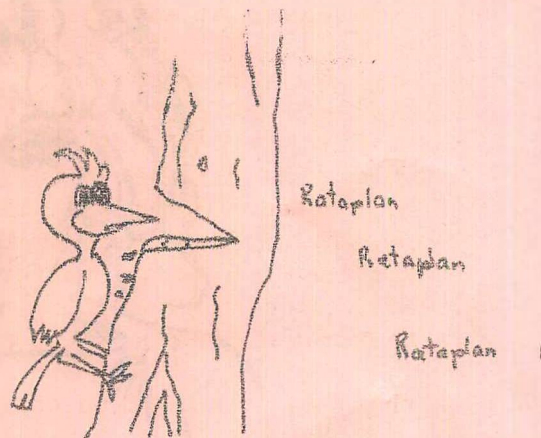


RATAPLAN 15

R A T A P L A N
F I F T E E N



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(Anything not otherwise attributed is by THE EDITOR)

The Cover is by Stephen Campbell and comprises what we hope will be the first in a series to be called "The RATAPLAN Wet Dream of the Month". All other artwork is by the lovely Valma Brown who sure draws a mean picture.

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Last August at Adventon II there was considerable discussion about the awards known as the DITMARS. Apparently some members of the convention were not very happy about the treatment that the Ditmars had received in the past and didn't look forward to a very bright future for them. The topic was brought up at the business session and, when one of the program items fell through, a full scale discussion was held. If anybody is that interested in what was said they can buy a taped copy of the whole convention from somebody in Adelaide but the discussion went on for far too long and contained far too little of worth to go about the business of transcribing. Even to go into what was said is not worth the trouble and, anyhow, my memory isn't that good.

So let's ignore all that and just concern ourselves with the future of the Ditmars.

It is generally agreed that awards of some kind are a worthwhile idea, apart from anything else it takes up a good few minutes at a convention and anything which makes a convention more enjoyable has to have some value. Ofcourse awards are supposed to be given to some work or person that a group of people feels is worthy of giving something special to. If the members of a convention vote this or that story an award it should mean that that story is worth something as a work of literature. Right here we can end up in lots of arguments, especially when somebodies favourite doesn't win; it can be said that any award given as the result of a vote by almost anybody is not an award for quality but a popularity awards and while this is probably correct there are people who are going to complain because they think that the award should have been to the best story, but we know very well that quality is a very subjective thing and if you reckon your favourite book is the only one worthy of an award then you'd better give an award yourself.

Some fans hold that the way to make sure that the Ditmar goes to the best that really deserves to win is to make sure that the voters are all well informed, which is to say that they've read everything that has been nominated. This will only be proved when it is tried out, and so far nobody has bothered to do anything about that, infact nobody has come up with a decent idea as to how this ideal state could be achieved. To make sure that the awards go to the right people there is only one scheme which seems to me to be infalable, we appoint an awards committee comprised of John Foyster, George Turner and Bruce Gillespie and let them do the work. This idea has at least one valuable advantage, if the award doesn't go to your favourite story you know exactly who to blame.

Now we come to the bit that interests me, so far everything applies just as much to the Hugo's as it does to the Ditmars though the Ditmars suffer because they don't appear to be necessary to the future of science fiction as the Hugo's do as there is supposed to be money attached to them. My interest stems from something which I think Gary Mason said at Adventon II, that the awards are important to the people giving them because they want to see the happy smiling faces of the people getting the awards. In the past we have had many situations where the awards went to people that had never heard of the Ditmar and have probably never even concerned themselves that they

might have an audience in Australia. Usually these awards have been accepted by people who don't know the person getting the award and may have no contact with that person apart from sending the award to them. The end result might be five minutes egoboo for the person on the receiving end but it is a terrible letdown for the people giving the award. So why bother?

The usual Ditmar awards come in four categories; Best International fiction, Best Australian Fiction, Best Dramatic Presentation and Best Australian Fanzine. Of those four only two are likely to be collected in person, the Dramatic Presentation is even worse than the International Fiction because nobody knows who the award will end up with. So if we are going to give awards at all we should think quite seriously about what we are doing.

We can give awards to people who can give us absolutely nothing in return and just put up with the situation in the name of doing a good job by telling those people that we have enjoyed what they have done. This, atleast, seems like the sporting thing to do but fandom is based on egoboo and the result from that point of view is a little lopsided.

We can give awards only in categories that are Australian, not such a bad idea until you think that within a couple of years everybody who deserves one will have got it and then we'll just go around the circle again. Australian science fiction and fandom are both pretty small arenas.

We can give no awards at all which would be by far the easiest thing to do. If conventions stopped giving Ditmars nobody would get upset about them, no accusations of stuffed ballot boxes and all that, but then fans generally like giving awards so we end up back at square one.

Indeed, we could run around this issue for years and resolve nothing. It seems quite likely that after all the time spent in discussion last August nothing different will happen at the next national convention, and if this is the case don't complain because it's just as much your fault as anybody elses.

If you are willing to put up with my opinion, which I am now about to give free of charge, Ditmars should be awarded only in categories which are Australian. This means that awards would be given to the "Best Australian Fanzine" (how many more can Bruce take before he runs out of room), "Best Australian Novel", "Best Australian Story of Shorter Length" (these two might be condensed into one if there isn't very much written in the year being voted on) and that's about it. This would mean that in any year only two or three Ditmars are awarded so perhaps we could increase the number and increase the time the awarding ceremony takes by letting the convention committee make a Special Award somewhere or another.

