

The white rabbit scampered up, paused to examine his watch and muttered, "I'm late, I'm late!"

Alice looked up from her SAPS mailing. "You think you're late," she said, "you should see Leigh Edmonds, he's only just starting work on

## RATAPLAN TWENTY-FIVE

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*This little fanzine is produced to delight the reader, edited and published by Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 433, Civic Square, ACT 2608, AUSTRALIA. It is more or less available to those who trade, send a letter of comment or contribution or for any other fanciful reason that comes to the editorial mind. People can also subscribe if they want to, at the nominal rate of \$2 for three issues. The general idea is that this fanzine is published six times a year (an ideal which we're having trouble with at the moment) and it deals with things like sf, fandom and other matters which I find interesting and other sf fans might also like to read about. The only blot on the horizon is the Big Red \*A\* which, should you receive it, tells you that, unless you let me know that you are interested in continuing our postal relationship, I will not bother you with another copy. (I'm not sure about that previous sentence, I must have been working for the Government for too long.) MM.591*

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I can take no delight in the fact that here we are almost to the middle of January and here I am only now setting out to stencil the October 1983 issue of this fanzine. There are, of course, excuses. Some have to do with the general awfulness of last year and others have to do with the problems of trying to get this fanzine into and then out of the micro-computer that we use at work. This is the second version of the October issue, the first one was ready to come out of the computer in mid-December but a combination of too much work, something called a "Format Error" and something else called a "Lost Disk Sector" put an end to that. So, from now on it's back to my good old trusty typer, and we shall see how things go. Things may be a little more basic, but I hope that they will be more regular.

In the space between the middle of December and now Valma and I have had the delight of being on holidays for a month. It is probably the first time since we went to North America (which is now less than ten years ago) that I've had such a long break from the mind numbing business of the public service. I can tell you that it is a very enjoyable experience. It also gave me a break from every day life and the chance for a bit of a rethink about things like fanzines. That being despite the fact that I've been doing them long enough now that I'm set in my ways and wouldn't know how to change even if it did seem like a good idea.

For our holidays Valma and I went to Melbourne, Dimboola, Adelaide and then Ballarat. Despite our best intentions we did see a few fans around the place. Paul Stevens, for example, hardly seemed to notice that it has been four years since we were last in Space Age Books, Mervyn Binns seemed as optimistic as ever about the financial state of his shop and Justin Ackroyd, when pressed, found it rather difficult to recommend a book that was actually worth reading.

There are no fans, so far as I am aware, in Dimboola or Ballarat. However we did stay with Paul Stokes in Adelaide and spent some time with Gary Mason and even met Marc Ortlieb in the final hours of his Adelaide residence before he left to go and live in Melbourne (AUSSIECON II casts its net wide but selects only the best).

On the other hand we saw plenty of scenery and covered plenty of ground. In addition we attended a family wedding and a family re-union at which there must have been thirty or so relatives; uncles and aunties, cousins and their spouses as well as their spawn. It was almost like a small convention except the talk



was about how the harvest was going and what other relatives were up to. Hmm, come to think of it, conventions aren't that much different when the talk is about how work is coming and how all those who aren't there are going, and what their latest follies have been. We even had a film show when there was a replay of the video-tape which had been made at the wedding, and everybody had a lovely time pointing out the funny things that everybody else did.

There was also a fair bit of film showing in Adelaide because Paul Stokes has a video tape player and got some tapes from one of the local libraries for his and our edification. We caught up on some of the more recent sf films that we have been too lazy to get along to see; "Bladerunner", "Mad Max II", "Star Trek II" and "Beastmaster". The best of the lot was "Mad Max II", but that isn't saying much, it was probably because I liked the scenery in it more than that in the other films. The main thrust of the other films was also action over logic but atleast in the local product the action had a very simple motive which made some sense, which is not something that I could say for the others. By seeing "Bladerunner" I was atleast able to find out if Joseph Nicholas was right when he called it garbage. Well, I wouldn't have said that, silly seems a more appropriate word. I must admit to having liked the setting which was set up, it had lots of atmosphere - but surely they are going to have some daylight in the future - and somebody is going to have to explain to me the logic of waving around searchlights in an apparently empty building. If I had paid money to go and see it I would have felt a little cheated.

The same thing could be said for "Star Trek II". The plot was minimal, and what there was of it seemed to take up only half of the film, the rest being squandered in typical stuff where the characters have a reunion and ponder on the meaning of life, mortality and the like. And as for the plot, it didn't seem much different from the stuff that they used to use in the original tv series.

And as for "Beastmaster", how anybody who has supposed mental empathy with a bird, a big black cat and a couple of ferrets can deserve a name like that is a little beyond me. It was a mixture of Conan and Walt Disney. I have two grumpy old cats here who do what I want some of the time, what does that qualify me for?

As a result of my viewing I've come to the conclusion that I'm not missing much by failing to get to see the latest cinematic delights which are being churned out to capture what passes for imagination in the viewing public, as well as their millions of dollars. Somebody might reckon that I'm being a bit harsh, and that I'm perhaps not seeing the best that there is, which I guess is just tough for me because I'm getting a little put off by seeing the sort of stuff that is making the big money and the big reputations, and realising that none of it is terribly good. Perhaps this attitude is enhanced by the new tv station that we're getting to see these days, which shows lots of good foreign films, with subtitles. It is quite interesting to flick between the three channels that we have here in Canberra. There is the commercial mob who show the Australian soaps and the US action series, the ABC who show a lot of British stuff and some better Australian stuff, and Ethnic TV which shows mostly European stuff. Generally speaking, when you turn from the ABC or Ethnic TV to the commercial mob, you turn from something with a bit of thought and motivation in it to something full of simple minded action. As a result I spend less and less time even tempted to look at the commercial stuff.

I seem to have neglected to mention most of the other things that happened during the trip. It was however, a fairly relaxed affair, included much time spent lounging in front of tv sets in Dimboola and Adelaide looking at the cricket (and also, in Adelaide, American Football which seems to make a virtue of making a game which takes an hour to play run for two and a half hours). There was also Paul Stokes collection of comics and his records, as well as those of Marc Ortlieb who left them with Paul to take over to Melbourne for him. It is interesting to delve into other people's



collections of things. Both Marc and Paul seem to have started buying records around the time that I gave it away, so everything I have is from before 1975 and almost all their stuff is from after that date. Which means that they have virtually no Beatles, Rolling Stones or Jerry Lee Lewis while I, on the other hand, have absolutely no Talking Heads, Souxsie and the Banshees or Pretenders (on disk anyhow, now). The other thing interesting was that neither of them had any classical music. I would be tempted to feel superior but I recall the size and scope of the Bangsund collection - even if nobody in their right minds would want to listen to half of it.

