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Don't do it Mr Gestetner! If you invent the wax stencil duplicator not only will you make fandom possible, it will inevitably lead to the publication of

RATAPLAN THIRTY ?

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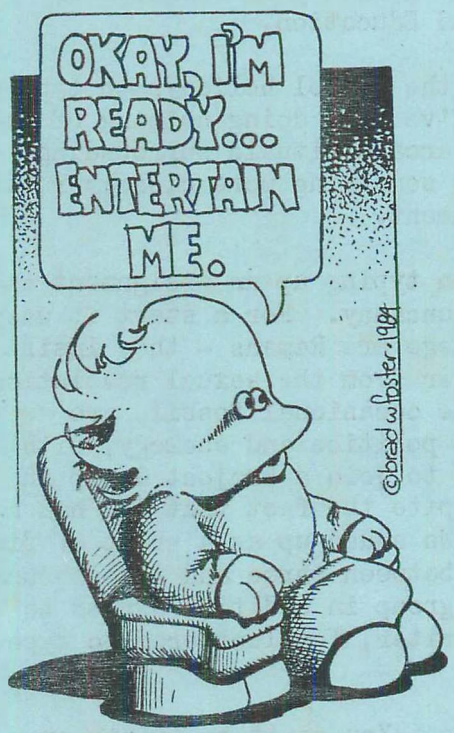
Not to be denied, merely delayed, this fanzine is published by the incorrigible Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 433, Civic Square, ACT, 2608, AUSTRALIA. Copies of this fanzine may be had for trade, for contribution or letter of comment, or by subscription at the standard rate of $2 for three issues or the de luxe rate of $49.99 for three issues. Members of SAPS will probably find copies in the mailing and it won't cost them a cent, directly. The purpose of the fanzine, if this or any other fanzine really has such a thing, is to publish selected words on science fiction and science fiction fans, among other things. A U-Boat Publication. What more can one say? MM.

* * *

OPENING SHOT

Not Cricket



As some of you may have gathered by now, I am one of the world elite which realises that the game of cricket is one of the highest achievements of English civilisation, if not Western Civilisation. Given the slightest opportunity I enjoy chatting about this high testament to mankind's noble nature and although there are some who may find such a matter tedious beyond belief I am, as always, sure that others share this enthusiasm. I know that one of my comrades in this is Phil Ware because we passed several happy hours discussing the noble game when he and Mandy Herriot were up here in Canberra for Circulation III. The convention was quite enjoyable since it took place on the same weekend as the recent General Election and I was able to seek out company interested in discussing politics and cricket. (As interesting as sf might be, it cannot compete with those two great spectator sports as topics of lively and intelligent conversation.)

During the dying moments of the convention, as Valma, Mandy, Phil and I enjoyed the outdoor seating which Carol and Jim Nomarhas, our hosts for the dead-dog party, had thoughtfully provided on their patio overlooking the Belconnen valley and the Brindabella ranges in the twilight, I made a rash promise. I said that I would include an article in this issue of Rataplan which would be entertaining and educational to cricket fans and annoying to the likes of Ted White and his comrades, an article with the title; "A Marxist Explanation of Kim Hughes' Resignation as Captain of the Australian XI".

Despite the fact that I had nailed together an ingenious argument for this article I do have some (not much, but enough) sense of what is respectable and what is not. Since following events have - as some tactless but perhaps accurate observer put it - put Kim out of his misery, I don't feel inclined to publish such an article. In fact, given the rather sad state of Australian cricket just at the moment, and remembering my resolution not to write about politics here, I'll have to think of something entirely different to write about.

Perhaps there's a better way to do this, I can get other people to write things and I'll just copy them out. This suits me just fine since I have some material which has been haunting my IN tray for simply ages and also needs to be put out of its misery (so to speak).

* * *

First in is Marc Ortlieb who has been rather quiet in the fanzine business of late, apart from producing a little counter-rumor publication for the looming edifice that is AussieCon II. His excuse is that he is enjoying the still fresh delights of nuptial bliss (no, he didn't actually say that and I wouldn't be bold enough to ask him to say it either) and the poverty of being a student. There might be a connection between these two factors in his life in 1984, but I'm not sure that he'd be quite that blunt about it...

SO WHO NEEDS FANDOM?

Marc Ortlieb

Contrary to recent rumors, my lack of fanzine activity of late has had little to do with a Ted White article published in Irwin Hirsh's Sikander. It doesn't really have much to do with Leigh Edmonds' fanzine review in Ornithopter a while back either, though I will admit that it struck closer to home. No. It's all got to do with the fact that I've found something which can provide me with all the masochistic joys of producing fanzines without actually having to pay for the postage - I refer, of course, to my recent status as a fourth year Bachelor of Education student at the Melbourne College of Advanced Education.

When I was merely a comfortably paid teacher, I used the school holidays to type up stencils for fanzines. As an impoverished student, I've been doing nothing of the sort. My first set of holidays were taken up in the arcane rituals surrounding getting married, but the August holidays saw me doing something more closely related to fanzine production. I've been typing up an assignment.

You may think that there are many similarities between typing up an assignment and pubbing an ish, but in this case the resemblance was uncanny. For a start it wasn't totally my assignment. I think our lecturers at college are Ramans - they insist that we do things in threes. (It's probably a hangover from the sexual revolution of the sixties - most of the lecturers, other than the occasional fossil, are hangovers from the sixties, being deeply into leftist politics and ecology, with occasional signs of trendy psychology.) I was forced to join a Project Group in order to work on my major Education D assignment, despite the fact that I'd had a lovely idea for a sole project on school magazines. We ended up as a group of five, and the project required that each member contribute between three and five thousand words to the final presentation. Each member of the group in addition agreed to contribute something extra, and, considering my typewriter, I volunteered to type the thing up.

Being thirty-two at tertiary college is rather strange. You can't be twenty on Sugar Mountain. My memories of the last time I was doing fourth year college are certainly flavoured by the fact that it was one of the most interesting and happy years of my life. The fact that I was a final year college student had a lot to do with that. This year is also one of extreme happiness, but the fact that I am a fourth year college student has virtually nothing to do with that. Indeed, college, rather than being a central part of my life, is a peripheral thing. It certainly has nothing to do with my social life, other than in the fact that assignments take up a lot of the time that I might otherwise use in socializing.

Naturally I at first thought that the students were particularly young. After all, in most cases, I was teaching while they were still at primary school. This age difference has taken a while to overcome - not helped by the fact that, of the nine weeks allotted to first term, I was out doing teaching practice for five. Three weeks, followed by one week, followed by vacation, doesn't really give one much time

to break into groups that have been established over three years of studying together.

Add to that the fact that I have a fairly good idea of what goes on in a classroom - a better idea than several of my lecturers - and the fact that my age and wide reading gave me a rather better general knowledge than most of the other students, and you can see that, not only was I a boring old fart, but I was also a real smartarse. Boring old farts and smartarses don't really make friends easily. Besides, I wasn't that interested in making new friends. I was too busy getting used to living in Melbourne with a wide range of science fiction fans and the like; with Cath's friends and relatives; and with getting to know Cath. First term wasn't a good one for getting to know people at college. I found that the one person I did get to like was one of my English lecturers who, coincidentally, had been one of Valma's lecturers.

Second term was better. For a start I was in a subject involving practical - Cell Biology. It was doing this course that convinced me that teachers should take time off to study every now and then. I soon discovered that my knowledge of cells, particularly when it comes to such things as cell membranes, was about twenty years out of date. I found myself actually nattering to some of the other students, and comparing whinges. They were in a position to tell me things; "Ah yes, Brian's lectures are always like that," and "Watch out for Ian, he has a habit of putting in exam question on stuff that he hasn't covered in lectures." I rather enjoyed joining in the natter, though slipped out of conversations when they turned to such things as the round of twenty-first parties, and who has dropped whom, and who was having a blue with his/her parents over staying out late.

I still wasn't pleased with the thought that my major project had to be done in a group. I prefer to work on my own. Indeed, I made my one foray into my old habit of writing for the student rag, and sent in a scurrilous piece in which I explained the stupidities I perceived in the system in terms of the college being a covert training for ASIO agents. I submitted a request to be excused from working in a group on the grounds of my age and cretchety nature, but had that knocked back. The lecturers granted that it was a well submitted request, and that it would be an interesting project, but it wasn't being done is a group of three or more. (The only specifications for the project were that each member of the group had to submit between three and five thousand words, and that it had to be done in groups of three or more. Everything else was subject to negotiation.) One of the lecturers then kindly went around the groups asking if any were willing to accept another member. Fortunately one was. They were working on a project examining adolescent leisure activities. This suited me. Not only had I, as a teacher, run after-school D&D clubs, but my brother-in law, John, is the Youth Officer for the Diamond Valley region. I'd nattered to him about his job, and knew that he would be a valuable source of information. Thus I joined the group.

The group was a little older than the average. Indeed, one member was a mother of two who was returning to college to pick up librarianship qualifications. I'd already met her, as we were both in the Cell Biology course, and we'd both made the mistake of assuming that it would start in the first week of second term. The group was my sort of group. The project had been designed so that each person would do her/his own bit and that the only time we really needed to work together was in summarising the findings. Each person had an extra bit to do, which was why I ended up with the typing. I figured that, since I couldn't really afford a fanzine, and since my Roneo was still in Adelaide, I might as well satisfy my desire for a typewriter by typing up the assignment.

As I said, it was a bit like typing up a fanzine. For a start there was the fun of chasing up each member of the group to get all the chapters together. Real Soon Now may be one of the fundamental customs of fandom, but it can also be found out in the wilds of mundania. Then there was the editing. Fortunately I've edited a number of fanzine articles (Ortlieb's definition of editing being to take out the author's spelling and grammatical errors and substitute one's own) and the standard was not much worse than that of most letter-of-comment writers - and it was certainly better

than that I'd faced while marking Year Eleven English essays. The actual work of typing up was easier than fanzine typing, as I could type to paper rather than stencil, thus avoiding the problems of having to use corflu. Then there was the fact that I had to double space. Over a hundred pages sounds large, but when you consider that that's double spaced, it's no more than a largish issue of Q36 used to be. (Of course my chapter was the last to be finished.)

The trouble was that it was so bloody boring - my own material especially. I mean, I really do not want to know about the patterns of adolescent recreation in the St Kilda area - besides which, since the assignment concentrated on organized recreational activities, it missed out on all the good stuff. I certainly can't see that the assignment will serve any useful purpose, other than getting the five of us that tiny bit closer to that elusive bit of paper at the end of the year. It certainly had none of the rigour that a research paper should have, and is based largely on anecdotal material. Indeed, the whole thing is a bit of a wank, but since that is what the lecturers seem to want, that is what they'll be getting.