You

might not think too much of my ideas so if you've anything better to offer you might go to the trouble of writing to either Bruce Gillespie (who is in charge of the next National Convention) or myself telling us what you think. If you don't think anything then don't say anything and don't complain.

Talking about awards, which is something we should actually steer clear of, I've wasted a great deal of time in the last couple of days looking at a couple of award type shows, Roscoe knows how I get myself into these things. On Friday there was the awarding of the Logie's, the Australian TV awards, and the crowning of The Queen of the Pacific.

Now I know why I looked at the latter, to see all those pretty young girls, but the only way I can explain the Logie awards is that I was doing some research for the Hugos because the Logies were being presented at the Southern Cross. Also Graham Kennedy was there and sure to win something and anybody will tell you that Graham Kennedy is the most entertaining person on Australian television in the last fifteen years.

So Valma and I settled ourselves on the bed - the only sensible place to put a TV set is in the bedroom, and watched the star-studded hoards getting their little statues. Lots of people I'd never heard of before got their awards, said their little speeches and got off the platform quick smart to make room for the next person, I didn't bother to count how many awards they gave out but it must have been thirty or forty though ofcourse only about ten were really important. The similarities between why some people end up with Hugo's and some of the people got Logie's did not escape me. In particular there was the award for the best TV advertisement, it went to a cigarette commercial which must set an all time low for the medium and yet it was awarded for no better reason than that Ted Hamilton who is quite a TV personality one way and another had not received an award before. He virtually said so himself while he was picking the award up.

I wish I could remember the name of the actor who went up to get some award half boozed. He ended up with two awards, the second being for the best script of the year and while he was making his little speech he would have upset atleast seventy-five percent of the audience by saying things like, "If a lot of the people in this audience were half the actors they thought they were..." He was either very brave or very drunk and while a lot of people will naturally agree with him privately they won't do so in public.

When it came to the main awards the formality of reading out Graham Kennedy's name as the Best Male TV Personality of the year was only to be expected, he seems to win it every year, I wonder how many of the little statues he has in his collection.

Anyhow the big thing about the Logie awards was supposed to be the overseas Personalities, namely David Cassidy (who is pretty lousy when he doesn't have a script) Gina Lollobrigida (who has a nice pair) and the guy who gets to play the Doctor in "Days of our Lives". What an incredible waste of time and money. There was also the actor who was the Inspector in Mod Squad who was almost acceptable and while we're on him, the show that won the Logie for the Best American Show was "Mod Squad" which could have only won because the organisers knew that there would be somebody from the show there to say something nice. The award for the Best English TV Show was a bit of a flop because nobody was there to take it.

The Best

overseas personality to take part in the Logie presentation would have to depend on your particular tastes but I remember being told of the time when William Shatner got the job and he and Bert Newton kept on sending each other up with one liners for a few minutes until Bert had to admit that he'd met his match. I somehow doubt that "Star Trek" won an award, afterall it was a kids show.

This year the winner in the Best Australian Comedy category was "The Auntie Jack Show", a choice which I fully agree with though I'm sure a lot won't, but they deserve to have their bloody arms ripped off.

I think I said I'd also seen the crowning of the Queen of the Pacific; I intend to say not another thing about it, it was terrible. (Chunderous, I think would describe it more accurately) Leigh says he's entering me next year. Blah!

The two previous lines came from Valma and only go to prove that a good faned never leaves his typer unguarded for a minute.

Frank Denton
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I was delighted to receive RATAPLAN in today's mail. I felt right at home with the review of Felix Werder's works, your talk about the moog, and Australian operain general. I'm certain that I'd be among the crowd who wanted to hear the European stuff. I grant everything that Werder has to say about how a culture creates a Mozart or Beethoven of their own, but I'm afraid that, from a listener's viewpoint, it takes a special kind of dedicated person to listen to the verymodern for a very long time and to go back again and again. I can recall reading the contemporary reactions of new works by composers that we consider to be classical, yes, even the backbone of the repertoire now, and they had the same problem then, no matter what century you want to chose. Such are the vagaries of the music world.

((You are right to the extent that even Beethoven got some terrible reviews on the morning after but alongside composers like Werder he was lucky because he didn't have to compete with fellows like ach-who were dead and buried and their music forgotten. When Werder had his Violin Concerto premiered a couple of years ago, a performance that Valma and I were lucky enough to attend, he went up against the venerated Tchiakovsky who commanded all of the second half and what chance did he have when everybody was along to hear the "Pathetic" and the Werder was just tossed in for Australian content. Incidentalaly Valma and I went off and chatted with some girl behind the shop counter where we were getting refreshed and got shut out of the second half, an event which upset Valma considerably but put me out not in the slightest and I had to tell her not to get upset, we hadn't missed anything worth hearing.

For all you Werder fans out there I've got a piece of paper lying around here

which is mainly about electronic music but has a marvelous opening paragraph:

"To most people music means something written in the 18th or 19th century, preferably near Vienna. The culture gap is now so great that the museum oriented middle class and the younger creative generation don't even use words to mean the same thing. Music is simply the organisation of sounds. Whether it is beautiful or not depends not on the piece but on the listener. There are more people in the world who think Beethoven ugly, than like Peking opera."

Yes, now back to Frank

Denton.))