So much for comparisons, of that sort anyhow.

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#### BLOODY RIPPER BOOK REVIEW

Valencies, Rory Barnes and Damien Br derick, published by Queensland University Press, 230 pp., recommended price \$7.95.

I would cringe at paying \$7.95 for a book but in this case I'd reckon that it is worth every cent.

Serendipity is a wonderful thing. As I was walking over to the university to drop in my last piece of work for the year, and wondering what I would do with myself now that all the work had finished, I dropped into the post office. And what should be waiting for me but a review copy of this book. The other bit of coincidence which seems relevant is that only a couple of days earlier Valma and I had been to see the film "Monkey Grip".

I may as well start with the only major criticism that I have of this book - that it is hard to get started on. Perhaps there is a convention, which other authors have got us used to but which the authors of this book ignore, but there is no setting the scene or the background so that we can make sense of the context we suddenly find ourselves dumped in. The book just starts at full speed with none of the usual introductions and it takes a good twenty or so pages to find your bearings and get up to the speed of the authors. So, unless you are willing to persevere you may give up on this work too easily. That would be a pity because it is one of the few sf books that I've read which has really excited me as being something new and worthwhile in the genre.

Perhaps there is a reason for the authors starting out so fast. While it is a story of the ways in which people interact with each other, it is not a story which has any real starting or ending points - though it is crafted so that the drift of events reaches a thoroughly convincing climax towards the end of the book. Valencies is more the life of a group of people; there is no great drama and no heroic, it is all perfectly ordinary and reasonable. It is also very entertaining. If it were not for the background in which the story is set and the fact that all the participants are effectively immortal, this would be a well composed novel set here and now.

The sfnal background is carefully worked out and on it depends a fair amount of the motivation of some of the characters. The scope of the Galactic Empire in which the story takes place, some of its sociology, politics and economics are fairly deftly passed on to the reader throughout the book. I can recall only one passage - in which the method of interstellar transport is explained - which jars a little, but then it is such an interesting variation on the traditional matter-transportation methods that the lecture is easily digested.

I mentioned having seen "Monkey Grip" earlier because, if you have had the pleasure of seeing that film, you will have some idea of the texture of this book. Characters are sketched in fairly carefully from the beginning of the book and continue to develop as we progress through its pages. There is a group of half a dozen or so who have central parts while others wander in and out, just as people do in life itself. But since this is not a book about



great social, political or military movements there is plenty of time to get to know these characters as they get to work out the little problems of day to day life (and as they willingly drift into a minor piece of political activism, just as many other people of their age and inclination would do.)

As for the style of presentation, the way in which the authors put forward the story and their ideas, and hide themselves behind them; I've already mentioned that the first few pages jar, because the reader is tossed in at the deep end. However, having got the novel rolling, the obtrusiveness of some of the word and idea formations becomes part of the background in which the characters move and seems to be an indication of the relatively simple lifestyle which the characters chose to lead in a complex society. These two factors are reflected by the gentle flow of the events and the sometimes tense way in which they are actually written out.

(As an aside, and taking up some of the issues relating to sf which have been discussed in this fanzine over the past few issues, there are a couple of additional things that come to mind about this book, because it gives me some hope for the development of an indigenous style of sf writing in this country. It also perhaps points the way for writing a newer and fresher kind of sf than the foreign sort. Your ordinary North American sf book would take the same background ideas which have been devised for this story and use them in different ways - in what has become the orthodox way. As part of this novel there is, somewhere off in the universe, a planet which has rebelled against the rule of the Empire. Because of the quirks of the transportation system usually used, the Empire has to defeat the planet by sending an expedition at slower-than-light speeds to blow up the star which it orbits. In Valencies this happens off-stage and as a motivation for some of the action. On the other hand most authors would have taken things the other way around and used that as the story because, on the face of it, a two hundred year expedition culminating in some sort of space battle and a sun going nova would be the sort of thing that makes epic reading. But it has been done so many times before that it simply doesn't need to be done again. Perhaps it is time that authors gave up on that sort of thing and took the alternative path which has been offered here. There might be some spectacular failures and there might be some totally boring books, but it is a direction which could offer some golden fruits as well.)

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One of the reasons that Val and I moved away from Melbourne to Canberra was because we weren't enjoying the crowds that you have to put up with in such places. I'm not sure if it was a similar motivation which took Glen Crawford and his wife from Sydney to the city of Gosford, or whether it was his job as some sort of manager in a large retailing business. Perhaps not because he did travel back to Sydney so that he could write the following article, and you won't find me going back to Melbourne just to write something about the arts centre that they have down there.

#### THE SYDNEY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

*Glen Crawford*

Opened earlier this year by the New South Wales Government, with the appropriate political chest-beating of course, the Sydney Entertainment Centre was touted as being the best thing to happen to culture in Sydney since the Opera House. The building occupies land left from the demise of the famous "Paddy's Markets" behind Chinatown in the sleazier part of the city, and is designed to house rock concerts, circuses, and other large scale entertainments out of the weather; a feature which has been unavailable in Sydney up until now.

It was one of those spur-of-the-moment decisions, a phone call on Thursday night; did we want to go to the circus at the Entertainment Centre on Saturday night? As we were feeling rather affluent at the time and, inspired by visions of the circus (roar of the greasepaint, smell of the crowd and all



that), we agreed on the spot. We were unsure of being able to get tickets at that late stage but this actually proved no problem, apart from someone having to travel into the city to pick them up beforehand. The cost was \$11.50 each, a price we considered reasonable for a major live show at a brand new venue, although our companions were less impressed and plans for a Chinese feast prior to the show were altered to dinner at home.

It was belting down rain on the Saturday night, which made the trip into the city slow and hazardous. We only managed to find parking near the Centre about five minutes before the show was due to begin. Although the Centre is right behind Chinatown, it is not clearly signposted, and we wandered for a minute or two before getting our bearings. This isn't exactly the nicest (or safest) part of the city, and some alleyways are positively frightening, and so we were glad to see the bright lights of the Centre finally looming ahead of us.

My first impression was: "Hell.... It's BIG!" And that was an understatement! From the outside it looks like a vast mountain of glass, stainless steel and raw concrete. There is an equally vast multi-level car park behind, all concrete and bright lights (typical me, not checking the parking possibilities first). The main entrance is majestic, with seemingly miles of plush red carpet and full height glass doors - although the effect of having a bloody great McDonalds junk food outlet as the major feature as the front is rather off-putting.