So who needs fandom? I can get my typing fingers shortened at college, and get credit for it... (Indeed, I got nineteen out of twenty for a fanzine article that I submitted to my English lecturer as an assignment. Now all I have to do is reply to Kirpal Sing's letter to me asking why I was so heavy handed in my attack on his Science Fiction article.) I can encounter all the fuggheads I want at college. Who needs amateur fannish fuggheads when you've got college lecturers being paid to do the job? Above all, who needs conventions? I wake up in the morning with my head throbbing, and feeling like something the dog dragged in without the need of alcoholic smoke-filled room parties. Yep. It's a great life in today's tertiary college. Thank god I only have one more term to serve.

* * *

KIDDIE STF

At the end of the school year Valma announced to me that she had been given the sf course at the school she's working at at the moment. To prove it she showed me a pile of books that made up the sf course which is currently being forced upon the poor kids at Deakin High School. I may not know much about sf, but I do know one thing - if I'd been shown that pile of books as an introduction to sf there would be very little chance that I would end up producing fanzines about the literature.

The main thing about the collection of books is that it's probably just the kind of thing that you'd expect a person who knows nothing about sf to have; it bore no resemblance to anything that I'd regard as worth giving to kids to read, not if you wanted to get them enthusiastic about reading sf. But then I'm not a teacher and know nothing about what it's like to have to give a course in which I have no personal interest or enthusiasm.

To give you an idea about the standard of what's in the pile, I'd reckon that the best book of the lot would have to be John Wyndham's The Chrysalids. The best represented author is Fred Hoyle with A for Andromeda and The Black Cloud and despite myself, I have to give somebody credit for at last getting one book in the right category because the pile includes Chariot of the Gods?. New to me were a couple of books by somebody called Nicholas Fisk (there can't really be such a person, can there?) whose main interest in life must be - according to the blurbs - microscopes. (At least that would explain his microscopic writing talent.) I read one of his books - a little monster called Time Trap which demonstrates that the poor fellow hasn't got much of a grasp on the ideas which he has lifted from somewhere else and that he must have been one of the kids evacuated from London at the beginning of the Second World War (since his recounting of that part of the story was pretty good, and would have been nice in some other book.)

In addition there were a couple or three anthologies of generally nondescript stories put together by editors I've never heard of and put out by publishers I've never heard of in sf either - including Reader's Digest Science Fiction Top Picks.

A couple of these are the kind of text books that people who seem to know nothing about sf, but who find themselves having to teach it, must find invaluable. These books are made up of a series of stories followed each one by some questions which are supposed to draw out some kind of relevance, generally of a humanistic nature. The imagination in shaping some of the questions seems, often enough, to contain more imagination and creativity than the subject story. And then there are the little homilies scattered about which neatly summarise sf, tho human condition and everything, and tell the poor reader exactly what are the approved thoughts on this or that story or human activity.

There must be a few teachers who actually know something about what they are doing when they put together a course on sf. If they exist I suppose that they do it from their own knowledge and preferences rather than from what the so-called experts have to say. I suppose that there is also an Association of teachers out there somewhere in the world which attempts to systematise the whole business so that those who are interested enough can get it more or less right. But I imagine that there are probably even more teachers who neither know nor care about self-help associations or groups which aim to actually do something to make school kids think fairly kindly of sf, teachers who are more interested in meeting their commitments to give the kids a basic education and to keep them out of their parents' hair for a few hours during the day.

There probably wasn't a science fiction course being taught in Australia a decade ago, and I wonder if sf wasn't better for it. It is probably only natural that we enthusiasts would like to attract others to our irrational appetites, and even more natural for filthy pros to want to get richer by expanding their market. But should we hope to do it by forcing our habit upon defenseless children through the medium of teachers who, in the majority, have little more than a basic knowledge of the subject. (How would we be if they got me to teach mathematics at schools, and I'm hopeless without my little pocket adding machine. Or, coming at it another way, most religious instruction in State Schools is carried out by members of the clergy imported especially for the occasion, so perhaps there should be a roster of dedicated and capable fans who can tour the schools spreading another version of the True Faith.)

Any teachers who read this may well object to my comments on this matter - which is okay by me so long as they do it behind my back. But such people are probably among the informed and not the teachers who should be concerning us.

But on the other hand perhaps it is not something that worrying will do anything about. For better or worse the establishment has got its hooks into sf, and uses it for more than the little entertainment that we originally looked to the genre for. If I was brave enough I could probably write a little bit about the changing face of entertainment and how sf has become big business, and therefore entered a different league in the field of entertainment, with the need to create more consumers for it. However that might invoke the kind of sociological analysis which would annoy some North American readers. And I wouldn't want to do that, would I? All the same, you'd have to admit that the entertainment in an issue of a Carnell <u>New Worlds</u> was different in nature to what we are getting these days in the various kinds of Star Wars spin-offs.

* * *

Funny, isn't it, how many Australian fans are teachers at one level or another. Perhaps one of these days somebody with nothing better to do, and the need to get a Doctorate so that they can get a teaching job, will write up the phenomenon. And if it weren't for his good sense in getting out of the service many years ago, Bruce Gillespie would also be a member of the unhappy band of pilgrims fighting their way through the forests of setting and marking tests, writing reports, and this and that, in addition to having to put up with rotten little kids (like I used to be). So let's get away from education for a moment and let Bruce enlighten us about the latest problems confronting the older rock fan who tries to spend a decent amount on records these days.

1983: THE BEST OF RECORDS, THE WORST OF TIMES

Bruce Gillespie

I set out to review the best popular music albums of 1983, but found that I could not do so without saying something about the whole popular music industry during the early 1980s. So bear with me while I relate:

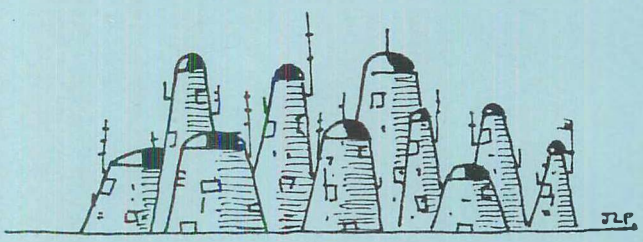
The Gospel According to Bruce

In the beginning was "pop music", and then there was jazz, and then there was pop music, and then there was rock music, and there was pop music. The most striking aspect of the popular music industry during the early 1980s is the return to "pop music" and the disappearance of the "rock music" which was so important during the 1960s and the early 1970s.

"Pop music" (as distinct from popular music) is:

(1) Sold as "singles" (records which have one song per side) or "albums" (two or more songs per side) to the largest possible number of buyers. Pop music records are promoted by repeated playings by radio stations, repeated showing of promotional videotapes on television, and by "live" (stage) appearances by the person or group whose record is being promoted.

(2) Relies for its musical appeal on a total effect welded together from the singer's voice, background voices, foreground instruments, and background drums, percussion, and bass guitar. The sound of the whole record should be dominated by the singer's voice or the total effect of the percussion.



(3) Emphasises the singer's voice and lyrics at the expense of the instrumental backing, despite the unoriginality and banality of the lyrics. The less interesting are the words, the more clearly they are sung.

(4) Relies for its musical subject matter on very simplified, mechanised versions of other, more complex popular music forms, such as blues, reggae, jazz, etc.

(5) Has reassumed an absolute dominance of popular music during the early 1980s, to the exclusion of all other more complex, lyrically interesting, or instrumentally sophisticated forms.

Rock music; the main form of popular music from 1964-5 until the mid 1970s:

(1) Was usually sold as "albums" rather than "singles", to such an extent that much rock music was never released on singles, or became famous only as part of "concept albums" (records in which all the songs had some thematic connection).

(2) Was usually sold to an audience who regarded themselves as more sophisticated than the audience for pop music; that is, they were less likely to rely on radio-style playings for information about which records to buy, and relied very much on word-of-mouth recommendations from friends. In turn, pop music radio and television "rock shows" ignored rock music, even during the early 1970s, when rock records were selling better than pop records. The audience for rock music tended to divide into smaller groups (fans of blues, country rock, and art rock, for instance) who had more contempt for each other than they had for the buyers of pop music.

(3) Was based on the instrumental, not vocal, skills/pyrotechnics of its practitioners. Many of the best rock records are based on long, improvised guitar breaks. Paradoxically, rock vocalists became less important just as the standard of they lyrics improved noticeably.

(4) Borrowed heavily from more sophisticated traditions of popular music, especially from blues, country-and-western, and jazz, and even paid tribute to its origins. Rocks musicians became musicologists, but they were also improvisers.

(5) Has faded from air play and suffered declining record sales during recent years. This is partly because fans of the various branches of rock music grew to despise each other so vehemently that nobody realised that no section of rock music had retained its popularity. Also, FM radio stations in the USA, which supported rock music during the early 1970s, now play the same monotonous round of ten-hits-repeated-hourly that has been the rule on AM radio stations for the last twenty-five years.

What is the Cause of the Catastrophe?

Why has rock music almost disappeared, and pop music resumed an ascendancy which it has not enjoyed since 1963; indeed, has turned back into the sort of pop music which ruled during the early 1960s?

The short answer is: the dreaded synthesizer. The synthesizer was developed almost twenty years ago, and appeared on some rock records during the early 1970s. However, versatile synthesizers did not take over pop music until the late 1970s. Now you need to hunt the radio waves and record shops to find a pop record by people using real instruments.

Not that I can think of any necessary arguments against the synthesiser. It should be able to manufacture any sound that the musician wants to produce; in fact the studio musicians who use synthesisers seem able to produce only the most obvious sounds. Even worse, they rely on drum synthesisers, so that a perfectly syncopated tick-tock beat clatters all over the airwaves, giving no hint of the energy of power we came to expect from drummers in good rock bands. Even that word "program" gives the game away; how can a musician improvise (and improvisation is the basis of all good popular music) if most of the sounds he/she wants to use have to be preprogrammed beforehand?

Did Anything Escape the Catastrophe During 1983?

All I am saying about popular music in 1983 is that, if you wanted to find something listenable, you had to escape the general stream of pop music and go off looking in some unlikely places. If you like the current state of pop music, then you probably won't like most of the records on this list. On the other hand, most of these records did not sell very well; at least, not nearly as well as they would have if they had been released during the 1970s. Most of these records were excluded from the playlists of Australian radio stations. The only way I found out about them was by accident, or precedent.

The two best records of 1983 were both recorded by the Party Boys: Live at Several 21sts and The Greatest Hits(of Other People), both on Oz Records. Radio stations consented to play the occasional track from Live at Several 21sts because the lead singer of this composite group was James Reyne, otherwise dedicated to the manufacture of pop as a member of the best-selling group, Australian Crawl. Reyne, in his guise as lead singer of the Party Boys, sounds rather like Mick Jagger; with him are Buzz Bidstrip (ex-Angles), Kevin Borich (Australia's best guitarists), Paul Christie (ex-Mondo Rock), and Harry James (ex-Ariel). They got together to play for fun at concerts, and became so popular that EMI released their live material as quickly as possible.

