



Number 1

March 1974

R I T B L A T / G R I M N E W S

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BAD SCENE MAN

Things were looking Grim. The whole operation was deeper into the shit than ever before. I was definately getting the feeling I wasn't so much a has-been as a never-was. Then, one grubby day round at Brosnan's Shack, I read the new issue of SIDDHARTHA he'd recieved that day;

"Shit," I said, " I could do up something like this easy."

"Yes," said the host obligingly. I burrowed once again into Williams' patent cri-de-coeur.

"Naturally," I said after a few minutes, "I wouldn't be quite as literate and intelligent as Williams is about it. Or as witty. Or urbane either, come to that. Hmmmm?"

"Well, no-one would expect that of you, Greg," said Brosnan, not looking at me.

Oh, I thought. And naturally enough made a number of silly descisions that ended up causing more trouble than anything else.

GRIM

The gag was, you see, that I'd finally come to terms with the fact that FOULER wasn't likely to come out for the next ten or twelve years at the soonest, and if I didn't want to go totally down the river I'd better pull myself together and do some sharp fanning. This giant breakthrough first took the form of some kind of group fanzine, planned back in the middle part of '73. This was more or less called BUDDY, a reasonable concept on the lines of GANNETSCRAPBOOK, but tidier. Each Ratfan was allocated a certain number of pages, material to be assembled and produced by two editors. This fell right apart because of the two cretins in charge having entirely disparate ideas of what constituted a good fanzine, and what BUDDY should be. The names of these two singleminded fanatical bigots were Pickersgill and Holdstock, and no more need be said about that. After this collapse plans for solo, duo, group fanzines came and went with the regularity of the morning sun. Another fairly advanced idea was RAT, a fanzine nominally under my editorship, but responsible to the group. This hit the shit due to no clear format, leaving behind (like BUDDY and others) nothing more than a feeling of great irritation and about £2 worth of destroyed stencils.

A lot of this failure stems from disparity in basic fannish beliefs and simple non-cooperation;; everything generally ended in a battle of wills over everything from the size of the paper to whether film reviews should be included. In no case was it ever possible to get two functioning editors whose opinions coincided sufficiently to make the enterprise workable - and what with one thing and another a solo-edited group fanzine was unworkable. Seriously, fans, in my opinion fanning is like fucking; it's good fun but you daren't lose sight of the serious objective or you're up shit creek. In this case it was pretty much like two men trying to fuck the same girl without the benefit of knowing there's more than one orifice. Stapled to our mutually incompatible fanzine ideas BUDDY dissolved lacklustrely.

The next big deal was a blurr of renewed interest in FOULER.

This was supposed to be some kind of "new! improved!" FOULER, devised with the specific purpose of engendering the serious discussion of fandom, fans, and fanzines - which was, OK, the purpose of FOULER all along, but that somehow got skipped over for the most part. So as soon as I'd finished tearing up the dozen or so stencils cut for BUDDY or RAT or whatever it was I started in on FOULER EIGHT. And it came along quite well for a change, until one particular piece of material came in.

Quite reasonably, even though (as usual) it pains me much to say it, John Hall was probably the reason for the FOULER EIGHT. What happened was I'd commissioned a column from Rob Holdstock, who as usual took about three months to get down to it. It was a fair piece of publishable work, but the problem was it contained a wickedly accurate, funny, and - to some minds - fairly nasty putdown of John Hall. At this time I was very concerned with keeping group loyalites firm, and I knew that whilst Hall might have taken that kind of thing from anyone else with nothing more than a lot of shouting he would go absolutely berserk with fury to see it come from the typewriter of his sworn enemy. So I immediately called Hall and filled him in on things. His reply was, more or less, "Holdstock is a cunt and if you have any sense you won't even be seen talking to him, much less using his shit in the magazine." Pressed on whether he'd withdraw his support if the Holdstock piece was used Hall said nothing more than 'You are the editor and you know what to do.' He said that very many times. So, for stability I got Holdstock to do a rewrite. And, naturally, of course of course, the promised rewrite never ever did show up, Holdstock even eventually lost the original, and the issue left with a gaping hole which couldn't be properly filled. So that was that.

Which brings things up to the time I read that fucking SIDDHARTHA and decided that the only way out was for us all to produce solo fanzines. That decision caused all hell to break loose in the roundabout apathetic hamfisted way that even the most cataclysmic things happen in fandom. Kettle, having had his material returned from the FOULER file broke out with the impossible, his own fanzine, produced in something less than a week. It had taken him four years - since the halcyon days of POTTAGE - but he did it in the end. That was, however, it. Young Brosnan was already 'famous' for his SCAB, and Li'l Malcolm soon made it big with MAGIC PUDDING, but the Mastermind soon found things hard going. I mean, editing fanzines is OK, re-writing I like, backing someone else's material is all good, but I'm not built to headline a fanzine myself.

But all avenues of escape failed. A fresh attempt to revive FOULER was ruined by Kettle (made miserable by TRUE RAT's failure) becoming unreliable and tending away from fandom in favour of romantic lust in Hampstead. I set aside full-time contributing to other fanzines as a chancy and incidental art at best, and at worst a total bringdown, and in the absence of sense or alternative, there's this. Not what I want, not what I'd like, but a fanzine nonetheless, and it's a terrible thing to be without one. I don't like it much, but I'm committed to it, it's something to stand by and look after and support for as long as reasonable, and even if it fails, well, it's not to be thrown away, better to partition and graft off the best bits and try them elsewhere anew. Keep a little continuity, like, try a bit harder next time. You know, the process, what being a fan's all about, I suppose.