Up the steps, and we found ourselves in a wide semi-circle foyer, dotted with dozens of concession stalls and program sellers. About a dozen or so separate entrances lead from this foyer to the main auditorium. Each is numbered, and all tickets carry a door number prefix, which makes finding your seat much simpler in such a giant complex. We found our entrance; it led up more steps and the usher pointed out the pathway to another usher. Up more steps. I leant back and stared up into the gloom above me - Ghod it was a long way up!

The Centre seating is built around three sides of a square, the fourth wall making up the backdrop of the stage area. There are also two huge video screens on this back wall which give close-up action shots for the benefit of those seated higher up, and also provide instant-replay action from the more exciting segments of the show, during slow scene changes, and so on. This, of course, was an opportunity too good for our friend the Ad Man to miss out on, and before the show, during intermission, and as we (along with ten thousand others) were waiting to leave, we were bombarded with advertisements.

Seating capacity is around twelve thousand and most of the seats were full on this night. Our \$11.50 tickets got us positions five rows from the back, on one side of the square. The view was excellent (when we finally staggered up there) if a bit far from the action. There was no problem with people in front standing up, as the rows are fairly steeply raked, and everyone has a clear view. Above our heads, in the darkness, was a labyrinth of air ducting, catwalks, lighting systems and girders, a real rats nest if ever I saw one. The seats themselves were a bit of a shock - would you believe plush velvet? They were fully padded and quite comfortable, but the venue is designed for, among other things, rock concerts - and what will be left after the first lot of punks or acid-heads goes through there will be anybody's guess.

One of our company had the foresight to bring along a pair of binoculars, and we all took turns watching the action through them - I'm not joking, the Centre is that BIG! The show itself was totally professional and of the highest quality, as one would expect from Michael Edgely. The clowns were suitably funny, the highwire act impressive (although looking down on a highwire act was a novel experience) and the elephant did his compulsory shit right on centre stage. The strongmen has muscles in all the right places, and the women were attractive, particularly those from the Eastern Bloc countries, although one young lady from the USA had enough muscles when viewed through the binoculars to bring to mind; "Me Jane... why you hiding Tarzan?"



By the time intermission came we were only too happy to get up and stretch our legs. The building does have a maze of air ducting, but no way is it air conditioned. And we were sitting at the top of an inverted pyramid walled by some ten thousand human bodies, which is a lot of body heat. We had naturally dressed for the frigid conditions outside, and were a little warm, to say the least. Thank Ghod they don't allow smoking.

We made the trip down to the foyer without major delays, and brought refreshments from one of the many stalls. I got a small paper cup of Coke, a theatre-sized cup of popcorn and a Paddle Pop... and it cost me \$3. I left the stall feeling decidedly ripped off, and felt awefully sorry for the parents with a couple of kids in tow. After all, this is supposed to be a family venue, or so our politicians tell us.

The second half of the show was top class, with the final supplied by the "Dingbats", a totally insane bunch of acrobatic clowns. The show took all of three hours, and by that time we were more than ready to leave. The seats were quite comfortable but the heat inside the building, combined with the strain of trying to watch something from such a distance, had exhausted us. It took a considerable time to get out of the complex too, as even twelve double doors aren't sufficient to allow ten thousand people through in a hurry. Once outside we got lost again due to the total lack of signposts, but we finally located our carpark and got mobile homeward.

In conclusion: a good venue for most major events, although the acoustics are yet unproved for something as loud as a rock concert. If you go, be prepared to pay mgaabucks for a seat down the front (we heard \$45), or take a pair of binoculars with you. Do NOT go near the bloody concession stalls for food, take a thermos or a few cans with you, and add a couple of packets of chips or other munchies. You have been warned! If it's freezing cold outside still wear something light under the warm and wollies, and if it's summer, wear as little as possible.

Oh, and try to ignore the advertisements.

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#### AUSTRALIAN FANZINES

Sikander 5, Irwin Hirsh, 279 Domain Road, South Yarra, Vict 3141.

You might remember that in recent issues of Rataplan there has been some talk about the "role models" which fanzine editors use when they publish their own fanzines. You might like to guess -- my models and it would probably be quite a game to try to figure out the models that others have worked to as well. One suggestion which has come up is that part of the blame for the current poor state of Australian fanzines is that their editors have lacked suitable models and have to virtually reinvent the fanzine for themselves.

When Irwin Hirsh came to publish Sikander he probably found that he lacked a suitable source of inspiration from inside Australia, but at least he was in contact with overseas fanzines. So he probably looked there for his models. This is probably the reason that Sikander does not seem to fall within the mainstream of Australian fanzines, and whenever I make up a mental list of fanzines which originate in this continent I tend to forget Irwin's effort. This is simply because I think of it as a North American fanzine - much like one or two British fanzines which have more consciously sought to emulate the North American than the home influences.

Despite this, Sikander is not a bad fanzine, just one that doesn't fit into what one might call an "ethnic Australian" mould. It's construction and the form of its writing do not seem as fluid as most Australian fanzines, there seems to be more of a formula approach to how an issue is put together than is customary with other local fanzines - or, since there might be a local formula too, Irwin doesn't stick to it. For example, Irwin's writing follows the form advocated by most of those who write about how to be a good fanwriter.



There is the catchy first line which drags the reader in, the personalisation which makes the reader feel on an informal footing with the writer, and there is the tendency to hide intentions so that written pieces gain a certain drama or tension. And it's not that these things don't work, just that they are so obviously employed that it takes some of the delight out of the writing - like always being able to see the strings holding up the rocket ship in a sfnal film.

Since Sikander seems such an Americanised Australian fanzine it is perhaps appropriate that this issue should contain the very long article by Ted White which looks at Australian fanzines from a foreign (North American) point of view. But on either side of that article there are stapled a few pages of contributions from other people. Both David Grigg and Christine Ashby are better than average fan writers, but I'm not sure that what they have in this issue is representative of their best. David's article is about a period in his life when he worked at selling advertising for an underground magazine. I found it interesting because it brought together a whole series of things which I had not thought about at the time, my reaction is a personal one of curiosity and I'm not sure that those who didn't know David at the time would find this article as interesting as I did. All the same, the sheer fluidity of the style will probably carry the piece through for most readers. Christine's little piece is probably a little out of place with the rest of Sikander since it is supposed to stir up some comment about "free will", or the lack of it. I get the impression that Irwin published this because he got it, not because it really fits in with the general tone or intent of his fanzine.