The result is extraordinary: a group of the best rock musicians in Australia (or anywhere) performing with great energy and ebullience, a marvellous cacophony of thumping, wailing sounds reverberating with that percussive power which you hear only on the greatest live albums. The result is pure exciting noise - as well as some magnificent guitar solos from Borich and some heartfelt revivals of some of the best songs of the last fifteen years. My favourites are versions of the Rolling

Stones "Bitch" and "Not Fade Away", and a version of Lou Reed's "White Light/White Heat" which improves on Reed's own performance from Rock'n'Roll Animal.

Reyne and the Party Boys have fun: they are the best musos around, they know they are the best, and they enjoy being the best.

The first Party Boys group was a two-weeks, four-concerts-and-one-record affair, and nobody thought we would hear of them again. Fortunately, there was another party, although Reyne went back to Australian Crawl. Richard Clapton, one of the last of Australia's early-1970s rock vocalists, joined the Party Boys for The Greatest Hits (of Other People). The other members are the same, and so is the high quality of the live recording. Clapton in not as wild a singer as Reyne, not so convincing at belting out rock 'n' roll, but he's nearly as good, and his heart is in the right place. Bidstrip still sounds as frenetic as Charlie Watts at his best. Borich still rips out those wondrous soaring guitar-licks which we used to think were our due on good rock records, but which have now been banished from airplay. Most of the songs are also good, especially the trio that close side two: the Rolling Stones "Street Fighting Man", David Lindley's "Mercury Blues" (written by K C Douglas) and Bob Dylan's "Rainy Day Women Nos. 12 and 35". Delirious: that's how I feel after listening to these two records; and grateful that some record company, somewhere, is still making records that I can listen to.

As I said before, synthesisers can hardly be blamed for the lack of imagination shown in their use. In 1982, Vangelis showed what could be done with overdubbing, good tunes, and a florid imagination. (And Jon Anderson's choirboy singing nicely complemented Vangelis' synthorchestrations on The Friends of Mr Cairo and Private Collection.) In 1983, the Eurythmics, Annie Lennox and Dave Stewart, showed that gifted singing (Annie's) and a certain glitsy bravura could overcome even some of the most leaden syntho-percussion. The result was Sweet Dreams, which included two fine singles ("Sweet Dreams" and "Love is a Stranger") and a few other creditable pieces.

Overall, however, Sweet Dreams is just the kind of pop which I complained about. The synthesized sounds blend together so it is impossible to pick out any good playing as such; the only distinguishable instrument is the voice of Annie Lennox. Other pop vices creep on as well: a reliance on lyrics which are banal at best and "Moon/June" ridiculous at worst; and an unwillingness to provide an entire album of good songs. (I keep being reminded of all those late-1950s albums on which the teen idol recorded his hit, and the producer cobbled together eleven other songs recorded in two hours on a slow Sunday afternoon.) No more concept albums these days, but only more and more records featuring one or two hits designed for airplay, and filled out with unmemorable songs and arrangements. During 1983, Tim Finn's Escapade, a good pop album, had lots of uninteresting filler; so did Paul Young's No Parlez, which could have been one of the best records of the year if it had been all good.

Paul Simon's Hearts and Bones (Warner Bros.) was the only record of 1983 which provided good songs and relied on a lot of synthesized instrumentation. The songs were written by Paul Simon, the best writer of popular songs of the last thirty years of more. Paul Simon records seldom, and takes a lot of trouble over each performance. As a result, the songs on Hearts and Bones are better than those on One Trick Pony, which were in turn more tuneful than those on Still Crazy After All These Years.

Paul Simon still inhabits the poetic, fragile country he had explored since his best work, on Simon and Garfunkle's Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme. If anything, the emotional tone of the songs deepens with each album; the melancholy is etched even more strongly into the musical face that Simon shows. "Through the long and speechless night", intones Simon over a fetching background of percussion and foghorn-like quavering notes, "My father came to me / And he held me to his chest / He said, there's not much more that you can do / Go on and get some rest." That's in "Think Too Much", the best song on the album. It's a song which Simon liked so much he recorded it in two different arrangements, one on each side of the record.

In another song, Simon intones, "If you want to write a song about the moon... / Walk along the craters of the afternoon / When the shadows are deep / And the light is alien / And gravity leaps like a knife off the pavement,"

The musical accompaniment to these songs often seems little more than swirls of synthesised notes flecked by bumps of percussion and graced by the occasional note of a real musical instrument. (Radio stations did play "Allergies", which Warner Bros. released as the single off the album, and which featured a glittering guitar solo from Al de Moola.) Paul Simon's voice of resolute woe, elevated by irony and sharpened by bitterness, is the main musical instrument. If the lyrics were boring, would we listen to this record? We would certainly listen to some of the tunes, especially those for "Hearts and Bones", "Think Too Much", "Song About the Moon", and "The Late Great Johnny Ace". But it's the words I listen to and devour. "Cars Are Cars" has a Nile Rogers chunkiness which Simon should have avoided, and the tune isn't much, either, but the ironies and images of the words make this a classic Paul Simon song. ("Cars are cars / All over the world / Similarly made / Similarly sold" but "People are strangers / They change with the curve / From time zone to time zone / As we can observe / They shut down their borders / And think they're immune / They stand on their differences / And shoots at the moon.")

Not that you would know that Paul Simon had released an album unless you, like me, haunted record stores for years at a time waiting for the next Paul Simon album. You might have read that Simon and Garfunkel, of Central-Park-Reunion fame, were about to record their first album of new songs since Bridge Over Troubled Water. That album, to be called Think Too Much, would have sold several million copies just because it was by Simon and Garfunkel. But Paul got annoyed with Art, and threw him off the project, and the name of the album was changed. So Hearts and Bones sold badly in America and not at all in Australia.

Warner Bros. Records must get some of the blame. The company released "Allergies", a pallid song, as the promotional single from Hearts and Bones instead of any of the attractive songs. The company has been making all sorts of other wrong decisions recently, although in turn it has been struck down by the fact that the fashion in the USA changed abruptly about two years ago. Suddenly the British invaded, wafting along under the skirts of Boy George, synthesisers were popular instead of guitars, and nearly all of Warner Bros. best-selling performers of the 1970s became non-starter-duds by 1983. Warner Bros. "let go" such people as Warren Zevon and Tom Waits; the Eagles broke up (wisely, just before they became unfashionable); Fleetwood Mac stopped selling six million copies per album. The whole guitars-and-drums West Coast rock sound, the basis of WB's success during the 1970s, was banished from American radio, giving way to synthpop or the the current crop of unutterably vulgar "heavy metal" performers. The great singer-songwriter-guitarists have lost faith, and record sales; Eric Clapton's most recent album, Money and Cigarettes (Warner Bros.) was a dull dud; Joni Mitchell's Wild Things Run Free (Geffen, distributed by Warner Bros.) was dull; and Neil Young lost his nerve altogether, abandoning his own style and making a horrendously miscalculated attempt at Synthpop (Trans) and an equally wrongheaded attempt at garage rockabilly (Everybody's Rocking). Neil Young now records for Geffen Records, distributed by Warner Bros.

These sad developments leave listeners like me up the creek without the proverbial paddle. Although nothing from England interests me; very little from Australia is exciting; only the best American performers are still capable of recording albums in which guitar players are heard playing and drummers can be heard whacking real drums. To discover such records is difficult. To take risks when record buying has become impossible, since prices have risen so steeply in recent years. Even so, here are a few records which have slipped through the sludge barrier:

* John Cougar Mellencamp: Uh Huh (Riva).
He used to be called "John Cougar", and as such produced two bloody awful singles which sold millions of copies each. Now he had changes name, and made Uh Huh, a record which is dedicated to the Rolling Stones. His band does not sound like the Stones, but they have a satisfyingly hard sound, and their infectious, anthem-like

let's-have-fun style reminds me of the Stones as they played in the early 1970s. The first song on side one, "Crubling Down", was released as the single from the album, and had some success in Australia. A better song is "Pink Houses", the type of song I would sing along to, if I could sing. "The Authority Song", also from side one, has just been released as a single in the USA, so it might be played on radio.

* T-Bone Burnett: Proof Through the Night (Warner Bros.).
This record is proof enough that late-60s-early-70s rock is not dead in America. T-Bone Burnett recorded and played with Bob Dylan during the mid-1970s, and Bob Dylan's intonation and phrasing can often be heard in Burnett's voice. Burnett is just beginning his solo career, so his lyrics are Deep and Meaningful, and most of the tunes are enjoyable. Nice "eve of destruction" sense of menace in the lyrics.

And, talking of Bob Dylan:
* Infidel (CBS) puzzles me, but I can hardly fault the music (produced by Mark Knopfler; twin guitars of Knopfler and Mick Taylor on most tracks). Dylan has been preachy throughout his career, but now he has changed to a different sermon. When he wags his finger at me and tells me that I shouldn't blame Israel for being the "Neighbourhood Bully", that I shouldn't put up with a "Union Sundown", and that I should support Regan as a "Man of Peace", I conclude that Dylan his lost his marbles. I don't listen to the lyrics any longer, and neither does anyone else. Perhaps we're all too embarrassed to see one of our heroes make a fool of himself. But as a musician, Dylan has never been cannier, especially in his choice of Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler as producer. Dylan and Knopfler are among the last people who understand the excitement of rock music: crank up the guitars, let the drums fly, amplify the bass, and devil take the singer.

* Jaco Pastorius: Invitation (Warner Bros.)
Rock music invaded jazz during the early 1970s, and the results were more exciting than all but the best rock records of the era. Now jazz has settled down to its own rather mumbley old age; even the master, Miles Davis, turned in a ho-hum record last year (Star People). ECM records, as an enterprise, has tried to keep jazz fresh, but records by people such as Pet Metheny have been a bit too mellow in recent years.

During 1983, the only hint I caught of the excitement of fusion jazz was Jaco Pastorius' Invitation. Indeed, I could argue that this was the best true rock record of the year. Pastorius is magnificent as a player of electric bass, and his accompanying musicians, including Randy Brecker and Don Alias, take off and stay in flight for the whole performance. Even so, the best track is "Continuum", on which Pastorius plays bass for four minutes and thirteen seconds. The record is worth buying for that track.

* Emmylou Harris: White Shoes" (Warner Bros.).
Emmylou Harris remains a favourite of mine, although often she misses step. For years she performed country songs, and was always beautifully dull. Often the dullness of her singing was saved by the excellent playing of the musicians she worked with, the fine songs she chose, and the meticulous arrangements (by her husband, Brian Ahern) with which she worked. Then came Roses in the Snow 1979, which displayed Harris, Ahern, and company reaching back into the beginnings of American folk/country, and retrieving a handful of classic songs which they graced with delicate mandolin-and-banjo sounds. They left the drums by the wayside, and included some of the songs Emmylou Harris had recorded with Dolly Parton and Linda Ronstadt for an album which was never released.