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The secret of publishing a succesful fanzine is in getting out a first issue.

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WHO KNOWS? WHO CARES?

Yes indeed. A sweet little birdy once told me of a fiendish plan by St Fantony crazies to organise a mass vote against fandom Master and goodguy Peter Weston in the current TAFF race, the principle being that something sinister was being held against the man from SPECULATION, and whilst Peter Roberts isn't exactly the spirit of St Fantony incarnate anything was better than Weston. A wierd allegation, which I'd be the first to admit came from a notoriously unreliable source, but a funny old scene anyway. I'm variously assured by other parties that such definately IS/IS NOT the case. Does anyone care to snitch on the plot, or can this be proven fantasy? In any event the bulk of votes are now cast, so it's too late to matter anyway.

Myself, I've got my vote down for Weston, a good kid, a real fan, someone I find personally admirable in many ways.

Next time, Roberts for TAFF, definately.

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"Listen, Roberts, do you think I can get over an air of patient misery well in my fanzine?"

"Well, with a printed cover, yes."

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LIKE, AH, DANCE TO THE MUSIC, MAN. UHH!

Well fans, it don't look like you're going to get lost in that good old rock and roll at Tynecon. Or in sweet soul music, R&B, or even solid old pop either. For although the young giants of the con-com have reinjected the idea of a disco into the con programme it sure doesn't appear to be the kind of things yer average bopper knows and loves - or even the kind of thing us ageing rockers might stamp our pint pots in time to down at the local hostelry. No shit, brothers, as you might well know by now this 'disco'

"will not be a loud mindless noise, but will play what we trust will be relatively intelligent music relatively quietly."

(Tynecon P.R. 3)

I don't know what ghastly vision this gives you, but I see a waste of fairy young singer/songwriters (concerned young people no doubt, as one magazine called them without a shred of satire) or direly boring 'progressive concert-rock performers on the grisly lines of Yes, ELP, and others too tedious to mention. In fact the kind of music a certain 'sensitive' type of person might play sitting quietly at home fondling the cat and - aptly - wanking in time to the synthesized strings. It's not quite party music, simply. Quite apart from the musical snobbery involved a disco is no place for 'intelligent' music. There seem to be forces at play here that would reduce the remaining ballsy vitality of rock to the aural equivalent of a fucking landscape painting. Nice, but nothing to get interested in, maybe.

Actually, I'm inclined to see this as another manifestation of the somewhat weakneed policies of these Tynecon hardmen. No-one really expected them to cut right through the old tediums and put bounce, vitality and speed into everything from the registration desk to the final cataleptic goodbyes, but christ, they are the youngest, most attuned contemporarily con-com for a decade or so and it seemed reasonable to hope they'd slot in a few new things without dithering and halfmeasures. However, this is one step forward and an embarrassed shuffle back, almost

as if rock was something the good fan shouldn't pay too much heed to. (And considering the number of fairy folk freaks in fandom that might well be not as silly a thought as it seems.)

Actually, I'll be big about this and assume the concom are being reticent about their disco intentions to keep in step with the ideals of conventions held by the Archietypal fans, but, fuck, does it really matter if they don't like it? Does it really matter if two or three old failed nuts boycott a con because they fear brain-damage due to a decibel overload? Does it really seem realistic that anyone with half a brain would boycott a con on those grounds anyway. So, fucking hell, why can't these people have the courage of their convictions. I know for a fact there's - in this time if no other - more fannish interest in rock (or at least the acceptance of it as good party music) than ever before. So what's the problem. Either the Tynecon concom are afraid to stand up behind what they think - and if they're doing it in one case they might be doing it in others - or they done the impossible, lost the backbeat.

In both cases they're to be pitied.

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"Hey Roberts, I bought some stencils and ink last night!"

"Oh. What for?"

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PETER ROBERTS - Myth or Master?

As you all know last year I coerced Roberts into wasteing the time between M.A. (Failed) and M.A. (Resit) working round the corner from the Filing Section, thus making it possible for him to join in the wild fannish life in this here fannish graveyard. Naturally enough he's spent most of his time lying on his bed or boiling his roots, and is becoming as rare a bird in Ratfandom circles as the fabled John Piggott.

When he got here he moved about a bit, though, and was hanging about with us enough to have doubt cast on his respectability. Recently, though, he hasn't been quite the social asset we hoped he could have been. He wanders his own esoteric way most of the time, which is OK enuff as most of the time there's nothing much going on, but when something does come up his usual ineffable boredom and disinterest tends to get up peoples' noses a bit. He rarely materializes at Ratfan socials even when he 'intends' to come; he either arrives so late as to make his attendance academic, or falls asleep and doesn't make it at all. Now, I'm aware Ratfan events aren't exactly wipe-out not-to-be-missed whoop-ups, but that's definately as much because some people have a habit of not supporting them as much as anything else.

Not that Roberts is the only social abrogate. Kettle is almost as unreliable, particularly since he found a woman somewhere and not even the urge to snatch a piece of cunt gets him out with his buddies these days; not that it's easy for me to criticise him, myself being the victim of the same involuntary gafia for longer than I care to think of. Rob Holdstock as a 'respectable married man with responsibilities' tends to put all this gang-follishness behind him, though with his writing and scholastic responsibilities he has maybe more reason - maybe.

Fringe henchmen like the Charnock family turn up all too infrequently, much as we'd like to see them more often.

Ratfans sans pareil seem to be Brosnan and recent American addition Rich Coad the Boy Wonder, both usually making it to wherever the scene is at, man. These days I usually get wherever I want to.