On the other side of the Ted White article, like the valley on the other side of the mountain, is the letter column. And what a dismal little valley it is too. Half of the material printed should probably not have been there because while it is useful for contributors to previous issues to read some of the response to what they wrote, that sort of thing does nothing for the fanzine, detracts in fact because it is waste space, and there are other ways of dispensing egoboo to contributors. As a result there is very little of real substance in the letter column and, if such columns are the lifeblood of fanzines, Sikander is fairly pale and thin. Perhaps Irwin is simply suffering the result of publishing at too infrequent a rate.

So,.. Having got all that out of the way I have to say something about the long and fairly complex Ted White article which dominates this issue.

After a first skim through this article I was fairly convinced that there were going to be a number of people who would be mortally offended by this piece. It seemed to me that Ted had hit a few nails right on their heads and bruised a few egos into the bargain. In most cases his criticisms of what people are doing, or failing to do, are accurate and may even be helpful to those concerned. However, after having forced myself to read the article from the beginning to end, absorbing every word on the way, I began to realise why it is that people really aren't that upset. It is not that Ted has failed in the critical task of pointing out errors, it is that in presenting the article in the way that he has, every comment is surrounded by unrelated or obtuse personal comment so that the cutting edge of what he has to say is lost. This may be a way to say some potentially hurtful things in an acceptable fashion but it is certainly no way to make points which will make people sit up and take real notice.

The impression I have is that this article is first draft. It flows fairly well and ties together some divergent points in skillful ways, so that if it is infact a drafted and redrafted piece Ted has done a very good job of making it seem spontaneous. (If he has the spare time to do that sort of work on a forty page opus like this then he certainly has more dedication, time, energy and ability than I will ever have). But assuming that Ted's thoughts have come straight from the typewriter, they show a lot more about his state of mind than they show about Australian fanzines. The mood is set, the parameters are



outlined and so on; after that the fact that Ted is writing about Australian fanzines, rather than any other sort, is neither here nor there, they are just the basic material which Ted uses to write about what a fanzine should be and what fanzines should be like. That things have turned out this way is fairly flattering for Australian fanzine editors.

Closer to home, I think that even if Ted is a fairly highly regarded fan writer, that is no excuse for Irwin not to edit him. There are many places in this piece in which Ted's asides add absolutely nothing to what he is trying to say and could have been chopped out. This sort of thing would have been useful because the article would then have been shorter, less trouble to read and more to the point. Because it is not, the effort which Ted put into writing it and Irwin put into copying it out and reproducing it is lost. What had the potential to be quite a bombshell has been transformed into a huge great sock full of cold porridge.

The other thing that Ted and Irwin have to put up with is, of course, the usual Australian apathy to criticism. They might expect strong denials and counter arguments, but that would be too much trouble for most of us. Instead the typical reaction that I've seen has been that the article was fair enough and reasonably accurate, but who cares anyhow and we'll keep on doing things the ways that suit us best. She'll be right.

In a more traditional vein we have...

Wahf-Full 12, Jack Herman, Box 272, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, NSW 2006.

Despite its faults I preferred this fanzine to Sikander. The reason doubtless has a lot to do with the more balanced nature of the contents and the new leaf that Jack has turned in including more of his own writing. The first few pages of this fanzine are actually the most enjoyable because they are more or less pure Herman and put together in a more relaxed style than we used to get from him in the past.

It would be interesting to know just why it is that Jack has become much more relaxed in his fanac over the past year or so. I guess that it must have something to do with the role that he has chosen to take in fandom. At an earlier time it looked as though he could have played a dominant role in the fannish activities of Sydney (and Australia) in a very overt way, being highly visible and vocal at the politics of fandom and putting his views forcefully in whatever medium he chose. But instead, in the past year, Jack seems to have taken a lower profile; his presence is now much more subtle, his ideas are humble suggestions rather than assertions and his fanzines much more subtle expressions of what he wants to say. If he keeps up this sort of thing he might even generate for himself the kind of reputation which most other fanzine editors would envy; the publisher of a solid and yet entertaining fanzine which just about everybody wants to read.

On the other hand, the trouble I have with Wahf-Full is that it seems too limited in the sorts of things that it discusses. Media sf takes up an awful lot of space in this issue and the other things which might have taken more, and have contributed more to the issue, do not have pride of place which they might have had. These other contributions strike me as being additions to the main body of the fanzine which, while they may have been very interesting, did not seem to sit too easily because they do not relate to the major themes. In particular the two items by Glen Crawford seem somehow out of place - no matter how well they might have been written or how interesting the subject matter might be.

The most annoying feature of this issue is the column of comments from various people about sf films and the like. It is conducted very much in the way that a school room session on the subject might be structured, with plenty of comments invited from the class and strung together by the teacher/editor who provides linking comments. Although this might give everybody the opportunity



to see their names and comments in print it doesn't actually go anywhere or achieve anything else. While it is probably a very generous thing to give everybody a bit of your fanzine to be able to make a comment, it might have been a bit more worthwhile to concentrate on a few points and to draw conclusions from them. The danger with the sort of thing that Jack has done is that it encourages only more comments from his readers of a similar nature, "I liked this and I didn't like that". Or perhaps I've got it the wrong way around, perhaps what Jack has done is the end result of that process, everybody has actually felt encouraged to do that sort of thing and he has just published the results.

The letter column is also something of a stew. It takes up half the issue but many of the comments are actually quite short. While Jack has edited his letters quite heavily (and cut some up so that various matters are dealt with in separate parts of the column) there is little sense of coherent thought in the whole thing. Once more the idea seems to be that everybody should get a fair say. Isn't it lovely to see free speech in action and it would be a fine thing if everybody had something worthwhile to say, but this is not the case.

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I suppose that it is not too much to say that John Alderson and I fail to see eye to eye on most subjects. I suppose that this isn't so uncommon since he is a small farmer and I'm a city bureaucrat - and it is well known that these two species cannot get on together. All the same we do originate from roughly the same area and we both know how to properly pronounce names like Rupanyup and Pimpinio, so we have something in common. The following is also another bit of local colour.

#### AFTER THE LOUVRE

*John J Alderson*

It's that time of the year when the wattle is out and the Golden Wattle Festival in Maryborough (Victoria) is in full swing. Being an Arts Festival, one of the major attractions is the art exhibition which is made up of entries for the Art Competition. The prize monies awarded are \$1500 for the best oil painting, \$750 for the best water colour, \$500 for any media when the retail value of the work is not over \$500, and \$300 when the retail value is not over \$300. All paintings are for sale except the prize winners which the Council of the City of Maryborough take for hanging in the new Creative Arts Centre.

