lightlings', we could hopefully trend away from tenuous, and therefore fiercely held, nationalistic beliefs, to promote a wider, less severe categorization that might well come to regard 'Chocco' as a criterion and an ideal. Polynesians are fortunate, they are Chocco already. Polynesians are also civilised and intelligent, and are highly adaptable without being intrusive. In this present timewe might easily draw parallels with bygone Angles, to name all our blend of Pacific peoples Polynesians. 'Polynesia', appropriately, means 'many islands'.

Nationalism is always false, certainly has an insecure base in Australia. It is amusing in a way. The Australian identity is intrinsically groundless, has of necessity to be superimposed - and we can see

that the less warranted people are through heritage, the more vehemently they attest to the justification of their birthright. Australians are very sensitive to their lack of background, which prompts them, when asked, to declare forcefully that they're Australian - and proud of it! I am an Englishman. I am not proud to be an Englishman. Very few Englishmen are conscious of such an active sentiment. We rather take it for granted. Poms regard nationalistic fervor as a rather curious phenomenon, and always with a certain amount of suspicion.

It really would be better if you Aussie chaps could be uncommonly mature and forgo pursuit of the so fallible dream of attaining an unassailable racial identity. 'Polynesian' is a much looser, less stressful, and has pleasant connotations. Yes, I think I could accept being known as a Polynesian - it has an informal ring, yet an encompassing breadth that quite appeals to my anti-nationalistic inclinations.

The first time I read this letter through I wondered what had inspired Jack to write it and then I remembered that in the last issue David Grigg had talked about Australian fanzines and Felix Werder about Australian Opera and music.

I can't think of anything else which would have spurred Jack into sending me this letter but perhaps there is a deep layer of "Australian Nationalism" that runs through an issue of RATAPLAN without my noticing.

The first thing I have to say is that all the stuff about racial inter-breeding was interesting but I don't see what it has to do with Nationalism, especially Australian Nationalism. Is it necessary for a country to possess racial purity before it can claim to be a nation? If that were the case there would be no such thing as a nation. What it takes mainly to make a nation is a bit of land which a lot of people get together on and say that they own it. In cases people use the excuse of traditional residence and trace back the lines of tribes to prove their claim but basically it's beside the point. A German is a person who lives in Germany and an Englishman is a person who lives in England and so an Australian is a person who lives in Australia.

In the case of Australia the definition is a lot simpler than the definition of what is Germany - many people have been killed fighting over what bits of land will be called Germany but basically Australia is just that big island continent and a few smaller islands down below Asia.

I fear, Jack, that you feel Nationalism and Patriotism to be more or less the same thing. As I live in Australia I call myself an Australian and think that it's a pretty okay sort of place but that doesn't make me think that it is the best place on earth because we all know that God created all places to be equal. Being an Australian means mainly that you come into contact all the time with people that live in the same place and have a lot more things in common than they do with the other side of the globe or even people up on the equator. It is

only logical to say that things called Australian fanzines and Australian Opera exist because they are created in a place called Australia. This does not actually imply nationalism, just a geographic fact.

There is always influence from other geographic regions in what people in Australia do but the major influence comes from the people you talk to about what you are doing. The verbal communication leads to people doing things in a similar way. Even if you say, 'but look here Australians don't all produce the same sorts of fanzines or Operas' you are only showing that people do things in a manner which looks to be different. Bruce Gillespie and I appear to produce different sorts of fanzines but they are closer related than either of the fanzines are to other fanzines from other places.

And as for wanting to call Australians 'Polynesians', it's just silly. Apart from the people who live in Tasmania and a few others on other little islands around the coast most people live on the mainland and the mainland (and islands) are called Australia so let's call ourselves Australians.

Margaret Oliver
11 Cleary Avenue,
Belmore N.S.W. 2192

Dear Leigh,

Sydney fen do not drink at meetings, but usually make up for it at parties, as I think John Snowden will find out the next time Sinful Sinny Fannish Frolics. Though what with all the neos turning up at meetings to actually discuss science fiction, you can't be sure of anything anymore...

Your "Nothing Much About Music" was very interesting. A few months ago I saw Sitsky's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Penberthy's "Dalgerie" at a preview concert in the Sydney Opera House. I wasn't terribly impressed by either of them, but I think this was mainly because my experience of Australian music consists of little more than a few rather insubstantial bits of piano music by Frank Hutchens. With more money for concerts and fewer pressures (hopefully), I'll try to rectify that next year.

The night before last, when I should have been madly studying for my exams next month, I happened to turn on the radio and heard a discussion on indeterminate music on "Lateline". Nigel Butterley and a group of people performed a work consisting of the various noises that can be made by moving, rattling or tearing paper. It was a lot of fun, and one of the conclusions they reached was that this kind of music is for the enjoyment of the performer as well as the listener, though of course any performer of any instrument enjoys playing something well. I hope to find out some more about this when my exams are over, though I haven't heard anything of Ron Nagorka's on in Sydney, but perhaps I haven't been listening in the right places.