There are parts of David Grigg's thought-provoking letter with which I agree and others that I will have to think about. I quite agree with the paragraph about the advertisement for the British raincoat. "Perhaps" embodies all of the understatement that I have found in England. Finding national treasures is like playing Hounds and Hares. We spent a morning in trying to locate Cadbury, now thought to be the most closely related to Camelot. It's on private land, a hill fort used mostly for pasturage now. In America there would be signposts for miles around proclaiming that you were approaching Camelot and telling you how many miles there were to go. Of course, there'd be an admission charge. We had to ask to find even Trust Houses, Beatrix Potter's home, William Wordsworth's home, William Morris's home.

Are Americans always that pushy? I don't know; I am one and too close to the source. What David is intimating, I think, is that it shows in our zines as well. I find Australian zines low key; I expect that is what David wishes American zines might be, and why he enjoys his countrymen's writing so much more than anything else. You're right, Leigh, that the personal zines of many fans in the States may have the kind of writing that he is looking for, but I wouldn't count even on that. Censure him not, however, as a chauvinist; I, too, find Australian zines to be the kind of reading that I enjoy and I generally read them cover to cover at one sitting, savoring every moment. There are a number of American zines with which I do the same, but the difference is that I often know the editor personally. This means a decided difference and may be what sways David towards his own kin.

Paul Anderson
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I read the "Jesus" article from John wondering about the lengthy build up and the seemingly irrelevant material on the Western film genre. The program looks as if it is one that I would avoid if at all possible since an intelligent, well made western is so rare an event that if one does come along then the overseas reviews of it will let me know of it in time and in the meantime I do not have to sit through so many wasted hours of semi-interest in a totally predictable plot. The most recent western I saw was "Showdown" with Martin and Hudson playing the roles of buddies now nominally on opposing sides of the law. I had missed it

intentionally in Adelaide but I caught it in Sydney after noticing that the film that I had wanted to see, "Sleuth", had started some half hour before and if a film is expected to be as good as that one was then it is worth seeing in its full release version. "Showdown" served it's purpose and filled time before we had to catch our Pan Am 747. Otherwise it was a dead loss as a film. I expect that "Godspell" would be similarly rewarding but I may still try to see it if John or some other worthy critic can persuade me that the film has merit.

Then following the discussions on the theories of western writing John ties it all into his theme very well with the well chosen quotes. The quote from the Chilean lady contradicted with the Russian spy's attitude in Michael Winner's film "Scorpio". There he is steadfast in his belief in Communism despite the brutal actions of his leaders. He believes in spite of the police action in invading Prague to eliminate Dubcek and his soft-line party officials. In other words, like the Christian he believes in the Gospels and the message of Christ but does not let the excesses and atrocities committed by the Church in their misplaced zeal sway him in his beliefs. And so the Russian has his belief in Communism which enables him to survive while Burt Lancaster is lost once he learns that his wife is dead. He carries on for a time to revenge himself but after the deed is done he virtually commits suicide in the end. It is the same with Christianity of one who allows oneself to be overcome by the misplaced actions of fanatics who have lost sight of the prime directives. By the way John, why did you study for the ministry in the first place?

((It appears, Paul, that you see a lot of films so maybe it's not too surprising that you pay so much attention to the make believe reality of a film like "Scorpio", no matter how well it is made. Script writers and directors have an absolutely amazing ability to render up the human condition into nice little parcels and they somehow never get the right labels on the right parcels - and the label is always far too large anyhow. I imagine that John would be a big fan of the Kung Fu films if they got such things in Canberra, they have the same sort of message as westerns but they are so much more blatant about what they are doing than westerns that they are a real delight to watch. Anybody who attempts to draw a moral any bigger than "the fight sequences were good" from them is going off the rails.))

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Yes, that's our JB and good to see. Loved every word of it - and he didn't even mention Martial Arts movies though there's no reason why he might want to. I could comment that, sadly, there is a Tartar Liberation movement but that is unfortunately another story. Pogo, of course, people will tell you and he and us, was the first to say "We have met the enemy and he is us". Or was it "I --- me"? Former, I think. Frustrating to think of another earlier version of this you/he rewrote

from.

The cartoon, naturally, is worth as much as John's article, which is no small value, to me. I hardly imagine I'm alone in that.

Ken Ford.

More politics, of a sort to calm us for Jack the Wod, old sod. I think you do honestly misunderstand Jack. Unless you were just using words, likely. It is quite a beautiful article/letter and made my night - after enjoying (sadly) John. Without going on too much about much of it, do you forget that we have taken on "our" country by taking it from the original inhabitants, not too like UK, etc? More like the Americas, perhaps? In passing, I could feel like saying that you and Bruce never will be too likely to do much that's similar but then I'm here, and so able to see a completely different view of both of you. I take your point of geographic similarity/fannish similarity but I don't see any, in most comparisons of you two, and seldom look for that much. To overseas market, your attitude is about right. If I look at Japan, Mae Strelkov in Argentina and so many others, I remember how different Irish fandom was, long ago, in the fannish differences of only so few worthy fans. Was it any different then? You, I suppose, must see more similarities with Bruce and you, true. It's quite understandable perhaps that you don't follow old Jack's line of thought - no real insult intended. It's just that I think I do; perhaps you do.