I don't know whether Roses in the Snow sold many copies. I suspect that it didn't, since Emmylou Harris has never returned to the purity of that style, although later albums were very good. With White Shoes, she reaches out beyond the country-rock market, but I fear she has tried to reach a middle-of-the-road rock audience which disappeared during recent years. This is a pity, since White Shoes provides the type of popular music to which I could listen indefinitely. Emmylou sings well these days, especially on such delectable ballads as Sandy Denny's "Like an Old

Fashioned Waltz" and Paul Kennerley's "In My Dream". T-Bone Burnett helps out as a player, and Emmylou Harris trips through Burnett's arrangement of the old song, "Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend".

So what distinguishes Emylou Harris's style from that of, say, Annie Lennox. Annie has a better voice, but Emmylou sings better songs. More importantly, the pop arrangements on White Shoes are never there merely as background; they show a careful attention to the detail of each instrument, the kind of attention to detail which makes rock music more interesting than modern pop.

* Jackson Browne: Lawyers in Love (Warner Bros.).
Jackson Browne is the essential Warner Bros. West-Coast-sound, songwriter-warbler. If Browne has been afflicted by the same trends that have affected the rest of the West-Coasters, Browne should have been washed up in 1983. Instead, he released Lawyers in Love, a record that was very successful in America, if not here. Perhaps that's because his songs are good pop as well as good rock. Also, Browne improves with every record, although his contemporaries sound more dispirited. I don't like the early Jackson Browne records very much; the recording sounds very flat, and Browne sounds rather reverential, especially about his own pure motives. On Running on Empty, Browne sounded for the first time as if he was having fun. The recording sound became bigger, pushier, rockier. The tunes were more listenable. Hold Out improves on this. On Lawyers in Love, Browne and his band expand their range and power beyond anything they tried during the 1970s. They sound more exciting, and more excited, than on any of their earlier records. At his least reverential, Browne sings "I'm a Rocker"; a his most confessional, he chants "Cut It Away"; in "Lawyers in Love" he makes fun of American national politics. Radio stations played "Lawyers in Love".

Nobody played "Say It Isn't True" on the radio. If Warner Bros. had picked that song as the single from the album, everybody might have realised that "Say It Isn't True" is Browne's best song. Buy the whole album if you have no other way of hearing the song. It begins very slowly as a step-march ballad. The lyrics on the first verse make it sound just like any ordinary love song. He's holding his beloved, just as he would in any other rock song. But what if his beloved disappeared? What if we all "vanished in a moment"? Why are we too stupid to stop the doom that is to come, "Say It Isn't True" - but it could be. I hope that other singers do so many cover versions of this song that it becomes famous. Maybe rock music still matters: say it is so.

* Other Recommendations:

Sharon O'Neil: Foreign Affair (CBS). Australian singer records West Coast rock, and sells well in Australia but not in America. Some very good songs and arrangements.

Bonnie Tyler: Faster than the Speed of Night (CBS). Pure pop from the Phil Spector of the eighties, Jim Steinman. Idiotic lyrics, but luscious arrangements for Bonnie Tyler's powerful voice. A perfect reproduction of 1962 pop.

Van Morrison: Inarticulate Speech of the Heart (Warner Bros.) Van's voice usually sounds like gravel flung into a concrete mixer, and often his songs and arrangements are a bit too wet. But most of the songs on this album are good, and effective musicians and chorus hide Van's voice during the rough spots.

John Cale: Songs for a New Age (Z). Cale has proved to be more of a maverick than his fellow ex-Velvet-Undergrounder, Lou Reed. Cale never sells any records, but recording companies keep recording his anyway. Listen to this for the lyrics: the instrumentation if sparse.

Loudon Wainwright III: Fame and Wealth (Rounder). Loudon is still the funniest man in rock music, and here is another batch of his acerbic songs. Some songs are musically interesting, and some are not.

RIP, 1983. In 1984 there might be new records from Springsteen and Dire Straits, so I might have some records to recommend unreservedly, I hope you enjoy the Party Boys' records.

* * *

A quick editorial apology to Bruce for taking so long to get this into print, a quick editorial note to the rest of you that We (the editor) do not always agree with what we print and sometimes think that our contributors write rubbish... er... have very poorly developed sensibilities in some areas; "unutterably vulgar heavy metal" indeed), and also an editorial ponder on what Bruce thought of his Springsteen record this year, and also what he thought of records from bands like U2 and the Divinals. And now on to:

PRE-LETTERS OF COMMENT

A lot of nice people have sent me some interesting letters commenting on the issues published before Rataplan 29, many of which are perhaps worth publishing. But since they are now mostly five or more months old I think I'll have to forgo the pleasure of printing them; I suppose I should count myself as having thus been punished for my tardiness. All the same, I'd like to thank all the following people for having taken the trouble to write to me: Harry Andruschak, Ned Brooks, Brian Earl Brown, Peter Coomber, Robert Coulson, Ken Ford, Diane Fox, Alexis Gilliland, Steve Green, Carey Handfield, Joy Hibbert, Terry Hughes, Ali Kayn, Dave Langford, Joyce Scrivner, Michael Shoemaker, Mae Strelkov, Arthur Thompson, Julie Vaux and Lucy Zinkiewicz.

* * *

LETTERS OF COMMENT

Lee Harding
PO Box 198, Fern Tree Gully, Victoria 3156.

These Brother C-60 machines are really great, aren't they? I have mine connected to an Apple IIc, using a Zardax wordprocessor. Why did god hold out for so long for this. I suppose it's rather like working with a slate, rubbing out and replacing as you go. Which probably explains why those ancients wrote such great books. I'm the sort of writer who has about five to fifty second-thoughts per page and much of my time has been taken up in reaching for the white-out, ripping pages out of the typer and experiencing general frustration all round. Hopefully that will now be a thing of the past and I'll be able to concentrate more on the writing and leave the typing until later. And the relief of having a clean copy... (and imagine typing stencils without recourse to corflu!).

((I know! I know!))

I liked your bit about fiction writing. I was a mite shaken to read the article from Leanne Frahm in a previous issue when she Told All about her "creative writing" class, and Martin Bridgestock's letter in the current issue strikes a similar uncomfortable chord. I am reminded of something Raymond Chandler once said: "Those whom God or nature intended to be writers will find their own answers. Those who need to ask merely want to be writers." Nuff said.

((Perhaps the advantage of self education in a writer is that each one will come up with a different answer to a problem. Most, of course, won't work, but those that do have the advantage of novelty and freshness. Perhaps the popularity of writing courses is one of the reasons that fiction these days generally seems so lacklustre.))

See you at the Wordfest in March?

((You bet! We wouldn't miss it.))

Joy Hibbert:
11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST1 5JG, UK.

The shortage of professional fiction magazines, and their tendency to have a narrow idea of what they want, ensures that good fiction cannot necessarily find a professional home. That is why I ask people why they don't publish fiction, if they don't. If you want to not print fiction for the other reasons that you give, namely that there are even fewer homes for intelligent nonfiction pieces, fair enough, and I have no argument. All fanzines have to choose to exclude something. But don't go round thinking good fiction can always be sold, because it can't. I also wonder to what extent the unwillingness to print fiction in fanzines comes from childhood beliefs that writers are something special - a form of sacrilege in a way.

((I wouldn't have thought so. In any case I reckon that sensible fanzine editors don't encourage people to write fiction for the same reason you don't give an alcoholic a bottle of Beam's Choice as a Christmas present. It only encourages them in their dissolute ways.))

In my experience, the ideal of writing art for fanzines tends to lead to a situation in which those who think they can write try to intimidate the rest of us. Me, I read fanzines in order to hear from people who aren't afraid to let their brains function.

It would be interesting to hear what else Terry Carr's generation was doing in its teens; for examples, working, unemployed, or at school? And how they heard about fandom in the first place? I got into fandom when I was eighteen. Until I was fifteen there were no sf magazines in Britain that I knew of. From SF Monthly I learned that conventions exist, and from them I learned that fanzines exist. I suspect that people of my generation didn't have the same access to cheap sf magazines in large numbers, with interesting letter columns, that fans of Terry's generation seems to have had. Thus we didn't get into writing to each other through the letter columns of prozines, because there weren't any, and what there were were expensive. I was at school until I was eighteen, and so would have had difficulty affording conventions away. There's also the question of social life. Isn't it pretty much accepted that until quite recently the sort of person who drifts into fandom has tended to be socially dysfunctional, to put it politely? At the age when Terry was a neo I had an active social life based around school, and that blended into a social life based around parties as I got older. It was solely that feeling that on-one else around me read sf that got me into fandom to start with (after which I realised that some of the ideas I held weren't so odd after all), rather than any other sort of loneliness.

I'd like to ask Bernadette Bosky a question: To what extent could our problems be greater simply because, on the whole, we don't believe in a physical afterlife?

I've a few ideas to throw into the conversation about how much of the current gloom, as opposed to that of the 60s, is merely because we're older now and have more to be gloomy about? Is some of the misery connected with the end of the sexual revolution? From safe reliable contraceptives and plenty of sex for all, we've gone to crippling IUDs, poisonous pills, herpes and AIDS. Partly, I suspect, it's a question of the dangers of nukes not having sunk in. Many old people even now cannot see that nukes are anything more than big conventional bombs, and thus nastier than say, the blitz, but still nothing we can't deal with. In the 50s and 60s did it seem likely that the Soviets and the Americans would use nukes as deterrents and nothing else? In the 50s, had we got used to the idea that the Soviets are a Bad Thing? After all, they were on our side in World War Two. Was the lack of a nutter in the White House, and the lack of a pro-American puppet in Number 10 anything to do with it? And of course, we'd never heard of the nuclear winter in those days, nor were we really aware of the way the government was lying to us over the nuclear danger.

((I like your first suggestion the best, just that we're all getting older and gloomier, not only because there's more to be gloomy about but because we're now

beginning to see that the hole that various parts of civilisation has fallen into is a lot deeper than we thought at first. But not having been a great beneficiary of the late-great sexual revolution I don't know how much that's got to do with it.))

Michael Hailstone
PO Box 193, Woden, ACT 2606.