Entries come from all over the country and have been painted (or at least the subject matter originated) overseas as well as in Australia. The fundamental difference in the painting of a foreign landscape, as contrasted with an Australian one, is an education. The artists have seen foreign parts very much as foreign parts, a street scene in Greece cannot be mistaken for one in Australia. I dare say that this is one of the real reasons why artists will always paint, they see things lesser mortals do not. Yet it was a joy to walk around the paintings and think; I know that place; and check the catalogue to see that the old shed or the laneway was at Talbot, or Bet Bet, or even Maryborough. The Maryborough Post Office got painted at least three times, and from memory of other days it seems to appear every year. It was also a matter of pride to recognise in the catalogue the names of old district families who have taken up the paint-brush.

There are an amazing number and variety of styles. Some are quite bad. Some glow with light like a new Turner... one of the beauties of acrylic paints is that they give a glow that Turner had to work layer upon layer to achieve. Some are like Hans Heyesen. There is in fact nothing, as far as style goes, which would characterise a "school" of painting. Which is as well, schools of painting are fads that ruin art. There is in fact nothing that would suggest that these artists are taught by the same master, that they ever looked at the same painting. Indeed, it seems likely that they forgot all they ever learned



at school and have been determined to express their own desires. It is evident that they have one thing in common, they love their country and their paintings glow with that love.

This is a weakness in many of the paintings (I am speaking of about five hundred paintings; 492 were listed but some were pairs which count as one). In so many the amount of bad painting was quite small. Some were sentimental with that dreamy quality of a Gainsborough, some were pretty-pretty. Some paint things just too neatly as though the grass had been raked for twigs and the ground swept of offending debris. I cannot criticise the choice of subject. Old sheds, old homes, ruins and ruinous things are common, but then not only this area, but Australia as a whole, is a land of ruins. Perhaps there is an affectation with the old. I cannot imagine where the artist saw a bullock team, but there is one, or a wagon loaded with hay, or horse drawn plough, there were at least two and neither doing a very good job of ploughing.

On the other hand I only recollect half a car and not a single tractor. Apart from two scenes there is a lack of appreciation of the modern world. It might be something that the artists are trying to forget. Sheep were very rare this year, but then the drought fairly well left them an endangered species here. Apart from some very small native animals featured were some badly painted horses... one horse and rider could have come out of the 17th Century, except for the shape of the horse. There were quite a lot of bird studies, mostly the birds looked stuffed, and some flower studies, most of which looked rather unnatural.

And yet the overwhelming impression was one of variety and vitality. Such as Ivy Jeffery's "Little Optimist" - a boy, a creek, a tin of worms and a fishing line. There was also some quiet humor in a painting by Arthur Hamil, "The Odd One" - the odd one being a black spoonbill in a vast sweep of feeding white spoonbills. To my recollection it is the first time Hamil has exhibited in Maryborough. I met him in Mildura some years ago after which he went to South Australia and is apparently still there. I have one of his lovely early works.

There was a surprising number of water scenes, in fact there was enough water in one exhibition to have got us through the last drought. Tree studies were plentiful and remain fascinating.

Last year (this was the ninth Rotary Art Show but the competition, if I remember, goes back many years previous to that) there was a dearth of figures in the landscapes. Well this is natural enough in Australia, more's the pity, but this year people were appearing in the paintings. Usually they were a little wooden unless they were so far away that they could not be examined. Static landscapes are not as good as landscapes where something is happening and too many of the landscapes were empty of man, bird or beast. However there were several scenes where figures predominate. Not good yet, but it's a start.

Virtually all the portraits, figures and nudes were done by women. The nudes were scratchy except in one instance which was wooden. The probability is that men can't get models. In any case, it is unlikely that any of the artists could afford to pay for models, that is, out of their income from painting. The very few portraits lacked depth of character. Possibly this was because the competition seems to favour landscapes and it must be very difficult to decide between a portrait and a landscape when judging. Probably it is time that the prizes for the competition were either altered or extended.

Some fifty-eight per cent of the artists were women, a percentage I think down on previous years, but the women still have the leisure for art that men seldom get. It may be of interest too, that there was not one single abstract painting, not one case of distorted perspective or what have you; not one of the gimmicks one usually associates with modern art. As has happened several times in history, artists have had to learn to paint what people want if they are to sell. These artists are selling their works to be hung in



ordinary homes. The prices have a very wide range, \$30 to \$1 500, but the range largely runs between \$100 and \$500. I vividly remember the remark of one man at an exhibition many years ago about a painting with a green sky: "I prefer my skies blue."

The exhibition is hung under difficulties. It is cramped and badly lit. Flourescent lights drain the colour out of paintings and the room, even on a sunny day, .. artificial lights.

For two generations we've had art in Australia which ought to have huge "DON'T RUBBISH AUSTRALIA" stickers plastered across its canvasses. Now we've got something to be proud of, at least in the country. We hope the cities will catch up in a couple more decades.

\* \* \*

## A VIEW FROM THE EDGE

Rob Gerrand

Having a three and a half year old daughter, a concern has naturally lodged in the back of my mind about education, in particular about the sort of schooling she will get, which surfaces occasionally but is always there.

So at a party at Bruce and Elaine Gillespie's earlier this year my ears picked up when I ran into an educationalist - a former teacher - who was an advisor to Victoria's State Education Board. I won't identify her, for in this account I probably will not do justice to her views, expressed as they were to a stranger at a party.

She said she was in a quandry about her advice on curriculum changes in that she wasn't sure if she could persuade the State Education Board to accept her recommendations.

- What are the curriculum changes you are recommending? I asked.

- A general curriculum, for all students.

A general curriculum suggested to me the possibility of all children being educated at least to certain standards, something I feared, in terms of my daughter, might not be happening.

- Is a common curriculum something like core subjects? I ventured.

- Nothing of the kind. Core subjects, I am afraid, are out of fashion these days. Core subjects imply that some subjects are important and some subjects are less important and therefore children studying subjects of lesser importance feel discriminated against.

- What then is a common curriculum?

- Well, everybody with a common curriculum studies the same subjects, but more or less amounts of them. All the basics are there and at the end of schooling a student should be able to read and write in English, do arithmetic, etc. But all students would not have to study things such as algebra, for example.

- Are you a mathematician, I asked, knowing full well she could not possibly be.

- Humanities, Arts.

I launched into a digression concerning the importance of algebra. No child can be said to be educated who didn't understand it. There was no way of understanding the world without algebra and therefore no chance to be in control of the world. Algebra was a key to abstract thinking, to mathematics, to science, to logic, to computers. (As I was saying these things I realised they all sounded terribly male-oriented, according to common sexist mythology).

The educationalist, in turn, launched into autobiography. She had gone to school in the country and had been the only one who had gained HSC. She knew



she was going to university but none of her contemporaries were. All of her work now was to make sure that this didn't happen to others.