But definately it's a social disaster-area. Really, there's only one solid event, a weekly meeting at Rob's, but the principle is that various bar-billiards, drinking, poker, cinema, w.h.y. sessions should spring up spontaneously. With this general disinterest and apathy, those sessions are few and far between. Odd for a group with as much personal friendship as this one has. Anyway, things are more or less boring, people have the preconception that nothing is going to happen/no-one is going to turn up, and so naturally and of course nothing does happen and no-one turns up. It isn't so much - this is the horrible part of it - that what we do is intrinsically boring or stupid (though I often get the impression that Roberts is less than impressed with us on close inspection - the reverse being doubtless true also) but that there are so few doing it at any time.

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"There is no God, William."

"There is no God. It's a bloody life."

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"I WANT OUT! OH GOD, HOW I WANT OUT!"

Dedicated Ratfan watchers may wonder why the name of John Hall doesn't appear in this journal as often as they might expect it to. Well, fans, the fax are that Mr Hall, after a lot of soul-searching and flagellation had decided that all this silly fannish stuff was not quite his box of chocolates, and made serious moves to remove himself from this stultifying fannish compound. For the third, fourth, or fifth time in the last three years. Bored with all the silliness and trivia of talking about premature ejaculation, films, masturbation, sf, anal entry, fanzines, books, fandom, each other, and everything in general Hall decided to quit the Ratfan scene for the rarified atmosphere of the Brunner household, where he would meet people who'd be able to talk to him on his own level and help him in his artistic.....oh shit, sorry, that was the time before last. Sorry fans. Try new para. for what actually happened.

Well what actually occurred is that Hall got himself into a little personal altercation with me (the discussion of which might bring me more trouble than necessary, so I'll leave it for now) and the annual renewal of enmity between us reached an all time high and should with luck hold for several years. Despite having heard from a source not very far from Hall's heart that he had no further use for Ratfans he has often been seen hanging about with Ratfan Masters Kettle and Brosnan. Well. Well.

Hall is also likely to bring out a great new rock fanzine any day now. As soon as he finds a duplicator. The fanzine is only eight months out of date so far.

Hall also dislikes Holdstock with a strychnine virulence.

It's a weird world in fandom.

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John Hall is an abject lesson to every fan.

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WHO DO THESE PEOPLE THINK THEY ARE ANYWAY?

Well, that seemed a lot easier a question just after the Bristol con, in those pretty good days of '73, when I wrote this ;

THE LADS.

Someone at the con asked me just who it was composed Ratfandom, and I didn't answer. Dumbfounded, I suppose. Later the same day someone asked Christine Edwards if she was part of Ratfandom, and after a bit of casting about she said she was, not without a certain sense of pride, I thought. And yes, for one reason or another, she surely is. But why? Is Ratfandom composed of people who just hang around together habitually, or by general geographic location, or by a likemindedness of some especial sort, or what. Like, it might be easy to say OK, Ratfandom is a London outfit, with Hall, Kettle, Brosnan, Holdstock, Edwards, and a few female hangers-on. But what about Ratfan Buddies, like Piggot or Peter Roberts? Maybe they wouldn't want to be called Ratfandom outright but surely they're the kind of people it would be good to include. Also there're several of Gannetfandom (for the moment leaving the unsettling notion that Ratfandom is rapidly taking on the aspect of Gannetfandom's Southern Office) and several others from 'uncommitted' parts of Britain who are all good friends and associates and seem to have some mental communion. So what do ya do.

Most commentators define Ratfandom as a London thing, a local phenomenon, which isn't exactly the deal, as I'd like to see it anyway. After all, the name was originally adopted as a group banner not as a local tag as was the Gannet label. To me Ratfandom is more accurately a religion than a nationality, unconfined by geographical consideration. As far as I see Ratfandom comprises people from all over, almost irrespective of other groups they tend toward. It's a state of mind, basically. More or less, these are those I think are with it;

John Brosnan ; Roy Kettle ; John Hall ; Rob & Shiela Holdstock, Peter Roberts ; Bryn Fortey ; Ian Maule ; Malcolm & Christine Edwards ; Thom Penman ; Jack Marsh ; Graham & Pat Charnock ; John Piggot ; Bob Rickard ; and, of course, Greg Pickersgill.

;; ; ;

Well, for post-con elation that seemed reasonable enough at the time, but looking back, around and ahead these days seem a lot different, and maybe those days weren't like that either. So what now?

The Gannet squad have increased their intensity so much any serious suggestion that any one of them would rather sit down next to Ratfandom has become rather silly. In fact, for one reason or another general Ratfandom contact with Gannets is sparse and poor, though that's not at all to be taken as indication of Gannet lack of inclination or whatever. However, generally with all their super-success in cons and fanzines they're as remote from Ratfandom as Ken Cheslin is in the opposite direction.

Bryn Fortey, con hardman and old-time Buddy, seemed to fade away into a horrific series of trials in the South of Wales and seems to have little inclination towards fanning of any kind.

Piggot seems to have totally vanished in favour of wargaming, something of a tragedy as he was the best new fanwriter of recent years, as well as being a Good Fellow to meet with. He's currently down as definately appearing at Tynecon, but he hasn't shown at anything like a Globe for long months.

John Hall became the subject of some controversy

and to all intents and purposes estranged himself from the group as a whole.