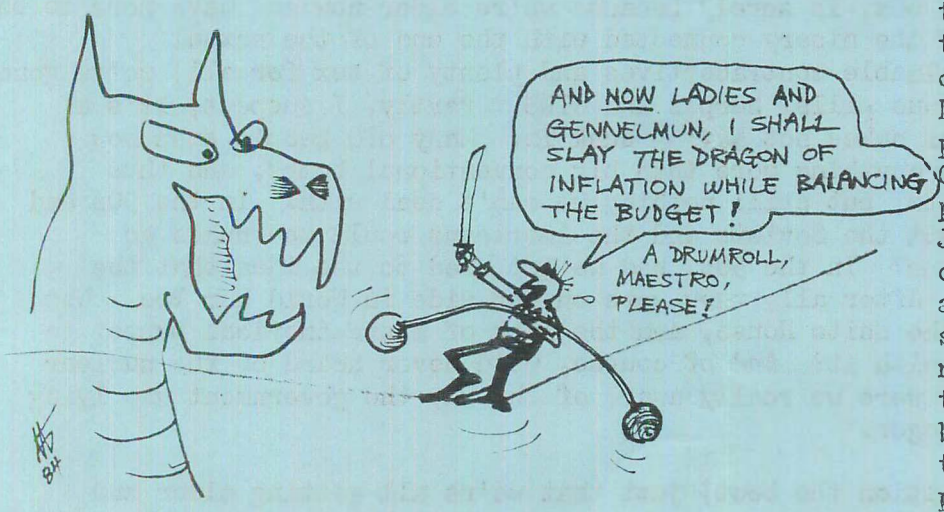
I feel moved mainly to comment on your answer to my letter in Rataplan 29. Quite frankly, there's one thing you say that really appals me. I don't share at all the morbid outlook that you share with Ian Warden. It's a sign of the times of course. As a reviewer (Tom Easton?) more or less once pointed out in his column in Analog, righteous anger went out with the sixties. The eighties are the time of frightened wimps turning belly up and whimpering: "Please kill me."

What appals me most of all is your statement: "In the sixties the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction which generally meant air bursting several megatons over all enemy cities, which was very nasty for them but not so bad in the short to medium term for people not living there."

The very thought of atom bombing cities, that is, deliberately killing millions of defenceless civilians, is nothing less than a monstrous atrocity. I feel that the only hope of achieving nuclear disarmament lies in those concerned managing to raise a bit of good old moral indignation. I mean, here we are in the eighties, and it seem that the best (worst?) kind of thing supposed "progressives" can get angry about is friendly girls with computers, rather than the deliberate murder of civilians. I mean, what military gain lies in such a crime?

Unhappily the precedent was set in World War Two. Until World War One the very idea of bombing even military targets inside towns was regarded with extreme distaste. We all know about the Nuremberg trials and how the Nazis killed six million Jews, but you don't hear much about the war crimes committed by "our" side. By that I mean the firebombing of German (and Japanese) cities on a far greater scale than the Germans or Japanese did. Especially the firebombing of Dresden, which surely must have been one of the greatest atrocities in all history.

What I'm trying to say is that nuclear weapons must be just about the most useless things ever invented. About twenty years ago I used to say that a nuclear war wouldn't be a war; it would be just a short intercontinental shooting match. Now I can go further than that and say: it won't be war; it would be nothing less than mass-murder. As the American President says in Doctor Strangelove, "We're talking about mass-murder, not war." He is spot on, but unhappily the phrase rolls so easily off the tongue, and hardly anybody bothers to think just what it means. One can understand the reason for the Manhattan Project: the Americans were worried that the Germans might develop an atomic bomb before them. But what could they do with the bomb, once they had it? Drop it on a city and kill thousands of civilians, that's all. It was quite okay, for the Americans and British had already set the precedent with Hamburg, Cologne, Dresden (and probably Tokyo and other Japanese cities, but it's odd that we hear hardly anything about them). And since the end of the war nuclear-war has always been thought of as dropping bombs on cities - by both the war planners and the peace movement.



And tell me this: Why have the Americans and the Russians agreed not to develop anti-ballistic missiles? Think of what that means: that is, it's okay for each country to fry millions of the other's civilians, but it is not okay for either country to defend its own civilians against such an attack. I mean, I understood that one of a government's duties is to defend its people against a foreign invasion or attack. It is generally accepted that Australia is a nuclear target because of the American alliance with military bases and warships, yet, if Australia were attacked with nuclear missiles, there would be absolutely no way of stopping them. We are totally defenceless against a nuclear attack. It's here I begin to think there's something funny going on, (thought there's nothing comical about it whatsoever). It seems almost as if the government of the nuclear powers were really conspiring to scare the bejesus out of their own civilian populations; to keep them in line.

Since beginning this letter I have seen a film showing the effect of a megaton air burst over London. Funny thing is, it deals only with the effect on such harmless targets as St Paul's Cathedral, the paintings in the National Gallery, brick terrace houses and the civilians dwelling therein. It also shows what is really likely to happen in a nuclear attack: not one, but many warheads exploded around the central city, and a third of these on the ground.

Fred Hoyle made a similar good point in one of his novels, in which a nuclear attack turns out to be a mass hallucination, showing everybody up as a fool for believing in such an event. I don't understand why nuclear "war" has been described as "unthinkable" - not only is it quite thinkable, it has been very much thought of for these last forty years.

What really disgusts me about the peace movement is that they think they're actually achieving something by gathering in large numbers in the parks and streets and marching peacefully and being thoroughly well behaved and respectable. This is playing right into the hands of the powers that be when instead they should be going absolutely berserk about this and stringing up all the politicians and war planners who have imposed this monstrous threat upon us.

((Well, since you're so concerned, what have you been doing about it; going around in a rage stringing up world leaders or rolling over and waiting for them to do the same to you. You can't have it both ways, you either go out and do something to stop the threat or you sit back, hopeful that it won't happen but also in the full knowledge of the possible price of inactivity. And writing disgusted and indignant letters to fanzines doesn't count.

((I'm not sure which of my statements you find the most appalling. But if you mean my hope that if a bomb goes off over Canberra, I will be killed in the initial burst, I see nothing appalling in that. It is merely a recognition that if such an event does occur I'd rather go out in a flash than hang around for what follows, and still end up equally dead. What do you intend to do if an atomic war breaks out - tell yourself that it's an appalling hallucination and try to ignore it?

((I also see nothing appalling about noting what the policy of nuclear war used to be in the fifties. Some might find that policy appalling, but I don't see how a recounting of it can be. Perhaps you'd rather that such things really were unthinkable and not able to be written about..

((One thing I find questionable in your letter is the comment about "bombing defenceless civilians..."; as though this is somehow more evil than any other kind of killing.))

Joan Dick
88-27 King Street, Prahran, Victoria 3181.

Rataplan 29 arrived last week, I was extremely interested in your "mental tool boxes". I'm going to get s(me of those tools. I have applied to and have been

accepted as an off-campus student at Deakin University. Hopefully I will one day have my BA.

It all began when I decided I needed some more education. My English, etc., needed updating and I realised my background reading and knowledge were badly lacking. Living in Prahran I went around the corner to the Prahran TAFE. I was told that my speaking English was perfectly correct and that "nobody bothers about spelling or grammar these days". As I walked out I saw a folder about a seminar being held at the Prahran High School. I went along. I told about my reception at the TAFE and everyone there was horrified. So I enrolled there and did a course in The English Essay. It was a gentle introduction into study, homework and so on after years away from school. Aside from the actual classes I was intrigued by the reactions from other class mates; comments from amazement to congratulations on my "bravery" were made, at someone in my age group wanting to return to college.

I really enjoyed myself at these classes and miss them now they have ended. I feel that I learned a lot, mainly that I have been condensing my writing far too much. But perhaps that reflects on a lifetime of having to contain myself in all ways. Emotion was a luxury I could not afford to indulge in in years gone past. Now I'm looking forward to next year and already I've changed my reading matter. It's like a whole new world has been opened to me. New ways of thinking and different points of view. A realisation of my own shortcomings and also that people who think differently to me may not necessarily be wrong.

However one thing has not changed. My spelling is still atrocious. I need a new, bigger dictionary. However, whenever I go to buy one I'm told not to. I have a strong feeling that my venture into the world of higher education may have solved a few Christmas present problems.

((I'm not sure that a dictionary is the answer to spelling problems. I have four, ranging from tiny to vast, and it doesn't seem to have done me any good. What I really need to do is be able to proof read properly, as anybody familiar with my fanzines will know.

((Anyhow... Congratulations and good luck with your new venture. I can assure you that it won't be easy and that if you're anything like me you'll be tempted to chuck it all in more than once. But stick with it, it's worth the effort. For example, after last year's experience with the English Civil War I can now sit back with a very indulgent smile when somebody starts sounding off about Oliver Cromwell. Of course I have to be very careful to keep my mouth shut because the one thing you really learn is that tertiary education teaches you more and more about less and less. The only real disadvantage with universities and the like is that they are infested with academics who like to spoil things by setting assignments, exams and essays. Universities would be much nicer places without them... But perhaps those people feel just the same way about students.))

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

It's nice to hear that the I Ching prophesises Development/Gradual Progress for your fanzine; I think you're doing a pretty good job already. But the one subject on which there has been scarcely any Development over the past 2400 years is the crucial question, "What is (Good) Literature?" Perhaps you could bear with a few more observations from me...

WHAT IS LITERATURE?

asked jesting Tolstoy; and stayed to give his own answer, namely, "What is good for the people". Plato and umpteen commissars agree; but I belong to the opposite party, the one founded by Aristotle, who says that Literature is basically What People Like.

I was stimulated by Russell Blackford's letter in Rataplan 29. Yes, he's right that my previous definition was a sort of Zen koan; and yes, my definition is vague. Who is mature? But the fact is that I was trying to be tough-minded and pragmatic. The word "Literature" with a big L is not normally used to cover books which are best-sellers for one season and then forgotten. Books of Literature in fact are books prized by a culture over decades and centuries, the ones that don't go out of print, like Homer and Shakespear or (in sf) Mary Shelly's Frankenstein and Well's The Time Machine. You could say that they are re-read by the "mature" - or at least by the people who set texts for literature courses. And that, of course, is a circular definition. Literature is what Literature experts say is Literature.

Because very often they have to teach it, year after year.

For example, I and my colleague John Strugnell are teaching the only undergrad sf course in an Australian university - and the texts we set are basically the ones that don't go dead after you have taught them for three or four years. Our sf list is as follows:

Wells:	Selected Short Stories (including "Time Machine")
	The First Men in the Moon
C S Lewis:	Out of the Silent Planet
LeGuin:	The Left Hand of Darkness
Vonnegut:	Cat's Cradle
Hoban:	Riddley Walker

The First Men in the Moon is new this year, substituting for The War of the Worlds. All the other texts have survived several years of teaching. And all of them are great books by reason of style as well as ideas.

Well, I must admit that there are some other principles of selection operating also. Content has some influence. I like sf books that have philosophical and/or religious implications - our course is structured around the debate between the sf writers on the meaning of Life, the Universe and Everything. It is books of this kind that I can bear to re-read - if they are also rich in style.

Incidentally, the re-reading test is not my own idea. Everyone who is interested in this problem should look at C S Lewis's An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge, 1961) - a delightful down-to-earth book which focuses on the way people read. Lewis says that a good book is a book which is read (and re-read) in a certain way; a bad book is read only once, and in a different way. "Literary" readers like a book for its flavour, it's atmosphere; often much more than for the plot. Unliterary readers read (only once) to find out What Happens Next.