- A guilt thing? I asked.

- Nothing of the sort. I think it is unfair that none of the others had a chance.

The discussion continued, as often, to a desultory non-conclusion, and left me profoundly dissatisfied with the quality of thinking about education, at least in this practitioner, in this discussion.

Now, I know it is not fair to mount an attack on supposed education theorists on the basis of one party. Never mind.

It at least catalysed feelings of dissatisfaction, and leads me now to ask: "Have schools improved since I was at one". I suspect that they have, but, and this is what interests me, why do I feel they have not, why do I feel they have probably gone to the dogs?

The answers lie in several areas - the image of the profession gained from the media; the people (which is, to some extent, what influences the media); the lack of intelligent discussion about the purposes of education in the community.

Having also recently spoken to a press officer for Victoria's Minister for Education, another factor could be that the Education Department does not explain what it's doing. Therefore only the critical or negative stories are heard.

The relevance of this to science fiction may be hard to discern. The reason I raised it here is simply that the education process is often cavalierly held to be the key to changing society, and changing society is the concern of the utopian branch of sf (and the dystopian). Yet not much attention is given in sf to the realities of education, particularly as experienced by someone whose worldview is to be changed.

One of the few writers who have tackled it is Jack Vance, who examines it in detail in The Blue World, The Languages of Pao and The Brave Free Man. For a literature, which is claimed by many to be prophetic, it is interesting that education is so little considered. The same applies to so-called mainstream literature.

I may return to this next time.

\* \* \*

#### LETTERS OF COMMENT

Don Ashby, 75 Neil Street, Carlton, Vict 3053.

Well, Melbourne has won the WorldCon bid. After the horrors of AussieCon and its' aftermath I wonder why anyone of sound mind would want to have anything to do with a WorldCon bid again, especially one in Melbourne. You are safe in Canberra and no doubt intend to stay there. I got a postcard from Carey Handfield telling me to move out and leave the country or I will find myself very busy. I don't intend to do either, and have I got news for him! Christine mentions a hundred people necessary to run this one. I didn't know there were a hundred fans in Melbourne, let alone a hundred fans in urgent need of psychiatric help. I wonder how many personal relationships, jobs and well beings will be sacrificed on the alter of this latest piece of international egoboo. Gafia, oh sweet gafia.

It has been my observation in the past that committees ran conventions so that they could get drunk free. The new respectability of fandom, however, seems to knock that theory on the head. What with people having babies and getting married, buying houses and getting jobs, there must be other explanations. I used to involve myself in fan conventions because Handfield told me to. I



suppose that sounds a bit like Nuremburg but some of the conventions that I was involved with could have been seen as crimes against fandom. Seriously though, I will risk being accused of perpetrating two of the Bs by saying that conventions are organised so that neofans and casual fans can pay for people from the far reaches of Australia to meet each other and talk (about the same things they talk about in letters, on the telephone and in fanzines) in the small bistros in St Kilda and Carlton. As Christine so smartly puts it in her FunCon report: food and talk figures high on the list of convention memories. The same can be said about Theatre Community Art and Arts Education conventions as well. I will generalise further and state that it is probably the same for dentists, taxidermist and dodo feather collectors conventions. After my second convention (I found the panels at the first one amusing and interesting but, to my dismay, I found those at my second convention neither, most jokes don't stand a second hearing) I eschewed the program and went in search of the people I had met at the previous two and talked, either over a meal or over a drink or even under a table depending on the time of day or night.

The best two conventions I have ever been to were the relaxacons that Eric Lindsay ran in the Blue Mountains. There, the talking, eating and drinking went on without the tedious interruptions of panels talking bullshit, masquerades perpetrating voyerism and awards raising blood pressures. The trouble with these conventions is that they are expensive as no one wants talkfests interrupted by earnest neofans or the neanderthal general public. Memberships are small at these conventions and so membership fees have to be high.

The '85 WorldCon will be a case in point. SMOFs and BNFs have friends and correspondents all over the world that they would really like to sit down and have a yarn with. The trouble is, what with spouses, babies, jobs and mortgages it's difficult to drop over to LA for the weekend. The answer is to entice them over here. To try and run a relaxacon of uninterrupted food, drink and talk for the relevant short list of overseas fans would probably come out with a convention membership fee of ten thousand dollars per head - a little steep? The answer is to organise a huge convention so that people who have never heard about the big debate about the relevance of sf to codlin moth will pay good money to listen. The panels will be entertaining and amusing, the panel members will have had lots of practise perfecting their art. The people on the short list will arrive at the airport and be whisked away to small bistros in St Kilda and Carlton, only to be seen at the odd panel and at convention room parties.

Elections, Hmmm. As a totally unmolested call-up resister (or almost totally unmolested) I can totally agree with Marc's memories of THAT election. As the perceptive people among you will have noticed, my name is Don. Those that know me will remember my fondness for parties. The last one went on until 6 am. I even had an election party at Leigh and Valma's place that went on until 5 am. After that one I got a lift home with a prowling Labour supporting Policeman as I staggered down St Kilda Road looking for a Cab. The next election, Ghod willing, I will have another party, And Marc, you are invited.

Now onto censorship, and a can of worms it is indeed. I have two things to say on the subject (I can't exactly hear people holding their breath). The first is: how can you expect people to be consistent in something like film censorship after even a casual glance at the state of the world in general. Politicians, men of religion, journalists, parents and yours truly are not consistent so it seems a trifle naïve to expect the sorts of people that want to be censors to be so too. The Australian, US and UK censorship systems are all stupid because they are based on erroneous criteria. In fact the criteria is not substantive at all. Something that was censored twenty years ago is no longer censored. Concepts of pornography and violence in a quantitative sense have to do with the social climate and act upon it. They try to quantify violence and pornography in the same way as the weather man quantifies weather



data. It is like trying to evaluate the worth of a book or poem by counting semi-colons. A film is either a "good" film or a "bad" film. It either adds to our understanding of the human condition, our understanding and appreciation of beauty, engages us in meaningful debate or stimulates our sense of wonder, or it is crud. Judgement of film (or any other work of art) is an aesthetic, intellectual or ethical matter. Any grading system is absurd. Under Mr Hanna-Rivero's system a film like *McBeth* would get the same grading as *The Magnificent Seven*. In other words, it doesn't mean a goddamned thing. It doesn't tell you something about the film at all except quantification of a few arbitrary elements in the plot. None of the films mentioned, except for *Freaks*, I consider worth watching. I won't watch them. Other people will watch them whether they are censored or not. People who want cheap thrills will go and watch motor racing, wishing for a good crash. Voyeurism is ubiquitous. Censorship is a problem because most of the morons on the censorship board only quantify plot elements and cannot tell the difference between the artistic and the arbitrary. Censorship is a cultural fantasy that "moral" people subscribe to in order to bolster up their sense of personal security. In these terms it fulfils a useful social function. People need a sense of security otherwise censorship wouldn't exist. If people who want, really want, to see a film or hard core pornography and bloody gore, they will seem them. Where there is a market there is a supplier.