The Edwards', Charnox, Marsh and Rickard were all pretty peripheral people at the best of times, and whilst they haven't by any means made any renouncing gestures they've never been anything like pillars of the community. No slurs or anything, they've got their own things and problems, and in one or two cases are too far removed geographically (even though they all, with the exception of Rickard - who might be appalled to find his name in this company - live in the London area) to have much involvement. Actually, whilst speaking of married people and women generally, it would appear that most of the women have tended to lose whatever interest in fandom they acquire. Indeed, most of them tend to denounce Globe-going and other fannish events as second only to menstruation in their calendar of monthly irritants. This more or less confirms my belief that fanning is nothing to do with women anyway, but there's a different story altogether.

Which, to all intents and purposes, leaves the supposed 'hard core' Ratfans; myself, Brosnan, Kettle and Holdstock. Along with, I suppose, Rich Coad and Peter Roberts - both by accident more than any conscious design. As described elsewhere herein there's a lot lacking in current Ratfan activities; Roberts being seen so little as to make his continued presence in the city a matter for some conjecture. There's a lot lacking in the fabled mental communion bit too, as I hope to make clear in these pages.

Holdstock has his problems, academic and literary as well as being actually married. He tries to keep up fan-contacts with more success than the rest of us, mainly because of his fascination for the prospect of being a professional writer. He's less than somewhat involved in the Ratfandom concept except as a vehicle for having lots of laffs. He seems to see the whole thing as something of a harmless hobby for taking your mind off the vital things in life. Like being married and selling to ANALOG. This seems a nasty dig at him, which it isn't really, as he is more the only thing which holds us together socially that not and truthfully, for all the ways he irritates me in his attitudes to fanning and our group he's a great man.

Kettle, though more inclined to view the group as a potentially good and viable thing, goes his own way. He's very seldom seen these days, even by Rich Coad, who lives in the same house. Kettle's problem is very much close to my heart, it being the classic one of fafia by female. There's nothing like women for screwing your fanning. I know, I was in the same situation for as long as a year, and I'm only just out of it now. Shit, that kind of thing is OK as long as you don't get obsessive about it. Still, he's very much a fan on the underside and it's only a matter of time.

Brosnan, of course, is virtually Ratfan sans pareil, with SCAB and excellent fanzine appearances (often with Tails of Ratfandom) all over. He's also most group oriented, inclined to join in on any social aspect, but entirely against any notion that Ratfandom might be anything more than a group of idiots hanging around together. And that of course is the point to which I've been leading up.

Lunatic it might seem to you, but I'd like to see whatever it is that passes for Ratfandom exceed the strictures of its corporate neuroses, inadequacies, and stupidities to make something greater than the sum of any of the parts. OK, I know that this has echoes of the great commune myth of the sixties (though I admit I've never quite thrown off the attractions of that idea) but there must be some way in which we can accomplish something more than sitting around yelling at each other about that fact that we don't do anything better than nothing. And not

necessarily purely in a fannish environment either, for all the fact that that's a vital part of my life.

Maybe what's required is for people to think of the group first, to ally themselves more with one another, to be less selfish and devote a little more of their consciousness towards a general improvement of our mutual way of life. Not to deny their own veins of achievement at all, merely to ensure that for every pace they might make away from the group-consciousness, they should extend themselves backwards one pace, tunnel in two directions at once.

It's better, at first, to confine this 'thinking' to a purely fannish aspect, but even there nothing functions. Probably I'll unqualifiedly stand by Roy Kettle's assertion that as a group (and 'group' meaning the four people composing hardcore Ratfandom) we can easily match or overrun any comparable group in Britain. Certainly our ideas are always viable, revolutionary, and far-seeing. The fact that they're often put into practice by other people long after we proposed them seems to confirm that. Naturally enough for all the sitting around and talking not a damn thing gets done, and after a while it just becomes something that was talked about once sometime, can't remember when, and lost. I find it hard to see why we can't do it. But it's probably not hard really, it's just that everything else gets in the way and there's no space for any trivia like a fanning project, and surely as shit, when you can't get peoples' heads down around a fanning project which is by 'realistic' definitions a trivial hobby project then how can you get anything that has a more general bearing on the whole life of the people involved even discussed properly. It's nothing more than a general unwillingness to function as a group. It's okay to talk about it, okay to pretend for a while that it's going to be done, but god forbid that anything will be done. That might compromise everyone into ways of thought they'd quite obviously prefer not to explore.

Alright. Leave that for the meantime. More next issue without a doubt. Back to the point, what's Ratfandom? A simple enough question, as most people can see.

Ratfandom is a group of people, varying in size, that appears almost spontaneously at certain social functions. At cons this group is at its largest, swelled by a lot of people who derive the most enjoyment from a con when they're with friends who lounge around disreputably fooling around, getting drunk and generally having fun. At Globes there's another Ratfandom, even though it's mostly the same people. But this time they stand around talking to each other about virtually everything. Ratfandom is entirely a public, social institution, something that doesn't carry over into 'normal' life, just goes more or less dormant again until the next time you need a group of B*U*D*D*I*E*S to have fun with. Lotsa laffs. Big deal.

But, fuckit anyway. Whoever they are they're the best people, whether they recognise themselves or not. They're the ones who find many fans silly people, with trivial sense of humour, lacking in anything approaching genuine friendship as opposed to jolly camaraderie, overconcerned with the more irrelevant aspects of everything. The ones who see most fans as prudish, flauntingly inadequate and overconcerned to be good fellows. The ones who see most fans as too much the same despite their superficial and deliberate attempts to set themselves apart from the 'mundanes'. Ratfans are the best ones, more or less, even though they're a bunch of no-good irresponsible, uncooperative, neurotic, selfish, ignorant, uncommunicative, alienated, estranged and useless bunch of bastards.

Great people.