Did I mean, perhaps, while reading Jack, to say something like "Nationalism is identification" to you after your comment? What isn't identification? Perhaps that is the story or did I mean a different story? Do I waste your time by saying that, to my tired mind and eyes of now, it's "ethics" by many/any names that are argued out in our small part of the universe, on so many unsaid levels? From the Children of God (of Moses David's leadership) to union methods or aims near you, to JB's cartoon to Cook's landing here to Jack's recognising clearly our attitudes, as he must, because he's an "outsider", poor "Pommie" (sorry, Pommy?) what boots it to repeat what's bootless if I repeat it, or some such likely feat?

((Well I'll go along with you in thinking that what Jack wrote that time was pretty good, infact one of the best letters I've ever received. I think that I would even concede that he had something in what he wrote but as the matter resolved itself Jack admitted that he had been too intense and that's about what I had thought. If I were to be BIG about the whole business I would have admitted that Jack was correct in what he said but that was not the point - the point was that what Jack had written was almost totally irrelevant to what is going on today in Australia, just as your little bit about us taking the land from the Aborigines is irrelevant because it's an accomplished fact and we couldn't really hand the land back even if we wanted to.))

The Lateline thing has some curiosity value. I'm sorry you didn't cover it more. Anyone (almost) would be able to try to learn piano and love Valma madly, right? Erasing and overtaping is just not good enough, mate. Someone may want to rip both your arms off. Who knows who gets to read your fanzine if it has a reputation for music etc. appreciation. If

editors of Hansard read it, you little know who else does, right?

Back to
listening to Monday night ABC Modern Music program. Good stuff, though
not Back, Vavaldi, etc.

((And a good thing too, who'd want to listen to old and tired hacks
like them when one can catch up on all that is new and exciting in
music. And if you had as many bits and pieces of electronic gadgetry
floating around you'd be able to make erasing and overtaping as good
an excuse as I can.))

Joan Dick
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Last Thursday night all the SF people in Melbourne and Space Age Books
were the topic of discussion, I was attending a night at the telescope
with the Albury and Wodonga Astronomy Club. I have always been interested
in astronomy but never had the opportunity to look through the telescope.
It was cloudy and hazy but I saw the moon and Saturn. It really has
rings around it, and moons. I'm still thrilled. It's just as the pictures
show it. My astronomy led me to SF, those wonderful names of fabulous
far off stars made me wonder if such places really did exist and I went
from there. I suppose everyone knows, if they think about it, that the
earth travells at a fair pace in its twenty-four hour spin, I was never
conscious of it till I saw Saturn fast vanishing into the side of the
viewing piece.

I enjoyed your grandmother's article. I think everyone
should get their grandparents to write out or tell of their life as a
youngster and the early years. This may seem trivial at the time but in
later years their records will be a priceless heritage. I regret not
thinking of this while my grandparents were alive as they were some of
the first settlers in the area. Now it is too late.

So, I live in Albury,
"a fairly large TOWN" on the main highway between Sydney and Melbourne.
YUCK! Albury is, and has been, a city for a long time now. But
unfortunately most people only know of it as a place they drive through
going elsewhere. I still remember the day I was asked, in the North
Albury shopping centre, "Is this Albury" and the look of amazement when I
said they had three miles more to go. Albury is nowhere near as big as
Melbourne, heavens forbid, but it is larger than most people realise
when they just drive through. Stop and find out one day - try 379
Wantigong Street for information.

Alex Gas and his comments on bathroom
reading and other things is very real to me. No one in this house goes
to the bathroom without a book and a transistor radio. About two hours
later there are expressions of concern. "Do you need a rope? Have you
lost the way? Have you swum the channel yet? Need any more soap? Did
you slip down the plughole?" But I hold the record. One very hot day I
went to sleep in a cool bath and now I get yelled at, "Mum's asleep again",
if I stay too long

Touching on the subject of concerts and opera I think

people have become used to hearing and seeing the best on radio and television. Hence they will not go in large numbers to hear what is an excellent presentation when it unfortunately falls below the level of expectation that they have unknowingly become used to.

((The reason why people don't go out much to live performances of this or that isn't because they get used to seeing better on the tv but just because they've gotten far too used to getting all their culture from the box and when it comes to the opera season or whatever they feel much more enclined to stay at home and catch up on what's happening over at 96 or on The Box. I don't think that you could really say that efforts like that are a high point of the cultural life in Australia.

On the other hand there must be a lot of people who still want to see a performance live, Valma and I recently went to the Prom Concerts down here and every night was sold out, "The Fires of London" performed here last night and you couldn't get a seat unless you were a subscriber (I didn't bother renewing this year because the rest of their season was lousy but I was a bit upset at missing that performance) and Lee Harding told me that when he went to get tickets to the opera they were almost sold out - and in a year when they are running one of the most uninteresting seasons one could imagine.

The reason I go to so many live performances is because no matter how good a piece might be on the radio or television and no matter how technically perfect it might be, it is only a poor copy of what happens in the concert hall or theatre. I remember the first time I went to a string quartet concert, my mouth fell right open the first time the violin entered because I never knew that the instrument really sounded like that. Sure I'd heard lots of records but on them the subtleness of the violin with the beautiful tones and overtones it has in the hands of a master just weren't there to be heard. What you hear over the radio is even worse and the television is even worse than that.