Now, I know from my own experience that this is not a complete account of the matter. There was a time (when I was in my teens) when I could get the literary experience (as described by Lewis) from books I can hardly re-read now - such as some of Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs. What I liked about Burroughs was not his plot (he always had only one plot, with a princess serving as a kind of electric hare to be chased by those greyhounds, the hero and villain) but the atmosphere of Barsoom; the dead sea bottoms, the deserted million-year-old dead cities, the flying ships. Now I realise that I was projecting like mad, there was not all that much of this stuff in the text, but enough for me to imagine it all. Now that I am mature (alas!) at fifty-five, I can no longer put up with the percentage of sheer nonsense in Burroughs, so for me he is no longer literature. And people like me form the Literary Establishment, ergo ...

I am not defending this situation, just stating that it is so. Let's have some more Development/Gradual Progress on this subject; and meanwhile I recommend An Experiment in Criticism. Like nearly everything by Lewis, it's a damned good read as well as being thought-provoking.

((It isn't in the local library so I suppose that I might have a look for it in the library at university when that starts up again. But as for finding time to

actually read the thing when one is still trying to figure out the nuts and bolts of historiography... well, not just yet. Even if it does make me feel slightly iggerant to have to go without. But I'm sure that the following writer knows all about it.))

George Turner
4/296 Inkerman Street, E. St Kilda, Victoria 3183.

Russell Blackford is lighting nuisance fires behind a screen of academicism, determined to hound my grey hairs to a shameful death, discredited and abandoned by Rataplan readers. Witness the way he writes that "Turner, like most critics, continues to impute that certain books have literary value and others don't, whatever that might mean." Impute is the operative word, but the "good" and "bad" paragraph to which he refers neither says nor imputes any such thing; in fact it comes close to saying the opposite. See how they get you? Semantics? Grrr (as in Andy Capp).

Let's straighten out the "good/bad" business. Russell suggests that the problem may be "because they lack meaning of any sort". The opposite is the case. In my Concise Oxford "bad" is defined in three groups of meanings with a total of thirteen sub-meanings. "Good" is defined in seventeen groups and I haven't counted the (If God had meant me to know he would have provided more fingers.) The trouble with these words is that they have too many meanings which can only be hunted down in the context of the nouns they qualify. "I've had a bad day" is a readily understood idiom, conventionally accepted, but is usually followed by a request for explanatory details. Upon which the second party howls, "You've had a bad day! Just wait while I tell you —" So each of them, even in superficial agreement, has a different qualitative idea of the adjectival meaning.

But when somebody writes, "This is a bad book," you need to know a great deal about his critical criteria before you gain a useful idea of his meaning. Does he mean badly written, immoral, uninteresting, subversive, below par for that author or whatever else may be relevant? Since only further explanation can clarify the usage, why use "bad" in the first place? The same argument applies to "good", with far greater odds against understanding - seventeen major meanings!

Since the critic cannot reasonably use these words without clarification, he may well avoid them altogether and go straight into the exposition. Adjectives of any kind are enemies of precision and must be used with care. What precise colour is represented by "blue"? How high is "tall"? How frightened is "menacing"? (A "menacing gesture" in fiction is one the author hasn't visualised properly and hopes the reader will fill in for him. It's the sort of sloppy writing that puts the kiss of inertia on many a potentially effective scene.) The writer who aims for clarity selects adjectives - and adverbs - with care and avoids them where possible. When one is necessary, particularly one describing a state of mind, he will go to great lengths to achieve exactness. (I'll admit that Henry James occasionally pursued exactness to exhaustion point. Moderation, even in exactness, says I.)

So I contradict Russell by saying that far from there being "no consensus what the words mean in factual terms", there are altogether too many accepted meanings for easy sorting. (There is - just to cloud the issue a little further - probably no single meaning for any word except the occasional specialised noun.) His second proposition, that "there is no way in strict logic to transform any number of factual statements into statements containing the words (i.e. good/bad)" is probably correct for the written word, where exactness is necessary, though context is a powerful force in pinning down meaning. It may be less of a problem in speech, where context is all-important, involving body movement, vocal stress, the listener's knowledge of the speaker's mental attitudes, etc, but critical writing should aim at precise expression (God forgive my sins over fifteen years of criticism!); anything less is unfair to book, author and potential reader.

Russell goes on to say that "there can be enough relative consensus" (precisely what is relative consensus?) to use them intelligently in particular discussions ...

provided we know in advance that ... fundamental values may prove to differ." But only, I think, in conversation, where differences can be resolved on the spot. In critical writing, or in any writing designed to communicate fine-tuned impressions, it cannot apply.

But let's not think that Russell was only lighting random fires. He was using all this to lead up to a discussion closer to his heart - "the purpose of science fiction and fantasy" - in the hope that someone would shout encouragement. So here am I, shouting. I have written recently and at lengt my conviction that science fiction and fantasy have become almost purposeless in the grip of market forces but that, with proper attention from responsible writers, useful purpose is possible. (And probably not only the purpose I have suggested i In The Heart Or In The Head.)

Take up the gage, Sir Russell! Meta-values and all! "Have at thee now!"

((Yes, yes! Go at it! But be careful when you use dangerous things like meta-values, there are some innocent bystanders who might get brain-ache is you use such weapons too wildly.

((Actually, I wonder if you two aren't arguing two sides of the one idea, especially in the matter of values - what with one saying that we can never be sure of the meaning of a word because it's all too imprecise, and the other saying that the trouble is that there are so many precise definitions that you can't keep track of them. No matter which way you toss it, confusion is still the end result.))

* * *

Others who wrote were: Terry Hughes, Joseph Nicholas, Russell Parker, Gregory See-Kee, Mae Strelkov, Jean Weber and Jack Wodhams.

And now here's something which will open up a discussion which had been lying around somewhat dormant in these pages for an issue of two.

THE ART OF ILLUSTRATION

Julie Vaux

Joseph Nicholas really does seem to think that illustration is not a valid form of art, judging from his comment: "... sf art's failure to develop as an art form due to it's remaining tied to the unimaginative business of illustrating other people's words."

Illustration is not art because it is secondary to the high and mighty concept! Is that what he's saying? How can a man live in a city with some of the finest art collections in the world and be so unaware? Joseph has overlooked the obvious fact that many great works of art are illustrations. The image is not secondary to the word, both are valid and complimentary.

A dozen examples of great artworks will hopefully put an end to this nonsense that illustration is not art.

(1) "Le Maitre du Coeur d'Amour Epris", written and illustrated by King Renee of Anjou is an illuminated manuscript that is gothic in subject, renaissance in colour and composition and baroque in its use of shadows and light, particularly the famous dawn scene. This is one of the most beautifully illuminated manuscripts created in Europe.

(2) The Parthenon statues which are master works of the Classical Greek period and illustrate the ritual procession to the Parthenon for the robing of the Godess.

(3) Matthies Grunewald Isenheim's altarpiece is one of the grandest and most moving of the German Mannerists, particularly the crucifixion scene. It, and other biblically based works, are all illustrations.

(4) Rembrandt's portraits of his son Titus must be illustrations or illuminations of the long dead but much remembered young man's character.

(5) The Book of Kepps in which word and image become one in a most marvellous and magical pattern of lively letters dancing into margins and becoming a microcosmos of colour and delight

(6) Calligraphy, especially of the Islamic and Far Eastern masters, is another example of word and image becoming one. I could name a dozen Chinese and Japanese calligraphers of renown.

(7) Roden's "Burghers of Calais" tragic figures illustrate a legend from mediaeval France - of the starving town councillors of Calais forced to beg before the English conqueror.

(8) From print making there is Hokusai's "Views of Mount Fuji", particularly the one of the great wave. Is not a picture an illustrations of a concept from the creator's mind?

(9) The bark painting of the Australian aborigines, whose mythic patterns of power are book, illustration, song and memory moving the spirit with strangeness.

(10) The totem poles of the coastal Indians of Alaska, British Columbia and Washington each tell a story.

(11) A little more modern are the great masters of comics; Kirby's vision of Asgard and Attilan and other cities of the immortals; and other artists like Lela Dowling, John Bryne and Steve Ditko.

(12) Lastly I suggest Wendy Pini as a masterly illustrator and artist. She has worked on convention handbooks, illustrated apas, designed Tarot cards, created an epic (the almost completed Elfquest), designed for book covers, worked in black and white, colour, etc. But Joseph would probably regard her, despite her obvious gifts, as another rendered of furry cute things.

I don't agree that there has been a failure of sf art to develop and that the failure is due to artists translating concepts and words into images. That's what illustrating is about; the interpretation of words and the understanding necessary to create or construct such images. Art is about images (be they visual or verbal) and about vision (be it visions and dreaming of one's own or the gift of joining one's dreaming to another's).

Sf art is about visions of the future, of the effect of Man and his tool using capacity, and how that effects his cultural perceptions. Also, creating images of alien life forms is part of that because by looking at different cultures we can see our own more fully.

Many artists over the past centuries have used their talents and skills to create visual images from other people's ideas and concepts. Let's look at some sf artists, starting with Michael Whelan - a well known artist who has done some excellent covers for Darkover books.

The cover of the DAW 1978 edition of Storm Queen is a truly beautiful piece of art that perfectly compliments and illustrates the writer's words - the image of Dorilys, her face made inhuman by the lightning. The colours and tones are superb - black, blue-violet storm clouds and mountains contrast with the electric green-white lines of lightning and the highlights of Dorily's robes. Her orange hair is the same intensity as the sky fire she summons, and her face is that of a lost child overwhelmed by the elements, too maddened by them to show fear - exactly the image created by the author's words. This wondrously intense image is a perfect example of imaginative illustration - an image crossing one's mind like lightning flashing in response to the words and concepts of the writer.

Another beautiful cover is George Barr's cover of the DAW 1975 edition of The Heritage of Hastur. Barr's style shows renaissance and gothic influences whereas Michael Whelan's style is perhaps more baroque in its tonality and texture. The cover is a superb composition with two contrasting colour schemes that, by their contrast, create a unified image. A pale and fragile figure fades before the force of another's flames - her colours the tint of flowers beginning to wither, stands before the fire-form of yellow:ochre with a whisper of demonic green and a cloak of flames rising. In the foreground a silvery hilt shimmers in normal and controlled curves, it's straightness contrasting with the arched, almost contorted, forms of the two females. It is a masterly illustration and an intriguing image, an echo (or rather a forewarning) of what it to come in the novel. It is a stunningly imaginative interpretation of Marion Zimmer Bradley's novel.

Finally, I would like to mention two covers of recent books which I hope everyone has seen.

The first is a book which impressed many fans, David Brin's Star Tide Rising. The cover was a beautiful textural piece - you could almost feel the dolphin's skin, the wetness of the two human's hair and the strange metal salts in that alien sea. It was a thoughtful and well imagined work with the dolphins in scale to the humans and their harnesses looking as though the cetaceans could wear them comfortably. The shimmer of the ripples strikes a note of strangeness with its chemical-heavy look. It is a work of sf art! It has high-tech texture and contrast between terran life forms and a strange environment. You look at it and question; then you read the book and find answers that make you want to ask more questions about the nature of sentience and its fragility.