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THEY AIN'T GONNA CATCH THE MIDNIGHT RAMBLER OF HEARTBREAK HOTEL

Somehow things started funny. It's like this,kids; one thing for me is Important and that's Fandom. Truly,there are many things in my life,maybe including most of those which most people would assume to be Really Important,which I would denigrate,desert and divest myself of long before I'd shuck off my fannish aspects. Quite seriously,my year revolves around the conventions,as much as the weeks pass better for the receipt of fanzines,the months' high points are Globes and fanmeetings (for all their usual lethargic tediums). Quite probably I spend more time meditating my fandom in searching and introspective fashion than I do contemplating any other thing. Shit,there's no doubt about it,I worry about my fannish world. I work hard at it when I can,and when I can't I fret about what I'm not doing, why I'm not doing it,and how I can get myself together. I'm not,I think, some nut retreating from 'Real Life'; I deal with all that business in varying ways and levels of success,but I never lose sight of the fact that for me Fandom is the Main Line.

All of which sounds crazy,no doubt,but the point is that when I got into a lot of personal shit the Thursday before the last Novacon I found myself steeped in combat and recrimination almost to the point of cold murder;dulled,miserable,tired,a rugged time resulting in the first occasion ever I've not been crazed with glee on my way to a con. Which made the Friday a bitter day,the trip to Birmingham a sickly one,the pace tiring. I went to bed at midnight. No wonder Gray Boak thought I had a bad con.

Saturday started with a nice flash of promise,so I pulled myself together with the realisation that if I fucked up this one it was six months until the next opportunity. Turned out to be the most enjoyable con out of the nine I've been to so far. Ain't fandom strange.

IF IT HAD BEEN ANY BETTER WE'D HAVE BEEN IN TROUBLE, SAID HAZEL.

Typically enough there was a convention programme. Not that I saw most of it - I think,I have an idea I might have,but offhand I can't recall much of it. I recall our lad Robert showing off in front of his young wife Sheila on the Hugo Winners panel ('and didn't he do well for a Ratfan cretin - only one heart-stopping moment of incomprehensible babbling babbly). Few more good dsales and we might have a Real Writer in the gang. If he doesn't, ah,move on to better things..

I recall Hazel Reynolds' opening speech for the part about people's first con being lonely and traumatic,and he plea to the old and tired types to shepherd a lost lamb or two. (It made me cast back to Novacon 1 where little lost Reynolds was shepherded to within an inch of the fold by a wellknown fannish roughneck.

I recall Ben Bulmer's speech almost lost him a number of friends.

I recall Keith Walker's talk on fanzines,badly placed at the tired end of the con. Not quite as doltish as I'd expected from one of Britain's most follish fans,but strangely crazed nevertheless. I admit to sharing his facination with British fanzines of the sixties, but out of historical interest and fannish perspective rather than for any 'quality' they possess. Walker's criteria didn't seem to have a lot to do with the duplicated word in any event;most of his ravings were directed at how 'good','imaginative' or 'interesting' the artwork and layout was. Not quite my approach to fandom,or many other people's I suspect. Why was this fellow there at all?

I kept waiting for Walker to pull out a copy of FOULER and exalt it's artistic endeavour, but he never did. Pity.

Actually, the Reynolds comment at the head of this para refers to the one film they did finally manage to get from some local pornographer. I didn't see it, but I heard that it was better than COCKSUCKERS OF 61 CYGNI C.

NO MANY PLACES,

are there, where you pay to be insulted outside of con hotels. Not that there was much combat this time other than with some lackey who caused a bit of unrest by striding into the residents bar and telling lounging fans in sharp tones that they'd better not mess the place up as it had just been cleaned. Cunt, he was.

Bar staff had a bit of strife though. The problem as usual was tipping, and fans being what they are had done little of it. Now, I realise there's often an unofficial collection at the end for the barkeeps, but surely it would be better for the conom to grease the skids a bit by actually giving the bartenders money as an official sweetener, with a promise of a bit more at the end if the service was kept up as long as needed. Saves a bit of the shouting of odds and early bar closing that often causes offence, as they say.

GREG PICKERSGILL IS CLINICALLY INSANE

Of course the basic point of a con for a good fan is socialising, getting to meet the people you wouldn't ordinarily get a chance to see. Which sounds funny coming from me, to some ears, as I'm generally put down as the most unsocial Ratfan of them all, which I suppose I am if you take Peter Roberts, or the MaD Group or Holdstock as the yardstick. These people seem to mingle well, talk to anyone, they're almost social automatons, they've got the right script, they Get On Well In Company. Not my thing, man. Myself, I have about a dozen people I really look forward to seeing at cons and elsewhere. People I'm genuinely overjoyed to see, like Bob Rickard, the Edwards' and Charnox, some others. Then there's the sort of 'good friends', people who come and go and are OK in all ways, and that's good enough, I suppose. Then there's the rest, the ones I find uninteresting and uninterested. Lots of the Big Name Fans, something in Fandom, hot shit people I find uninspired, and usually as totally disinterested in me as I am in them. Not that I'd walk away or be outright offensive if they spoke to me, but simply I can't be bothered to start it myself. Maybe one or other is the lower for this, though more likely neither.

Though at Novacon I did make an attempt to talk more to people I'd been somewhat estranged from previously, to be a bit more aware and receptive to people I'd found interesting without being communicative with. And it worked somewhat too. Peter Weston (in a moment of boredom, I suspect) actually sought me out for conversation and left me with the feeling he may well be the Master of Fandom after all. Tony Walsh seemed to lose his quoted-above Chestercan conviction a little after long and agreeable talks. Ian Maule and Henry Pijohn showed up as handsome buddies, Simone Walsh was good for a laugh as always, Gray Boak refused to see sense about a 'new', 'rival' British apa despite a lot of shouting. Actually quite a lot happened, but it'll probably happen pretty much the same at the next con. And sure as shit I'm looking forward to it.