Good Luck for DUFF!

Thanks for the good wishes, if I keep on having this feeling that I want to write about modern music in my fanzine instead of the usual sorts of things I will surely need luck to win.

By a very strange coincidence I also heard that "Lateline" program and even took the precaution of recording it incase anything interesting was said that I could have used. There was lots that was said that I would have liked to have used but unfortunately I accidentally recorded over the talk. It's a pity too, in my attempts to list even more famous people on my contents page than John Bangsund does I almost managed William Mann but now my chance has gone.

The program served mainly to make me aware of the ideas of John Cage and his ideas are very interesting even if I don't go along with them. Even so after that talk I went out and read a book which dealt with Cage in part and while reading about one work of his in which the pianist (female) dresses in celophane and plays The Swan (half way through which she breaks off, climbs a ladder and leaps into a tub of water whereupon she continues with the piece) I had the idea for a piece of music in which people rip pages out of books and read them in various manners. So I wrote the piece and, with the help of some friends rehearsed it a few weeks later. It didn't seem too bad but we thought we might like to hear what it might sound like and so we decided to record it. And so we did, all over William Mann.

I'm a little surprised that you didn't like "The Fall of the House of Usher", I saw it on the box many years ago and even then without a knowledge of the musical idiom I thought it was pretty good. I was quite looking forward to seeing a performance they were going to be doing of it in Melbourne but a power strike intervened and though at the time they said they were merely putting the performance off I suspect they had to cancel it because I couldn't find out another thing about it.

You might consider this the end of the letters, there are some more yet that are printable but I've only a very few pages left at my disposal and I have a few other things that I want to print. Perhaps there should be a WAHF list here but if you were sitting where I'm sitting now and could see the same jumble of letters and fanzines and bits of paper that I can see you'd go without too. I should mention though that Eric Lindsay wrote a letter saying that he had spent an incredible amount on books while he was in America, John Snowden wrote to say that Sydney fans only drink lemonade (or words to that effect) and Ken Ozanne wanted to know why I wrote so much about music and didn't mention a singer by name once.

John Alderson also sent a pretty little article about his true love up there in Haverlock which I should get around to printing next issue. With this article came a covering letter which, amongst other things, offered to take care of Valma for the time I should be away if I won DUFF. I have had to turn him down, two at once is asking a bit too much I think and Valma wouldn't have it.

HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT

Great ideas come to some people whilst they hover on the threshold of sleep. Vegemite sandwiches have been known to induce this state, and it was under the influence of a vegemite sandwich that Ken Ford discovered Active Apathy.

Ken Ford, the Jester of Melbourne Fandom (sometimes he gets out of hand), thus became the first person in the world to have the choice of whether or not he wanted to be a member of the Active Apathists League. Leigh Edmonds (publisher of Rataplan, DUFF candidate and Tall Person) was proclaimed founder-after-the-fact. Leigh served as a brilliant inspiration to Ken in finding a purpose for the League.

Where else but St Kilda on the 1st December 1973 could this have happened? It was a natural happening, just like an earthquake or a blocked sink.

PURPOSE OF THE MOVEMENT

The main purpose of the League is to create sub-groups. Forty-nine sub-groups have already been created, each has two members a piece, so far, Ken Ford and Leigh Edmonds, probably not in that order.

Some of these are:- The Australian Shostakovich Appreciation Guild; The Asexual Calisthenics Club; Western Users of Zen Philosophies; The Let's-Get-Shuffle-Board-Out-Of-Heaven-And-Back-On-The-Ships Society; The Family; Fandom; and The Australian Labor Party.

POLITICS

We might send a letter to all the Governments of the World telling them: "The Active Apathy League will take over your government on condition that you feel like it at the time. Thank you."

DECLARATION

On the night the League was/were formed, we declared the Whole World a Chronosynclastic infandibulum, or something.

PATRON SAINTS

If you feel like it, you can even pick one or more of the multi-choice patron saints.

- (a) Kurt Vonnegut Jr.
- (b) Adolf Hitler
- (c) Gough Whitlam
- (d) (b) or (c), what's the difference?
- (e) Moshe Dayan

- (f) John Fox, the accountant
- (g) Anyone you like.
- (h) none of these/all of these.
- (i) who cares?

The list will be changed, maybe.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

All readers of Rataplan are hereby given the choice to become a member. The founding fathers have the right to return any entries they deem unfit, and no correspondance may be entered into, perhaps.

AWARD TIME

An award will be given whenever it is given, to the person who lives up to the League's ideals. The winner this time is Jane Clifton, who I've never met but who really exists, who hasn't heard of meand/or knows nothing about Active Apathists, and, for that matter, the sleep-inducing effects of a vegemite sandwich over-dose.