Lastly, who remembers the cover of The Fountains of Paradise with the lion's mouth lit by fire besides the high-tech shimmer of the sky-rail? The old giving way to the new and the contrast between the two. This is surely what sf art should try to capture - tomorrow dancing with today and yesterday. The contrast and interplay of the familiar and strange is another aim we can hold, and likewise the invocation of the alien that makes us more aware of the meaning of being human.

Sf art is successful because it it linked to the imagination of others and because it brings a creator's concepts and words to life!

* * *

NOT MORE OF THE USUAL COMMENTS ON FANZINES

Honestly, it's got so that I'm not really sure if I should be pleased or not when I open my letter box and find a fanzine lurking in there. Most of the fanzine fans in the US will have a fair idea why, but before I get to that there might be space for a couple of comments on the current state of Australian fanzines.

The first comment is - what Australian fanzines? With Jack Herman and Marc Ortlieb out of the firing line and with most Melbourne fans involved in getting AussieCon II on the way, with Western and South Australia gone quiet, with Eric Lindsay out of a job and trying to make a living from writing about and working on computers, and with Ron Clarke, Jean Weber and Nikkie White gone to quarterly schedules, the arrival of a lonely locally produced fanzine is almost a good excuse for a night of wild revelry. If the surviving local fanzines were also of good international quality I might even knock the top off a bottle of bubbly, but in the current state of affairs it looks like the manufacturers need not look to me to boost their income for a long time yet. In fact, I find it hard to remember a time when things have been worse. Even in 1968, when there were only two or three fanzines in Australia, there was the promise and excitement of good things to come, and also the giant of ASFR in our midst. These days there seems to be just the vague idea that somebody might do something good one of these days and the distraction of AussieCon II. There are fans who might produce good fanzines, but they are sucked into putting their energies towards that great ephemeral event. I don't think that any convention is worth that.

It is no secret that the few fanzines which do get published from time to time are not terribly impressive. The business is something which I've already written quite enough about and I don't suppose that you'd want to read much more about it either. (If Ted White gave Australian fanzines a bad time in 1983 I'd hate to imagine what his comments would be on the product of the second half of 1984, leaving aside the Bruce Gillespie revival of course.) The revival of Bruce's The Metaphysical Review is a good thing and I expect that it will improve over the next few issues to once more grow into the great monsters that Bruce is prone to publish when he gets the chance. But I'm not going to dwell on that and spoil an otherwise good pessimistic comment, I'm sure that Bruce wouldn't want that. "Doom and gloom all the way" is the motto.

In the meantime it seems that there are but a bare handful of fanzines escaping from the British Isles these days. As usual, it seems that there is plenty of activity but that most of it is failing to reach these shores. I gather, from the occasional reference in the occasional printed page which does get here, that this is because British fans have discovered the amateur publication association. I get the idea that fanzine publication over there might never have been more popular, but that it has never been more hidden. Not that it makes much difference to those of us off the isles since I had previously thought that British fanzine fandom was an informal apa anyhow.

And while all this is quietly going on (or not going on as the case may be) the main body of fanzine fans in North America seems to be entertaining the rest of us, but not necessarily themselves, with a bit of vicious feuding. From this distance I cannot pretend to understand what it's all about or who is still buddies with who. I cannot deny that there is a certain vicarious thrill in reading this kind of thing with people heaping abuse upon each other, but I could wish that the often clever word-play and publishing energy had been put to better use. I could also wish that none of this had ever happened because it has probably soured relationships which, from this far continent at least, had made possible quite a lot of entertaining and lively fannish fanzines. I fear that this feeling will mean an end to such a welcome flow through my letter box.

There is, of course, the occasional North American fanzine which is published by someone more like me - out on the edge but still enjoying the fanzine editor's craft. Some are actually quite good in a typically North American style - you know, with decently organised layout, clean presentation, generally well put together words and what have you. That's bread and butter to the fanzine reading fan, and some of it fairly tasty. All the same, a diet of fanzines is always enlivened by a bit of jam, and it is simply missing at the moment - apart from that prepared from the rather bitter fruits of feuding.

* * *

REVIEW OF A LITTLE MONSTER

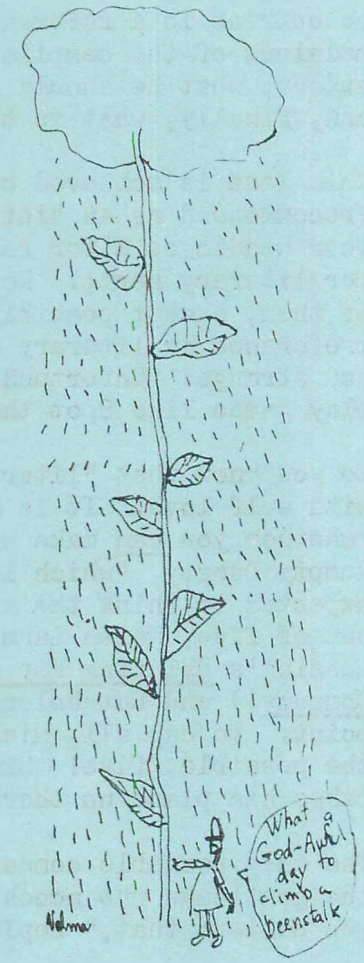
George Turner

The Science Fiction Source Book, edited by David Wingrove; Longman; 320pp; $25 (approximately).

"Source-book. Any work from which an author has "lifted" or borrowed an idea, plot or story. Holinshed's Chronicles was a much used source-book for Elizabethan dramatists."

The definition quoted above is "lifted" and/or borrowed from A Dictionary of Literary Terms (Penguin, 1976), a volume which every critic should possess. If you accept this definition - I don't know of a better one - you will at once discard The Science Fiction Source Book as a ludicrous imposter. Who seeks to lift or borrow an idea from it will come empty away, because the few ideas it has are already second hand. A description of the little monster is difficult to formulate; if it were not

for the thing's pretentious uselessness I would suggest "a source-book of innocent merriment."



There is, as a rule, little gained by reviewing a book which the reviewer regards as useless, but this one deserves notice as a prime example of imposition on an all-too-willing readership by taking irresponsible (a nastier word could be used) advantage of the current boom of sf-related "research" volumes. It is handsomely made, lavish in use of big-name contributors, compendiously illustrated and contains nothing of real use which you will not find better covered in Peter Nicholls's The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. Caveat emptor!

The book opens with a sensible forward by Brian Aldiss in which one lovely sentence touches my usually stoney heart: "... on the other hand elaborate popular films like Blade Runner, choked with weirdo sets and hardware, grounded in dubious morality; and on the other fiction where its writers are either in financial straits or growing rich by plagiarism." I am not in financial straits (more like doldrums) but still close enough to the soup kitchens to feel a glow when, on the other side of the world, someone much more reputable echoes the opinions that have made me outcast and derided by Sydney fandom.

Aldiss follows with a short history of sf, condensing and updating the general line of Billion Year Spree. You either agree with his historiography or you do not, and what it has to do with source material escapes me, aside from some being given passing mention. This is hardly Aldiss's fault; he only produced what was asked of him. (There is also a photograph of him leaning on a tombstone. Unfair symbolism, I think.)

Next comes forty-five pages labelled "The SF Sub-Genres" - fifteen subjects divelled over by Brian Stableford, whose short "Introduction" serves to explain that in science fiction there is room for anything you care to toss into it. As into a garbage tip. The sub-heads, "Man And Machines", "Aliens", "ESP", etc offer possibilities for discussion of sources but these are not taken up. (Strange, because Stableford's knowledge of rare and obscure sf is reputedly encyclopedic.) Instead we are given rapid summaries which any local fan of good reading experience could match, followed by discussion of one "major" work as exemplar of the sub-genre under notice. The Dispossessed is an admirable choice for "Utopias and Dystopias", but common sense rejects More Than Human as seriously representative of "ESP". Purists may blanch at Dune for "Alien Ecologies", while Ballard's mainstream Crash as representative of sf handling of the "Sex and Sexuality" theme is mere crassness.

Then there are twelve essayettes by writers on "The Science Fiction Writer at Work". They include hard common sense from Ursula Le Guin, some unexpectedly evasive nonsense from Tom Disch, some numbing coy Irishness from Ray Bradbury and a number of love-plugs for word-processors. Again, don't blame the writers for doing what was asked of them. But, do writer's muddled ideas about his/her creativity constitute source material? You can find out by trying to make use of it. Please don't write me dejected letters about the results.

The major portion of the book, a hundred and eighty-five pages, is taken up by "Science Fiction Writers; A Consumer's Guide", and this is a curiosity on a grand scale. It is simply a listing of the better known authors with selective reference to some of their publications. In this respect it is far inferior to the Nicholls Encyclopedia or even to the Curtis Smith Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers with its garbled bibliography. The entries have been compiled by twelve critics, all more or less reputable, from the somotimes idiosyncratic Aldiss through solid Roz Kaveney to editor David Wingrove himself.

Nothing wrong with that lot? Possibly not, but the entries are not merely factual as entries in a reference work should be; they are qualified by the personal opinions of the compilers. The reader is told how he should rate the hapless sf author, what he should find in their work, whether he should approve or disapprove and, finally, what is the literary and aesthetic stature of each listee.

This last is achieved by a five-star rating system, of arbitrarily selected works (recommended as an "introduction" to the author in question - or under fire) under four headings: R for readability, C for characterisation, I for idea content and L for literary merit. None of these highly subjective terms is defined and since all of them, except possibly idea content, are unmeasurable matters of personal preference or literary orientation, the mishmash provided by twelve arbiters is rich and strange. Unfortunately these miniature masterpieces are not signed, so we can't play games like Spot the Nitwit, which alone might make the exercise bearable.

Do you know that "literary merit" is? If you say "yes", you're lying or flushed with self love. It is a Humpty-Dumpty phrase. ("The question is", said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things". "The question is", said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all.") What, I wonder, is the reader expected to think the arbiters mean when Lafferty's Fourth Mansion scores four stars out of five, Keith Laumer's Plague of Demons gets three (as do Lem's Solaris, Lessing's Briefing For A Descent Into Hell and Ballard's The Unlimited Dream Company!) and Batchelor's People's Republic of Antarctica is awarded one lousy point. To cap all, Michael Bishop's Transfiguration and No Enemy But Time receive the possible, five! Since there is no higher accolade one must assume that Bishop takes his place up there with Shakespeare and Dickens.

The only possible comment on these goings-on it that of the Duke of Wellington to the gentleman who accosted him in the Strand with, "Mister Smith, I believe!" "If you believe that," replied the Duke, "you'll believe anything."