Now comes the second thing I want to discuss. Briefly it is exploitation, dignity and responsibility. I know that it is three things but I hope you will see that they are part of a single issue. A film is alienating in the sense that there is no contact of any sort between those images on the screen and the audience viewing it. What occurs on the screen has happened prior to the viewing and the viewer can do nothing about it. The viewer is safe.

The two largest groups that are oppressed and exploited globally are women and children. Pornography (by that I mean products advertised as such), is the most overt example of this culturally in the west. Rape, sexual harassment and pornography are examples of an exercise in cynical and degrading power over women. Children who have no control over their destinies are also degraded by pornography. As Mr Dylan said - "Money doesn't talk it swears". It is not a sufficient excuse that adult pornography should be between consenting adults, for it to be excused by the people who make it, or the people who watch it. Every person who pays money to watch pornography or any sort must be directly guilty of every rape and child molestation that happens in this society. Pornographic films undermine the rights of women and children to be as equally human as men. The downgrading of a human being to "a bit of ass" is so disgusting that I find it hard to imagine how an intelligent person, as Mr Hanna-Rivero seems to be, could discuss it in terms of a human right to want to chose.

Before people start jumping up and down and start accusing me of Grundyism, I am not against the showing of sexual acts per se (providing they don't include children) where they are substantive to a film's plot and the film is a serious attempt to catalyse aesthetic, intellectual or ethical experience. People who honestly care about human rights shouldn't be carping about the right to see what they please, they should be throwing rocks through the windows of the animals who trade on the degradation of human beings for a fast buck. Triade over.

There are quite a few points here that need to be dealt with, and which I am going to ignore to save some space. All the same, I'm not at all sure, after reading the above, whether you are in support of censorship or not - and if you do think that it is a good idea, exactly what sort. The ideas which you put up are very fine, they might well be ideals which some sort of moral and aesthetically pleasing society might aim for but in western society they are no more than pipe dreams. The difference between what you have suggested and what Joseph suggested was the difference between what might be the ideal and what is achievable.



I suppose that one of the problems with your ideas are that you would make judgements on moral and aesthetic grounds whereas currently judgements are made by bureaucrats and businessmen - whose ideals are those of making a profit and making society run smoothly. Any opposition to that rule would be a one sided struggle in which the advocates of rightness and beauty would have little chance. And, in any case the majority of people are not possessed of the nobler sensibilities which you seem to possess and all they are after is to enjoy themselves and have a few thrills in life - surely education and not censorship would be the better way to go about refining their tastes, if that is worth doing.

David Lake, Department of English, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Qld 4067.

I was interested by Bruce Gillespie's summary of Elliott and his own response on the great contest of Science Fiction versus Fantasy. By and large I agree with Bruce. I think hard science fiction is dead - and it never was very living. The best things in sf have always been literary fantasies, thinly disguised with a veneer of science. The kind of story which is really sf and nothing else - the sort of stuff thrown up in the old days by Hal Clement - it is worth reading once and only once. After that - yawn, shudder, change the subject! It's not literature. (My definition of Literature: anything a mature person can bear to read three times. I can't read Hal Clement even twice. And the same applies to all stories where the point is merely scientific.)

The great master and founder of modern sf was H G Wells. And he never called his stuff "science fiction". In the 1933 preface to a collection of his *Scientific Romances*, he insisted that all his stories were fantasies. "They do not aim to project a serious possibility; they aim indeed only at the same amount of conviction as one gets in a good gripping dream." He added that he used "scientific patter" rather than magic because it was no longer possible to believe in magic.

The first great sf story was Wells's *Time Machine*. The basis of that story is magic, thinly disguised, since time travel is logically impossible - and Wells knew it. He simply used "scientific patter" at the beginning of the story to make the device seem a scientific possibility.

But I'm flogging a dead horse here, I think. Good sf never really was scientific; but at one time, yes, there were writers who had their starry young eyes fixed on the Future, and they thought they were writing about it. That was the so-called Golden Age (1938-45, approximately). The great writers of that period are still nearly all alive; only now they are writing rubbish. Highly lucrative rubbish, but still rubbish.

What makes these ancient survivors seem so absurd is that of course there won't be any future. None, that is, for glorious rocket-ships to zoom about the galaxy in. The future of our civilisation is very obviously going to be nasty, brutish, and short. And that, of course, is why people want to buy books about wizards and castles and dragons... not about space ships (there won't be any) or about future cities (there won't be any - or if there will, they'll be too horrible to contemplate).

I really think sf was a doomed genre from the start. In its beginning was its end, writ large. It really began with *The Time Machine* - and that lovely story is basically about the inevitable death of the human race. The Morlocks are merely a foreshadowing; the real crunch comes when the Time Traveller escapes from the Morlocks to... the end of the Solar System. End of story - beginning of genre! Really, what more was there to say? All the busy rocket ships of the Golden Age were just noise, after that great Signal. What all truthful sf says is that the human race is doomed!: whether in the next five years of the next fifty billion. Does it make really all that much difference if we get blown up tomorrow, or freeze it out in the last planet of the last star before the final cold death?



Not really. Truthfully sf was never a good place for optimists. There's nothing strange about our present gloom: that's where sf started. It was the so-called Golden Age which was the anomaly. And it died after seven years: on 6 August 1945, at Hiroshima, when the real future arrived.

Since 1945, the future has relentlessly begun to look worse and worse. The Space Age began in the 60s and died in the 70s. It died for lack of a credible place to go - as our planetary probes brought back the horrid truth: we will not be going to the planets because they're not worth going to. The Solar System, apart from the Earth, is a lethal flying slag-heap. And from the deafening radio silence of the Galaxy, there probably isn't any inhabited planet nearer than Andromeda.

On present evidence, it is very likely that the human level of intelligence is a biological mistake. I doubt if any intelligent race in the universe lasts more than twenty thousand years from the invention of agriculture. That's why we're not hearing from them: they're either still in the trees, or blown to radioactive bits.

And I think many former readers of sf have come around to these realisations. Who the devil wants to think honestly about the future these days? Science fiction? You've got to be joking!

Roll on the wizards and castles, roll on the Book of the New Sun (which is fantasy, of course: when the stars are visible in daylight, the Earth would actually be frozen down to the carbon dioxide - though in fact science tells us that Earth will roast, not freeze).