Only five weeks to go.

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oooooooo

T H E M A N Y D E P T H S O F

T H O M P E N M A N
.....

1.

He waited, huddled over his typewriter, for inspiration to strike like the macroscopic hand of some cosmogenetic Krishna. Waiting for burnt ebon shafts to penetrate deep like some fiery wounds in a seared sky. He waited throughout long over written paragraphs, empty of content and full of meaningless prose.

2.

One Sunday night Thom Penman and Ritchie Smith were once more at my house. The conversation had, as usual, gotten very personal...

"You fucking stupid bastard Williams!" screeched Thom. "You can't see anything that 's in front of your fucking nose!"

Thom has a very deep complex about something he won't tell anyone about.

"Is it because you're frightened of women?" I said.

"You're confusing symptom with cause!"

"I'm his best friend and even I don't know what he's talking about," said Ritchie exasperatedly.

"You're thick, the bloody pair of you!"

"Are you frightened of being left on the shelf?"

"Oh Jesus!" He paced up and down. "It's so bloody obvious, it ought to be apparent to even Mauler!"

"Then tell us what it is."

"If you can't work it out, I'm not going to tell you!"

3.

Thom bought a sitar for £50.

He didn't know what a chord was.

He thought you could tune it like a guitar.

Thom hasn't mentioned his sitar in months.

4.

"Have you been talking about me?" is Thom's habitual question when he arrives at the Gannet, and he always looks disappointed when we say no.

4.

"Ace Doubles!" said Thom talking through his nose, his scorn cutting through the fug of his cigar smoke. "Ace Doubles! Anyone could write one of those. Hell, Goblin, you could do it easily."

"I know, rosebud," I replied, stroking his knee.

"Fuckoff, there's people watching! Anyway, you could write one easily. I could churn one out in a couple of months without any trouble!"

"Let's go for a drink," I said.
"I can't afford it, man," said Thom.

"I've got no money."

"Okay, I'll buy you a drink."
On the way to the pub we passed an

off-licence.

"Just a second," said Thom, and we
went in. He bought six packets of Hamlet cigars.
Later, drinking his free beer, he said;
"Well, it's priorities, isn't it?"

6.

"Best fanwriter? F.G. Smallmount, of

course. I mean, obviously..."

7.

"I'm sure Pickersgill and Kettle hate me."

:::::IAN WILLIAMS:::::

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THE GODFOULER STRIKES

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The doors of the Globe were flung open and The GodFouler swept in, flanked by Babyface Leroy (The Nose) Ramino, and Little Johnny (Bad Fairy) Brosanno. With a sneer the GodFouler propped himself up at his favourite position at the bar and prepared to deal with those snivelling fans who desired his favour. The first was a bland, balding man in his late forties, dressed in a war-surplus flying suit and with a white cravat (the letter 'W' prominent in one corner) knotted around his neck. He was Grey (Ginger) Boak. Approaching the GodFouler nervously, his head bowed and hands scraping together, he snuffled and awaited his audience.

"Yass?" said the GodFouler.

"It was Holdstock. Rob (Good Ol' Rob) Holdstock."

"Yass?"

"He poisoned Finney against me. I was getting on well with her when she suddenly dropped me. Said I was wishy-washy. Holdstock obviously told lies about me."

"The way I heard it," said Babyface with a sneer, "you once took her out for a hamburger." The Bad Fairy sniggered.

"But she was mad about me! Our knees touched twice under the table! It was love, I tell you! Love!" Boak's voice rose to a scream as he collapsed sobbing to the floor. "Help me, GodFouler," he moaned as he licked the GodFouler's boots. "Will you, please!"

"Yass."

+

Morning at the Holdstock household. Robert awoke to find a large, bloody, severed prick lying on the pillow next to face. Horrified he recoiled with a scream. Then he screamed again.

It was his own prick.

The GodFouler had struck again.

:::::JOHN BROSAN:::::

GRUNTS FROM THE STYE
+ + + + + + + + + + +

I dislike the current phrase, to do one's thing, it smacks of onanism, and in fandom to-day there is too much doing one's thing and not enough thought for others. In days past it was nice to turn out a well-produced and thought-out fanzine and get letters full of serious and constructive criticism, such as how to avoid imperfections in duplicating and whether phrases were grammatically correct, and to slap you down hard if you used words not socially acceptable. I feel that to-day however fandom's publishing work has become an Augean stables and it is high time it was put in order and cleaned up. I suggest a sort of code of conduct to which fanzine producers should subscribe. Anyone not following the code should have one chance to redeem themselves and thereafter their zines should be blacked and destroyed unread.

The first item of the code is standardisation of format size. This is difficult at present as the metric paper sizes are gradually being used and until these are commonly available no hard and fast rules can be given. However a committee of senior zine editors, those for instance who have been publishing for, say, four or five years, should convene and issue a rule regarding format size, which should be binding. The virtue of this is that filing and OMPA mailings would be thereby facilitated, also some arrangements for bulk buying might be made with financial saving.

The next item is standardisation of numbering pages and internal arrangements, such as contents on the inner side of the cover along with the editorial name and address, editorial to start on the opposite page, letters and fanzine reviews to be at the rear of the magazine and so forth. Pages should be legibly numbered say in the top right hand corner, and it is not inconceivable that each faned should be issued with an approval certificate of some kind, to show that his zine complies with the accepted standards.