As an aside, and what is this fanzine but a collection of asides, I always derive a certain amount of amusement from the people who spend vast amounts of time and money on their hi-fi equipment in the vain attempt to capture that illusive "concert hall" quality. They will go out and spend their thousand or so and boast about the performance of their equipment but if you go around and listen, while you have to admit that it sounds quite good, they still haven't got the "perfect" result. Some of them believe that they have but I doubt if they know that there is a concert hall inside the stone building called the Melbourne Town Hall - and no matter how bad the acoustics are in there they are by far preferable to any hi-fi system. For playing records my ageing system is quite acceptable, it tells me the way that the music is put together and gives me some sort of idea of the sonorities the composer intended, but to hear the music as the composer really intended, along with all the emotional impact, there is no substitute but to be there in person.

As to Albury being a city, it probably is. Any place that takes half an hour to drive

through could probably be considered a city but I suppose I'm too used to taking half an hour to get into the city from St.Kilda which is supposed to be an inner suburb of Melbourne and little places just escape my notice. The main thing I always remember about Albury is not the size of it but the annoyance it causes by making me slow down to a thirty-five mile/per/hour crawl for so long when I could be dashing along at fifty.))

Well I bet that you all thought I had forgotten that a fanzine like this is supposed to have an article in it every once in a while, and to be quite honest I had. But John Alderson reminded me by putting an article in my letter box (something which everybody is encouraged to do) and since John appears to be the only regular contributor, who am I to ignore his little reminders. They are quite good too.

A NOBLE SACRIFICE

It was recently, as discerning fans will note from certain aspects of this article, that I went fishing on the lower reaches of one of the tributaries of the Murray. In the interests of ecology I will not state exactly where... you fellows find your own secluded fishing spots. Well we roared away from Serpentine where we had stopped at the hostelry for fuel for my two friends. I make my own and a few bottles of The Quest for the Bunyip's Blood No 2 sufficed me for the week. Besides I pride myself on my tidyness, I take my bottles home and fill them again and save labels. They drink frightful stuff in cans and that, and leave the dead marines behind, despite the fact that they can be used to make excellent carbide "bombs" when the fish refuse to bite, as unfortunately the misguided creatures are wont to do.

Arriving at our secluded fishing spot we heaved the debris from the last trip into the river, then went and set the coss lines... the river being too snagged for gill-nets. Some theiving character had swiped our drum nets... Then throwing in half a dozen or set lines each we started to set up camp.

I may say that there were three of us, that's including myself who am a man to be reckoned with if reports are true. There was Bill, not to be confused with that Wright fellow, who is a rather well educated chap; and Ken, who has nothing to do with Fords. Ken was a notable sleeper, and when he fell on his bunk or whatever, he died until six the next morning. He could sleep on the hobs of hell, probably will if he doesn't reform and stop guzzling the amber-devil.

Perhaps it was just as well we didn't catch any more than we could eat the first night, the fridge was full of bottles and that. Well my mates manfully emptied their contents as we sat around the campfire...

"Rosy with pictures and tales to tell..."

except that they were not telling any yarns. Ken was studying the form in the back of some Melbourne daily or other whilst Bill was studying form in "Continental" and "Playboy". Holding out a centre spread of the latter to my shocked gaze he said,

"Be all right if you had a milk-round, wouldn't it?"

I grunted noncommittedly to cover my lack of knowledge and resumed my

reading of PHILOSOPHICAL GAS, which I confess I don't understand either, (being somewhat worse than PUNCH but without as many pictures).

"What's that blackanyella thing you're reading?" demanded Bill. "It looks like a D.L.P. election pamphlet."

"It's not," I assured him, "John Bangsund expresses no opinion on politics and the D.L.P. have opinions on everything."

Whereupon he took it from my hand and gave me Playboy and after some time searching I found an SF story of questionable quality which I read. By this time Bill had finished with PHILOSOPHICAL GAS and tossed it back to me, saying as he did so, "My God!" I confess that Bill had not previously struck me as a religious man, but whether this was a trait in his character previously well hidden or a conversion by Bangsund, I don't know. However he downed three large cans in succession and without a sip, and then silently rose and went around the lines.

Several days later there was ample room in the fridge and we were getting anxious about filling it with fish. True, we could use gelly, but it is inadvisable to use gelly until just before leaving. It attracts fishing inspectors and even police who ask awkward questions and want to see fishing and marriage licenses... though nobody in their right mind would take a woman fishing. However we had hopes the fish would bite as the weather was blowing up and lightning played around the horizon.

It was about midnight when the wind struck, ripping the tent from around us and wrapping it around a gumtree half a mile away. Whilst Bill and I held down the fridge so it would not get the rain began to pour down in sharp icy sheets. We were drenched. The bitter hail that followed froze us, and then more rain wet us again, and there we were, in our shirt tails, holding down the fridge. And all the while Ken slept the sleep of the just. I would not venture to suggest how many inches of rain fell but the river began to rise and we decided the best thing to do was to get the fridge up a tree and tie it there. As the wind had moderated with the fall in temperature we managed this without more than a little trouble. With our grog safe we were able to think of other lesser things as we waded knee deep in the rising water.

"Cripes," said Bill, "That bloody Ken'll drown."

Sure enough Ken was still sound asleep, the rising water lapping his ears but fortunately he was lying on his back. We shook him, but without effect.

"Forget about waking him," said Bill, "he'd drown first. Prop his head up with some bottles."