To you Jane, the award, our ideal member. Take it or leave it.

- * Every word you have just read may be changed and/or disregarded, if you so desire, to read anything like Active Plebian Elephant's, or floundered Yak in Mosque soup, or aomething equally as profound, subtle or witty (pick one).**

** and these***

*** so can these****

**** these too*****

*****maybe these*



GETTING DUFFED!

by David Grigg

Leigh Edmonds, arbiter of fan's fate, has informed me that he is standing for some incredible antediluvian contest, the prize of which consists of a trip to the colonies. When I pressed him as to his reasons for wanting to venture on such an epic (if not awe-inspiring) journey, he not inconsiderately broke off from his herculean (if not sisyphian) task of stencilling this fanzine thing and told me.

"I want to go" he said, "to meet all of those weird American people over there, and perhaps try to teach them the good word."

"Ah," I said, "You are going : - a missionary to bring enlightenment to the heathens."

"Exactly!" he cried, standing up and stroking his inconsiderable beard.

"Just think, ever since that silly revolution, America has been in the hands of the Infidel. They have been led astray into believing that they, and only they, rule the world, together with the egocentric belief that America is the world. Look at Baseball."

"My game's soccer, I'm afraid, but what about baseball?"

"What do Americans call their league? The World Series. And look at science fiction conventions. When they started up, did they call their convention the American SF Convention? No, they called it the World Convention."

"By George! You may be right."

He strode up and down, his six foot seven bulk filling the room, if not in actuality, then certainly in spirit.

"They have to realise," he said, "that there is more to the world than the United States of America."

"The best-damned country in the world" I added as an aside as Leigh swept past me.

"They have to realise that there is more to fandom than American fandom, that there are fans who have not been brought up on a steady diet of Yandros, SFRs, Locii and Granfaloons, but on the sweet ambrosia of Scythrops, Rataplans and The Mentor."

"Hurrah!" I cried, leaping up and nearly knocking Spot, the Edmonds' resident feline, head over heels.

"Yes," he said, and here a strange glow came over his face, "once I get there, America will never be the same again. They may even make me President."

"You'd make a peachy President."

"One day I may even make Pope. But first things first. What I've got to do, you see, is convert these Americans into true-blue Aussie fans. Let's see, I'll have to take over a dozen cases of pies, plus a case of tomato sauce, some tubes of Fosters, and fifty million copies of the Iron Outlaw strip from Nation Review. Of course, I'll have to put out a special American edition of Rataplan, filled with the slogan of the United Fanarchist Party of Australia."

"Which is?"

"She'll be right, mate."

"Of course."

I attempted to interrupt him in his stride, for his face was filled with a zealous enthusiasm I had only ever seen before when he worked his synthesizer.

Excuse me, Leigh, " I said, "But aren't there other people standing for this contest? They might possibly win instead of you. Notwithstanding, of course," I added as his visage became severe, "that you are the most worthy candidate, sometimes the taste of the populace is not that of the cognoscenti."

"Yes," he said at last, "I do believe some others are standing. Paul Stevens and John Bangsund, to be precise."

"And why do they want to go?"

"Heaven knows. They have nothing to offer except themselves. I, however, have Ghu on my side."

"You've got mittens, eh?"

"What?"

"Got Mittens."

"What the hell has mittens to do with the price of eggs?"

"Gott mit uns. God is with us."

"Oh, yair. That's right."

"But what about Paul and John?"

"Paul? What is he? Nothing but a character in a film. An evil, anti-fannish character at that. Why, the Yanks would be scared he'd blow up the convention hotel. And as for that Bangsund fellow, he told me not three weeks ago that he'd once and for all, finally, irrevocably forsworn fandom and gone into deep gaffiation, like a bear does in winter."

"But he says that just about as often as he tries to give up smoking."

"Exactly."

"I've written you a campaign poem."

"Really? Let 's hear it."

"Hum... Whenever you hear a sharp little voice
That seems to be insistently saying:
EDMONDS FOR DUFF!, or given a choice,
DUFF IS FOR EDMONDS, continually playing
The same thing ever again,
just let out a yell,
and say, 'what the hell!'
Edmonds, Leigh Edmonds, GET DUFFED!'"

"Jesus."

* * * *

Before I close off this issue I wish to state that David says as an afterword that I don't really talk as he would have you believe from the above.

This issue is being produced in the break between Christmas and the New Year so it's a little late to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Merry New Year. Instead I will remind you that Mozart's birthday is Sunday the 27th of January. Don't forget it.

KAPUT



PRINTED MATTER

Jackie Franke
Box 51-A RR-2
Beecher
IL 60401
VS of A

SENDER:

Leigh Edmonds
PO Box 74
Balaclava
Victoria 3183
AUSTRALIA