Next, though I am against censorship in any shape or form, I feel that some control over the writing of articles should be exercised. There is no excuse these days for bad grammar, slipshod sentence construction, and last of all vulgarisms which are put in articles not for any effect but merely as personal bravado. Typing errors being overlooked is debatable. It is easy to correct a stencil one agrees but fanzine editors may be pressed for time and as such an error may slip through. However it is quite reasonable to set an upper limit of typing errors per issue and these being exceeded would admit of the editor being censured.

Lastly, as I said, I am against censorship, but articles that deal with matters outside the usual bounds of reasonable comment or discussion in a manner calculated to bring derision upon those, who, by our elected choice are set in authority over us should be banned. Good changes in society are never made by rabble-rousing, but by conscientious working into a position of control. In other words don't moan about the rain, get busy and build an umbrella or shelter.

:::::ALAN BURNS:::::

WEDNESDAYS WERE ALSO VERY BAD

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Sort of pale images of himself. By no means exact replicas, but the differences were not exaggerated enough to be immediately obvious. It was like several dusty mirrors with the smallest of flaws. A second's lapse in concentration on the part of the artist. A flyspeck on the Xerox.

Gerson could see them but no-one else could it seems. He made no attempt to rationalize his multiple state nor the factor in it that on occasion made him one of his own images. People would occasionally talk to another Gerson and ignore him, even transferring their attention in the middle of a conversation. Gerson himself refrained from most contact with the others. They were unintentionally boring when he did talk to them, unless he found the slight differences that did in fact exist. They weren't really in the way, and he had a feeling he wouldn't have been able to do much about it even if they were, as he wasn't positive that he was in fact the original. It was a pleasant fantasy to see himself as the central figure, but he was fairly certain all the others thought the same thing. Fair enough. They weren't bad fellows. They had similar tastes to his own, so they always managed to steal enough of everything from supermarkets or whaveter; totally undetected as long as the original Gerson behaved legally. Everything progressed normally until it came to a time when something came up that there was only one of.

Michelle.

One by one they shared her.

One by one they helped themselves to her.

One by one they fell in love and became

insanely jealous of each other.

It was a bad time.

:::::LEROY KETTLE:::::

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MEANWHILE, BACK IN GILBERT'S AGE

I do not like these dirty rhymes
They are a sign of modern times.
We used to "make meat pies", not screw,
We didn't shit, we "did poo-poo".
We'd never piss or take a leak,
We'd merely "let the old man speak".
And when it came to masturbation,
We "caught a train outside the station".
We took a euphemistic pride
In never saying what we could hide.
The practice, I confess, soon went,
When no-one knew what anyone meant.
And though I disagree with it,
There's no mistake when I say "Shit!"

:::::LEROY KETTLE:::::

f a n z i n e

r e v i e w s

E Y E B A L L

OK. Old readers start here. It's the old EYEBALL again. Richly applauded during its life, not especially missed during its demise (where oh where was that letter from Peter Wetson saying 'where oh where is that column written intelligently and perceptively by Master fanzine reviewer Greg Pickersgill?').

Anyway, back simply because I rather like doing fanzine reviews and don't especially want to do them full time for another fanzine even if no-one asked me to. Not that there's a lot of need for another fanzine column these days, what with every other fan doing a review section. And not just manky old Haverings either, but often class stuff. Piggott, Williams and Edwards have recently added their names to Master fanzine reviewer rolls alongside oldtimers like Boak and Roberts, so there's not a lot of need for me. Maybe I ought to slip casually aside content to be one of the precursors of the current school of hard-faced reviewing and not issue new material to be judged unfavourably alongside current reviewers. Maybe I would if I had any sense, but as usual ego wins in the end as it does in the best of all fanning. EYEBALL rolls.

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TRUE RAT 1 ; from LEROY KETTLE, 74 Eleanor Road, London E.8

SCAB 1 - 5 ; from JOHN BROSNAN, Flat 1, 62 Elsham Road, London W.14

God it's a funny sensation looking at these two manifestations of Ratfan egocentricity and trying to figure something of any depth to say about them. In fact saying anything like that about either of these Ace fanzines is not only impossible but pernicious.

Actually, there's not a lot of point in discussing SCAB as so few copies actually reach fandom at large, but it does have a lot of relevance to what has become known in local circles as 'The Real Idiot Debacle' - the almost total and entire failure of TRUE RAT in the usual fannish terms. What happened, you see, to this Kettle fanzine, the one he's been trying to get out ever since those wierd days of Coventry in '69 and oddly titled fanzines like POTTAGE and GOLLYWOG, A MAGAZINE OF LEROY KETTLE, is that of about sixty copies sent out only five letters came back. Bad scene, as we say round here. Not exactly fannish success, especially considering he's had virtually no response in any other accepted way, such as trades, reviews, or anything. Quite a lot of personal spoken comment, ok, (that's the big disadvantage of living close to your key readership) but that's not a lot of good in the files; is it.