For the rest, there is a checklist of sf and fantasy magazines which may be of use to bibliophiles, a short history of the magazines which offers a different overall view from Aldiss's and a potted history of sf criticism accompanied by a list of 364 (!) critical publications, indicating that sf criticism is less a vehicle of study than a business for the gulling of literary suckers. The book ends with a short, sharp "Afterword" from Kingsly Amis, who spoils the party by having no great hope for the genre; he thinks Hollywood might do it better. Well, it takes all kinds...

I have said that it is no fault of the writers that this is a useless and suspect book, but I must qualify that by saying that twelve critics with any respect for their calling should have refused the requirement to summarise such abstractions as literary values on a scale of personal opinion and unexplained evaluation. They, of all people, should have known better.

This book is sucker bait. It may even be aesthetically dangerous to the reader still young enough to confuse the opinions of prominent writers with the word of God. Avoid the Source Book like the plague. It is our finest laboratory sample to date of the virus of pseudo-academicism. Stay with the Nicholls Encyclopedia, so far unsurpassed.

* * *

Here's a little something from one among us who has recently been rather inactive in the fannish sphere. Even though he does sell the occasional sf or fantasy book for the dreaded Melvyn Bunns and spend some time holding up the counter at Space Age Books, I'm not sure that anybody would say that qualifies as fan activity. I would be tempted to say that his absence from fanzines has been the result of the same happy virus as that which has attacked Marc Ortlieb and, more recently, Jack Herman. I would say that, but I'm not not so silly as to raise the ire of yet another newly married fan, since there seem to be so many of them around these days.

THE STEVENS REPORT:
THERE'S A LOT OF IT GOING AROUND

Paul Stevens

Leigh Edmonds will do anything to get a column out of me. Last year, in early November 1983 when Kit and I were on our honeymoon, we called in on Canberra to have a look at the place, sneer at the public servants, croggle at the war memorial and to say hello to our friends.

Leigh suggested that I do a series of articles on various Melbourne fans for his fanzine. I thought about it for some time, found out that my typewriter had died, thought about it once more, looked at new typewriters and thought about it some more. By that time Kit and I had been married a year and were back in Canberra on another holiday. I had hoped that Edmonds had forgotten what had been mentioned some time previously. Not him!

"Where's my article?" he asked.

"What article?"

I won't bore you with all the dialogue that passed between us but the end result was me leaving Canberra with an Adler electric portable typewriter (which he had declared surplus to requirements) in the boot of my rented car, and a promise to do his bloody column. I must remember to keep away from Canberra in future.

So my column this time is about Robin Johnson. Not so much about Robin personally but about his getting married and how Kit and I attended the wedding. You see, there's a lot of it going around. Marriage, that is. It seems that lots of people are getting married these days. Even I got married, an event that shocked everyone who knows me, as I looked set for permanent bachelorhood. After that lots of fans started getting married, hence the title for this column. But on with the story...

Back at Easter Robin wandered into Space Age Books and announced to Merv and I that he was going to get married and that the nice lady with him was indeed his intended, Alicia Plowman. I was so shocked by this that I stopped work for the rest of the day (with luck I manage to get shocked at least five times a week and have to stop work... or so Merv claims).

Soon after this Kit and I received an invitation to their wedding which was to be held in Hobart on Thursday, 12 July. We talked it over and decided to attend, if I could get the time off work. It wasn't that hard, Merv only had one heart attack when I asked him for a couple of days off, but I promised on a stack of Analogs to be back the following Monday.

We decided to take a bit of a holiday also and flew down to Hobart on the Thursday morning and hired a car for our four days. Thrifty gave us a Sigma at a good rate and we drove into the hotel in Hobart from the airport. The streets in Hobart are one-way at times and after two tours around the block we got into the hotel carpark.

The wedding was late that afternoon so we changed from our slightly up-market first-class clothes into our really top-of-the-line attending-a-wedding clothes and then wandered down to the church.

Hobart is really a lovely old style town, with old restored buildings and old restored people, and so was the church. With a quick brandy on hand I might have felt the same. The side chapel was where the ceremony took place but the assembled people were all unknown to me except for Mike O'Brien and Peter and Elizabeth Darling. The ceremony was quick and simple and then there were congratulations outside before heading off to Alicia's house for the reception.

It was a good reception. There was lots of champagne and orange juice so we talked and drank champagne, and ate and drank and talked and drank and drank and boy was I

feeling good so I drank some more orange juice with a drop of champagne with it to kill the taste and felt much better so I drank more and sat down and then had to have another drink...

Some time later Kit led me back to our hotel where I laid down and had a little sleep. Tiring, these weddings!

The next day we drove down to Richmond, an historical town not a great distance from Hobart, in order to meet Robin, Alicia, Peter and Elizabeth for lunch. It was a nice drive through interesting country full of sheep and cattle and other livestock, with great lighting effects on far hills and lakes, and stuff like that. Richmond is a very old town that was established back in the early 1800s, and a lot of the older dwellings have been restored to their original condition. Tourism is popular and the place where Robin and Alicia were staying had once been an old mortuary and is now converted into a comfortable cottage. We had lunch in a local pub, The Richmond Arms, complete with wood panelling and an open fire. Very civilised!

With Friday out of the way Kit and I decided to do some driving so we headed off in the direction of Mount Wellington. It has snowed at the top and though the road was closed we were able to drive above the snow line before stopping. There were lots of cars and people around and Kit threw snowballs at me, and hit me in the chops. I took revenge, and war erupted. A lovely view and very cold...

Coming down we headed along the coast towards the DeCastenaux channel and then around back to Hobart. It was a great drive and very scenic - Tasmania is a lovely place and well worth driving around.

* * *

WHAT'S THIS THEN - PART THE SECOND

If you have a memory which is better than mine you will recall that at the beginning of the previous issue I spent a little bit of time chattering on about how I had gone and bought a new typer. As it turned out, that purchase was a fairly good investment because, just for a change, it was possible to read what was printed in the fanzine. Of course the step up to some fancy technology, after the antique which I had used for a couple of issues, took a bit of adjustment, but being a sci-fi fan I'm used to thinking about the future, high technology and that sort of thing. So I didn't take to long to get used to the idea that little metal arms didn't have to fly up and attack the stencil and that it all happened faster than the eye can possibly see. Would you believe that the little plastic petalled arrangement just whizzes around so fast that you can't see it - to do that it's a wonder that it doesn't go close to the speed of light. It must or else you'd be able to see it move. Wouldn't you?

At any rate, even though you can't see it from where you are (at least I hope that it isn't too obvious due to some glaring problem with the format such as half of page four being repeated on page fifteen), Valma and I have gone out and spent a large sum of money on a small computing device. The idea is that if I have this device at my disposal I will manage to get more typing done and this produce more fanzines. (Well, so far I don't know about getting more fanzines done, but the machine seems to have lost me about nine pages which it has cast into the great entropic void which exists somewhere about the surface of a floppy disk, thus making for more typing. Actually I have to admit that it was partly my own fault, and if I were computer literate such losses might not have occurred.)

I am a bit hopeful that this machine will be able to do something about one of the things which has never thrilled me about my fanzines, that being the creative spelling with which I am blessed. Now, instead of spending hours straining my eyes over a stencil, and then only finding the five glaring errors which remained when the first copy came off the Roneo, all I have to do is slip a disk into the machine, press a few buttons and, "lo", everything is put to rights. Of course the spelling is going to be corrected into American, but at least it might be uniform for a

change.

At least that's the theory, I don't know if it works yet. Although we bought the dictionary program at the same time we bought the computer I wasn't able to get it to run. When I took it back to the shop we all discovered that the program disk was just blank. Since that state matches my own abilities it seemed only appropriate. Anyhow they've sent off to Sydney for another disk that can spell, and it should arrive tomorrow. I hope this works. I bet some of you do too.

And, changing the subject once again, just when you thought he'd gone away and it was safe to come out of the bunkers, when things had settled down and you could relax, we present the return of the almost fabulous and legendary Ken Ford; man mountain who, in his own time, bought more good humor to more people than you'd reckon is humanly possible, and who adorned the Magic Puddin Club in its heyday ten years ago... golly, that long ago? Anyhow, he returns.

ADDA FOODEE

Ken Ford

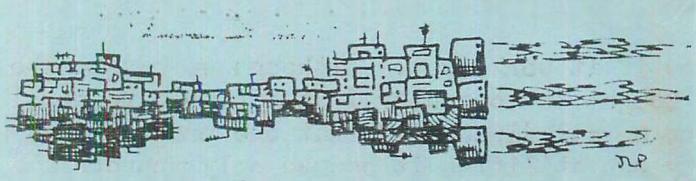
A nose was emptied onto my true-love.
The guy was a Fitzroy supporter
so I punched him in the face with a full can of beer.
It made quite an indentation there.
An old lady, five rows down, heard the ruckus,
came up to put in her boot too!
In the groin.
Then we beat up on the pie-salesboy
because we were hungry.
The match started then, and we
sat on a precocious ten-year-old,
Breaking some minor bones.
Happy due to a quarter-time lead,
we raped a couple of women a few rows back during the break.
More tinnies were needed, so
we fought our way to the bar and stole some.
Youz could only steal two.
I accidentally gashed a fellow who was innocently standing by.
On the way back, I went to the toilet
by pissing on a whole row of guys.
And I left a turd in the middle of one of them's Record
The siren went then.
Rushing back to me seat, so as not to miss a kick,
I used my machete occasionally.
I'd lost my mate in the crowd, but noticing
a leg flying in the air, and a lone kidney sailing -
he was spotted nearby. He joined me.
Three people died.

* * *

CLOSING SHOTS

For the past couple of hours I've been lurking out in the garden doing the weeding. By some stroke of luck I managed to be weeding around where the strawberries are growing like, well, like weeds. The pleasant thing about weeding in that area is that you get the reward for you efforts as you work rather at some later date when whatever form of vegies that you plant there are ready for consumption.

As a result I'm sitting here feeling rather full, perhaps even a little over fed. In fact I have to admit that I'm not feeling too well at all. No, it's not all caused by the strawberries, a lot of it has to do with the fanzine that arrived in the mail today. There are some people who are so good at this fanzine making



business that it makes you sick even to think about it. There should be a law against it. But since there isn't I suppose that I'm going to have to learn to live with it and remark that you are probably lucky that I don't have more space left in which to "gush" about it. Simply write today to: Skel & Cas, 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5NW, ENGLAND for your copy.

* * *

AIR
Turner
Gillespie
Jones
Edmonds
Thyme

CONTENTS

In addition we have some artwork from Brad Foster (page 1), John Packer (pages 16 & 28), Alexis Gilliland (page 14) and Valma Brown (page 23). Thanks all.

* * *

And finally there is the "Case of the Rig Red *A*". The mystery mark appears only on the copies of this fanzine which go to naughty people who have failed to respond to previous issues. If you find that you are cursed by such a mark you might not find out who dun what in following issues, unless you take the handy advice which is printed for your convenience on the first page of this issue. In following issues, who knows where it might be hidden. You could be in deep trouble.