So we did that, but it was a temporary measure. Soon the rising water was lapping at his open mouth. We sat him up and held him until the rising water forced us to drag him upright, and holding him between us we spent the rest of the miserable night. By about five the water began falling rapidly and a chill wind blew which set our teeth chattering. Ken looked blue, and Bill said we'd have to get him warm. We tried to rub circulation back into his limbs but with the icy rain still falling our efforts were in vain.

"We'll have to light a fire," said Bill.

"Good idea I said, "I'll hold Ken up while you ~~little one~~."

"Fair go mate, you're the bushman, not me. I'm a school teacher and wasn't taught anything practical."

"And what," I asked, "would you suggest I use to start a fire? Everything is sopping wet."

"Get that copy of PHRENETIC BASH you had the other night. That's the driest thing I've ever read."

"You mean PHILOSOPHICAL GAS. But that's a collector's piece."

"Would you have Ken die for the sake of a bit of rag like that. Besides Bangnoise or whatever his name is has a garage-full he hasn't posted out."

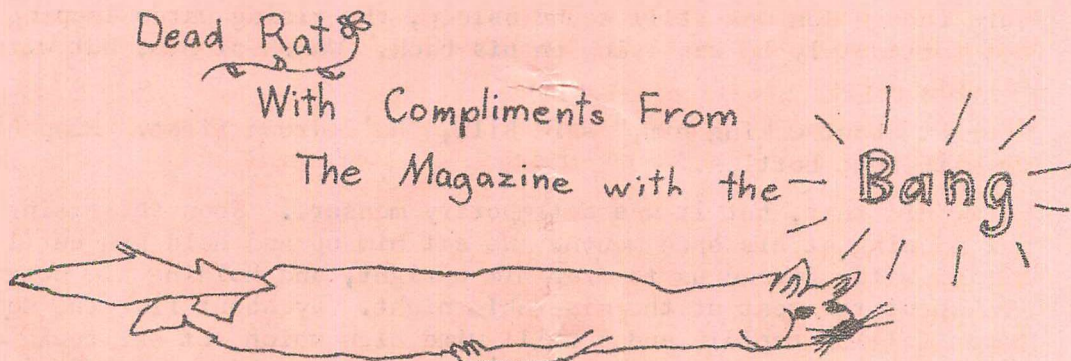
"Oh he's going to start putting them in Hansards and get to the better class of reader that way."

Bill said some words I didn't understand and from the tone of his voice I hope he doesn't teach at school. With a tear in my eye I searched in the mud and ooze beneath the bed for our library. Finally I found it, its prestine gold covered with yellow mud. Reverently I wiped the mud off it, pushed it under a pile of dripping wood and applied a match. Immediately it burst into flames and ignited the wood and soon we had a blazing fire going. We warmed, first one side of Ken, and then the other side until the blueness left him and his limbs bent again. Soon he stopped shivering and we forced some rum between his teeth. Slowly the long night ended and when six came, Ken woke, and reached for the rum.

"Eh, I say," he said between swallows, "I musta been full last night not to get to bed. Where's my pants?"

I suppose I would have made the sacrifice for anybody but it does leave me with another copy missing in my file of Phrenetic Bash, sorry, Philosophical Gas. It was a great moment thrust upon me...

-- John Alderson



NEW YORK IN PIECES

I am riding on one of the incredibly efficient cattle carts that New York is infamous for and despising every incredibly efficient moment of it. Clackety - clack clack. A shudder of hurtling steel. Blink flash blink flash. Coming up beside us is the double "E" train, resplendant in vast patches of day-glo grafiti (on the inside of these iron shells the grafitti is mostly code, personal vendettas, allegiances, brotherhood pacts, statements of courage) on the outside looking like concrete jungle camouflage for a giant mechanical spined caterpillar as it weaves along high in the air over the bridges. Now, in the pit of Hades, sharing the same tube the double "E" creeps up beside us, momentarily holding its own - I catch fleeting glimpses of a strange procession of human anomalies in comical disarray, then its gone, back to the darkness, shot further into the bowles of this infinite labyrinth.

Sometimes it's like being inside the head of a huge torpedo as it trembles and pulses towards that awesome moment when suddenly, with a great whoosh, the tunnel explodes into daylight shock and we emerge, blinking, and feeling somehow naked but relieved, and with our faces still veiled in the dreaming darkness, dusting ourselves absent mindedly from that timeless contact with a world we can sense was transversed, but never really touched.

Inside the carriages the people behave as if they were from another world (and in a sense they are) looking like clay models in a psychodrama for the blind and for the mute. Poker faced, expressionless as a herd of cattle being led to an unknown lemming overkill, they stand contorted and twisted, clumped together in a ridiculously banal, almost debased fashion. For example:

I am jerking to work on the F Train from Roosevelt Avenue, Jackson Heights to Fifth Avenue. My right knee is deftly and surely placed within the groin of a rather tired looking executive.

Shoved up snugly against my left side is a rather plain looking girl who (I could almost swear) is secretly or subliminally relishing the anonymous sensuality of her casual, coincidental rape.

My right foot is apparently resting on someone elses toe, though I can't really be sure as I have no way of seeing it and my face is approxiamtely eight inches from that of a woman who must have had atleast a pound of garlic for breakfast.