All this may sound a bit odd coming from me, the author of some seven or eight sf novels. Not a bit: if you've read my books you will notice that they are all thinly disguised fantasies. My next book (if there is one) will be out and out fantasy, complete with castles and wizards.

Oh, and by the way, I see no point in going to Melbourne in 1985. I would find the whole thing too macabre.

Well, that just about wraps it up for science fiction. If it weren't for the fact that I'm pretty sure other people will want to keep writing about it I'd declare a shift in emphasis to something really escapist, like football, as from the next issue.

Ted White, 1014 N Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, VA 22046, USA.

Yours is the first mention I've seen in print of my Sikander article, although I have received several letters directly from Australian fans. One of them thought I'd viciously savaged Jean Weber, but none of them disagreed with my basic premise and most found added documentation to bolster my points. But tell me: is my piece seen by most Australians as a "hatchet job on Australian fanzines"? I saw it more as an explanation of why most Australian fanzines enjoy such a poor reputation elsewhere in the world, but I suppose that if one is unaware of that reputation it might read worse. Oh well, Melbourne should be "interesting" (as the Chinese saying has it). (I am a little disappointed that you gave no reaction to the piece - or the way it treats you/Rataplan.)

I hope that my comments a few pages back give you some idea of what I thought about your opus. It is not too comprehensive however, it is a bit difficult to deal with all the matters you raised in only a page so I've tried to get to the point of the whole thing rather than individual arguments. Your comments on this fanzine are fairly much what I would have written myself if I'd felt inclined to explaining what I am doing and why - although I thought there was probably too much about Julie Vaux's faults and not enough about my good points.

I found myself (grab onto something) nodding in agreement throughout the first two pages of Joseph's letter. It wasn't until he began pontificating about American culture that I experienced my usual reaction to Nicholas, which is



that it's a shame that he doesn't know what he's talking about. Both Aldiss's theories and his own exist in a vacuum that ignores the context of US publishing from the dime novel through to pulp magazines, and the function of illustration in publishing magazines. The intent of those who published fiction for the "newly literate" masses was, purely and simply, to make money. Anyone who learned his history from western pulps learned garbage; anyone who equated "the crime and war pulps" with "contemporary society" must have ended up in total ignorance of that society. These fictions didn't create attitudes; they reflected them. Mass fiction always follows mass taste, a basic lesson in capitalism.

Likewise, the "art" in sf magazines was not (with rare exceptions) "fine art" and subject to the fads of fine art ("cubism, surrealism, pop, op, abstract and whathave you") any more than the art in non-sf magazines was. It was, in the tradition of the books published in the late nineteenth century, illustration: the visualization of scenes from the stories. This is a separate function and one to which Joseph's glib criticisms hardly apply. One might as well criticise a jingle composed to sell something on tv for not being a major symphonic work - though cover paintings have some more latitude.

Your comments on the Aldiss/Nicholas "theory" of pulp magazines seems, well..., a shade naïve. I get the impression that most social and marxist theoreticians would gobble you up for breakfast. The conception of society which you express is apparently limited to a single plane in which things are actually what they appear to be and only have those functions which their manufactures claim for them; so if somebody sets up a publishing house to make money out of publishing popular fiction the cause and the effect which are most obvious are the only ones. However, even on the limited scale that you have mentioned there are other factors which have nothing to do with an initial intent. The fact that General Motors is set up to make money through manufacturing and selling cars (amongst other things) cannot possibly discount other social activities which also resulted from the initial impulse. There is a road-making industry, service stations, panel beaters and specialised sections in hospitals. These are simply more economic results but there are other factors too, social mobility, ability to get to sports contests, going to national parks and museums, and many more. In many ways the original intent is the most minor of the effects resulting from the decision to make cars or publish pulp magazines.

I think that it is also a little limp to say that popular fiction follows from popular taste. One of the questions here is - where did "popular taste" come from? Various writers will give you different answers but one explanation which links very neatly with the ideas which Joseph put up: popular taste is a reflection of the ideals of the ruling class and they are passed to the subordinate classes in a fashion which will lead to those classes accepting the ruling class ideals and making that the dominant ideology. Thus, fiction must not only be entertaining for the masses, it must also teach them the sorts of things that those in positions of power want them to be taught, and it has to be done in such a way as to make those who accept that ideology think of it as their own culture. It is probably neither here nor there if the history which is taught is "garbage" or that those who read and accept the stuff end up in total ignorance of that society and their place in it. Marxists would call the end result of that process "false class consciousness". I don't imagine that a knowledge of the truth of the past and of the contemporary society would make members of subservient classes any great friends of the ruling class and so perhaps that ignorance could be seen as a good thing by those who get to make the decisions. Not that there needs to be any conscious conspiracy - just a group self interest which is articulated in self preservation.

As for criticising jingles simply for not being symphonies - I think that you've got the wrong sort of criticism in mind. On an artistic level you may be right, but as a social analysis, criticism of a jingle (and a symphony)



for being a tool of ruling class domination seems to be right-on. Of course Joseph didn't go quite that far, but it was the water which he was starting to dabble in.

\* \* \*

As the observant can see, this is the final page of this issue. I haven't included a "We Also Heard From" column at the end of the letters of comment because there are a great many of them still to be printed in the next issue. In fact, the way that things look now, issue 26 is going to be something of a house-keeping issue in which I tidy up a lot of stuff that has been building up over the past few months.

I'm not sure that spending a whole issue on publishing other people's comments is going to be a good thing - especially after my comments on Jack Herman's fanzine. However it seems like the only thing to do at the moment. I also hope to have the thing out fairly soon so perhaps you could look upon it as a bit of an extension of this issue. And thinking about this issue leads me on to the following:

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On the first page of this issue I had to admit that it was the middle of January and not the middle of October last year when this issue was due. Things are even worse now and it is the beginning of February. I seem to have let things slip a little. Still, ~~there~~ is always the business of the New Years Resolution and I hope that mine will solve my deadline problems - I've resolved to win the lottery so that I can dedicate myself to (among other things) publishing big, fat, and interesting fanzines all the time. There are, of course, a few of you who need not concern yourselves with the question of when the next issue will appear in your letter box because it's so long since I heard from you that it seems unlikely that you will get any issues after this one. If you perceive a Big Red \*A\* in the little space just here to the right you are just one such person. You can redeem yourself by doing one of those things which are indicated (a person who had not written as many official bits of paper as I would have said "written") just a few lines from the top of the first page of this issue. You might like to go back and read it.

Okay? See you shortly - I hope.