Paradox twists its ironical blade; the imbalances are atrocious. In the case of Subways it appears that once again Americans have substituted quality with quantity, a major facet of the American life style generally that I abhor. The oprressive, schizophrenic feeling of anonymity that one feels travelling with the Boob-tube, mind bent multitudes every day and that I know must be shared within the heart of every tube traveller (no matter how bland the facial expression) is the direct result of this quantitative living. If I may digress for a moment, it is remarkable how close capitalistic society is to the communist when viewed on this socio economic level.

The same debilitating, Kafkaesque drama is being enacted: the stage is

either on the Subway route or in a workers meal camp. The setting, appropriately garbed is all the colours of tedium conveys the same dense atmosphere of futility. A mixture of the stifled screams and stagnation of those living their death-on-the-installment-plan lives (to quote Celine) with which the stage is set, and thus the players look, act and feel very much the same.

So whilst being very efficient in moving enormous quantities of people very rapidly, the Subways remain as possibly the worst means of transport from a human aspect. It is here that the children of Hades are truly creative in their rebellious designs against Transit Authority. To see some of these brightly coloured patches of ghetto calligraphy, liberated and free form against the dark ugliness of subway walls is truly a joy, and a relief.

While Eurpoe and possibly Australia have still maintained some semblance of civility and politeness in public, Americans, if I am to judge on their behaviour in the Subways have not. I don't wish to qualify this, as, taken into consideration with other points I've mentioned, it appears self evident. I merely wish to show why the Subway experience for a fella from Down Under can be a most dramatic experience and a marvelous introduction to New York living at its most typical and New York people in their most homogeneous state.

-- Bernie Bernhouse

For those of you not in the know, Bernie has had a lot of contact with Australian fandom since he wandered into the Melbourne Science Fiction Club one evening in 1968. Last December he flew to America to spend a couple of months but he seems to have landed a job working for the Australian Consulate in New York so who knows what is going to happen.

When

Bruce Gillespie got back from his world trip he seemed to think that the New York Subway was pretty alright and very efficient. But then maybe Bruce just got to travel on it a bit and Bernie has to use them every day.

I once travelled on the Underground in Sydney, in the off-peak time it was quite an exciting experience but when we returned in the peak period it was one of the worst experiences that I had to put up with. In comparison to the normal Melbourne commuter who is quite inhuman at times the Sydney commuters were simply horrible zombie types. The experience almost totally put me off the idea of ever living in Sydney. Maybe it is just the business of travelling in the dark where every perception possessed by the people in the carriage is turned into the carriage that made that trip seems so oppressive or maybe there is something different about Sydney train travellers that makes them worse.

Graham England
11 Churchill Close
Tadcot

by John Bangsund in RATAPLAN 13 on Jesus is overlong but very and well written. It proposes the difference between the

story and the novel which is well known here, but seems to get reinvented about every twenty years. Stories are for entertainment. For example "The Speckled Band" by Conan Doyle is a story and "One Day in the Life of Danisovich" is a novel.

((And...))

There is a Tartar Liberation Movement - it's in the Crimea as the Crimean Tartars were one of the minority groups to be displaced by Stalin.

On 'Us' and 'Them' - the theme is indeed valid since hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanoes are "them" always. You can't get away from the battle between man and the elements and unfortunately that's what happened in Brisabne.

I agree about Seargent Chang, worse, the sermon on the Mount is almost totally unacceptable to me, but I believe that the sermon is right and admirable. Worse again, I claim to be a christian so that I should accept the lot - including the Church minister who accused me of trying to seduce his wife - I'm supposed to love him and it's bloody. In general, since we don't know the answers, the study of Moral Philosophy might help. If you'd accept articles on morality in your fanzine I'll try writing some.

((Well okay, if you feel like it please do try your hand at an article. Morals is one of those things that I find endlessly fascinating and that's part of the reason why I printed John's article - apart from because it was well written.

Any sort of moral judgement has always seemed to me to have to be based on some sort of assumption or another which are usually unprovable by any of the usual scientific means or even by common sense means. What is right and good by one definition is wrong and bad in another place and another time so I reckon all discussions are relative. However I'm always willing to learn. For myself I prefer the I CHING.))

I've got Ken Ford all ready and waiting and hot and running off at the mouth to fill up the last couple of pages so I reckon I'd better slip in the WAHF's here.

BRIAN WALLS says that he thinks the newly discovered delight of the Western World which is called Streaking is one of the new short lived phenomena that we can read about in FUTURE SHOCK. We agree that the craze will be amazingly short-lived.

STEPHEN HITCHINGS is terribly concerned that neuromuscular junctions have never been mentioned in RATAPLAN. He says that without them there would be no such things as fanzines which might be true except that I have no idea what a neuromuscular junction happens to be.

KEN GAMMAGE writes about the La Jolla High School Hetrosexual Society and asks if he can become a member of the Active Apathists League because of his membership of the aforementioned society. We'll have to know more about the society first Ken.

Gee, I don't seem to get many letters, maybe RATAPLAN isn't

SPREADS OF ADDICTION

Unfortunately, many of the AA followers have tried to attain the divine state of their founder, and are discovering strange things in relation to the vegemite overdose. Even more unfortunate is the fact that the more gullible of these people are going onto the harder spreads in an attempt to achieve supreme apathy.

Here follows a dissertation on spreads of addiction by one Professor Morton P Knudd-Buddah of the University of Southern Chinkapook:

Dear Reader,

Your Illustrious Grand-Apathist has brought to us in the Department of Spreadology, the knowledge of the abuse of spreads. My colleagues and I maintain that spreads have their place in society. Used in moderation they can add a certain vivance to the plain sandwich, but misused to the point of over-use, spreads are a social menace.

The first and most common spread is butter.¹ Up to an inch thick (1iT)² butter is safe, but Kline (1957) proved that chimpanzees with 1.02iTs on their sandwiches suffered slight hallucinatory experiences. Chee-chee, a five month old male, mistook an orange for a banana whilst Poxie, a year old female, mistook Chee-chee for a banana.

Next, we have a unique Australian spread, very common in this country, Vegemite. Vegemite is a yeast derivitive and may have relations in the UK and USA. Vegemite is safe up to 0.04iTs, but more than this may cause psychological dependence, after 0.3iTs, it also has physiological dependence. A dose of over 0.857iTs can cause death. Death by Vegemite OD is rare, and the social stigma surrounding the Vegemite addict has made it very embarrassing to admit a Vegemite-death in the family.

A proven instance of Vegemite-dependence is in singer Helen Reddy, who is reported to have her Vegemite shipped from Australia to the USA. Another sad case is that of Mr X, an inmate of Pleasant View Sanitorium since 1964 when he went beserk and ate a whole jar of Vegemite in 33 seconds, rupturing his spleen and cutting the use of his bladder by fifty percent.

Peanut-butter is another spread with dangerous physical side-effects. Over 0.39iTs the bowles act independantly. Being in a closed room with a Peanut-butter addict is no fun. Death by Peanut-butter is not direct asphyxiation or explosion.

strangely enough, are very similar. Subjects in (1965) were given 0.34iTs of either and both ch others ear-lobes move from the ear to the only difference was that the Cheese-spread move to the right nostrill and the Jam move to the left nostrill. This is still occasion the reactions of the same groups may lie in the fact that the groups were not football team, and these variables might

cause
know

popular

be of some consequence.

Finally, because I am busy, I'll leave the other so-called soft-spreads, and mention a dreadfully potent hard-spread to stay away from, namely, Salmon, Anchovy and Crab paste. As little as 0.001iTs can cause bad breath, impotence and headaches. Admittedly, this paste has a certain appeal, but be careful, very careful. At best this paste can cause apathy.

All the best,

Professor M.P. Knudd-Buddah. B App Sp (Hons)
U. Sth. Chink.

1. Or margarine. Scientific analysis has proven that for the most part there is no difference in the psychadelic effects. If you are interested, you may read the article by Cambridge, J and Freble, T entitled "The Psychosomatic Differences of Butter and Margarine in Rats" in The Journal of Comprehensible Spreadology, 81, 99-109.
2. The potency of spreads is measured in iTs, or inches thick spread. One inch thick is written as 1iTs, most spreads other than butter are safe to 0.04iTs levels, except for the deadly potent salmon, crab and anchovy pastes. The iTs measure is a measure of average thickness over a slice of bread which is approximately 4 inches by 4.5 inches.
3. All research in the specialised Jam field has only heightened the belief that all Jam is the same.

Okay then, be warned.

* * * * *

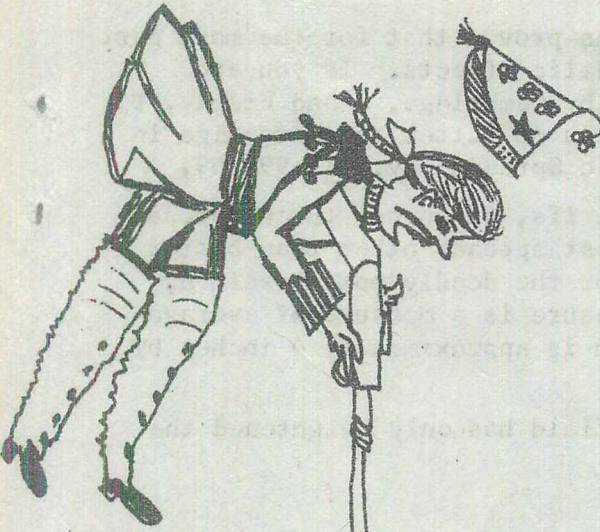
EDITORIAL PARTING SHOT: (Consider yourself shot.)

Hannibal: great Carthaginian General, son of Hamilcar, subjugated all Spain south of the Ebro by the capture of the city of Saguntum, which led to the outbreak of the Second Punic War and his leading his army through hostile territory of the Pyrenees and the Alps into Italy: defeated the Romans in succession at the Ticinus, the Trebia and Lake Trasimene, extirpating the army sent against him; passed the Appennines and descended into Apulia, where after being harassed by the tantalising policy of Fabius Maximus, he met the Romans at Cannoe in 216BC and inflicted on them a crushing defeat; later reverses ended in the evacuation of Italy and the transfer of the seat of war to Africa, where Hannibal was defeated by Scipio at Zama in 201BC. He afterwards joined Antiochus, King of Syria, who was at war with Rome, but on that's monarch's defeat he fled to Prusias, King of Bithynia, where, when his surrender was demanded ended his life by taking poison. (247-183BC)

So there you are, especially if you've been having arguments with people who believe, for some reason or another, that Hannibal invaded Italy through Greece. Now why would anybody want to do a silly thing like that. Now if I'd been Hannibal I would have sailed across the Med and done it the easy way, but they didn't think logically in those days.

KAPUT

The Magazine of the
Rataplan 15



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