Well, fuck it, it's not easy to see why the response wasn't exactly weighting down the mailman on his drear route through the Eleanor Gardens tenements. Simply there was nothing to comment on. It was all fall-about comedy, right through, unremmitting as a machinegun but not as

effective, no way. In fact, it's true what Malcolm Edwards has been known to say, too much Kettle is definately too much Kettle. There's a time when all the histrionics ought to stop, and unfortunately, although he knows it well enuff himself, Mr Kettle never quite finds himself in a position to pull the plug. Naturally and all, I find Kettle without a doubt the most entertaining fanwriter over the whole field of fannish writing there is. There are those better at specific things, but his is a multiplicity of little talents rather than one large one. I found this fanzine totally readable, the events realistically depicted (Kettle being one of the few fans with the Touch of fanwriting, the ability to describe actual events with a realistic tinge of fantasy that makes them and the characters both genuine and larger than life) and the whole thing a general delite to the world. The fragment-of-the-longest-con-report-ever-written was Just Like It Really Happened (to all intents and purposes) as was the Ratfandom party report. The satire on fannish poetic endeavour quite staggering in its accuracy of style and intent and needle-sharp in its characterization of fannish poets from Ritchie Smith to Charles Platt. The 'Truconfessions' of Lisa Conesa showed the results of many hours spent trying to set up a hackwork factory in emulation of such literay giants as Christopher M. Priest and Graham Charnock. And so and so and so on and on and on.

Which brings us to the problem of what you can say about a fanzine like this, other than 'far out, innit funny.' Perceptive readers will have noticed this problem already has the present Master reviewer in its grip, and will also be the first to loudly shout 'Fuck all'. And more or less they're right, and honestly, who's gonna bring out a sixteen page fanzine for five locs?

Which is SCAB's big deal, as it's a crummy (though in fact not usually as crummy as TRUE RAT in production) four pager entirely obsessed with Ratfandom and other London phenomenons as seen by John Brosnan. Funny as hell, and most of it true. It's advantage is it can be knocked out with no effort and little money, and get one exactly the same level of praise as that accorded a larger, similar, device. Which isn't to say Brosnan is generally as funny a writer as Kettle; over the short haul maybe, but in the longer material he tends to get a little loose, and has something of a tendency towards irrelevant nastiness.

However. More or less factual. SCAB clocks out roughly monthly, and since the last TRUE RAT in September '73 there's been little hope of a new one. Pity, really. And what more can you say?

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MAGIC PUDDING 1 ; from MALCOLM EDWARDS, 19 Ranmoor Gardens, Harrow,
Middlesex HA1 1UQ

Now, this is Class, kids. This is Class. A fine and near perfect example of the almost lost art of the personalzine from someone who many people thought was nothing more than a sf creep hanging round with big name pros in order to get himself big-deal assignments writing asshole blurbs for Gollancz sf potboilers and £40 checks for scurrying up fanzine reviews for the execrable SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY. But be big brothers, put all that aside and see that this man's a real fan - as if we didn't know from his superbly fannish-tinged editorials in VECTOR and (wayback) Good Old QUICKSILVER.

Produced as a means to egoboo this works splendidly, bringing in virtually every facet of Mal's life; home fannish, sf fan, convention committe member. Beautifully written, very fluid, conversational without being colloquial, almost the written man-

ifestation of a pseudly little sanctimonious bourgeois with a house in the country a dog and a wife (loving). But, honest kids, he's a real Buddy and a great writer to boot.

Simply, I find it incredible that someone can range over such a varied collection of subjects and treat them all with respect (or, more to the point, with such a finely judged apportioning of respect) and endow them with such interest as Malcolm does. Musings on records, fanning, conventions, sloshing boiling water of heaps of festering maggots, and Peter Presford are all made to spring alive and vibrant by Mal's scintillating Olivetti 32. Having seen many examples of the 'art' of the personalzine I can assure you this is head and shoulders above the bulk of them, and is substantially better than virtually all fanwriting in this country at present. Nothing more than limitation of subject stands between Malcolm and the highest accolades of fanwriting. No shit, this is a fluency of expression rarely seen in these sub-literate days. This is an incisiveness - amply demonstrated here in Malcolm's fanzine criticism which has all the depth of consideration he accords to his 'real writing' about 'literature' - that puts most fannish work to shame as cack-handed muddle-headed drivel. It's a testament to my own inability that I can't - as Malcolm would be able to - extract samples or otherwise demonstrate the truth of my claims. All there is to say is try to get hold of a copy of this, though there aren't many about. If you do you're a lucky man, and if you don't you've missed some of the best fanwriting of 1973.

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CYNIC 6 ; from GRAHAM BOAK, 6 Hawks Road, Kingston-upon-Thames,
Surrey 1KT 3 EG

Kids, I'd lately begun to worry about Mr Boak. I'd begun to see him take on the mantle of an old and tired man, rapidly receding into premature middle-age with all the stultification of thought word and deed that that portends for the average fan. Indeed, in personal confrontations I'd been more than a little impatient with him, tending more and more to discard him without thinking; reacting, like, without any original action other than suspicion of decay. But I were wrong indeed, and was proven so by the old Superfan himself who quietly and without fuss produced this, easily and breathtakingly the best all-round fanzine of 1973.

Actually, I'd been so put-off by Boak I greeted this with no enthusiasm after its year-long nonappearance, and only a hint by Peter Roberts that I was talked of inside brought me to cracking its pages; inside was a fine fanzine, entirely to the point, totally readable from cover to cover as a unit, free from the superfluous and superficial bullshit saddling down the only two other fanzines with any claims to excellence in '73 - BLUNT & ZIMRI.

The only bad thing is the cover, a Dave Rowe atrocity. As usual he seems to be consciously striving after an original and distinctive style, and, almost as usual, succeeding in nothing more than hard-edged drawings almost robotic in execution as well as aspect. A terrible cover for such a fine fanzine, and a regrettable lapse of taste by Boak who seemed to let such trivia as Silly Animal fandom cloud his otherwise sound editorial taste.

The only real article within is Jim Linwood's piece on the NOVA Award, and indeed FOULER arch-enemy Linwood does a fine resume of the meaning and mechanism of the award, as well as doing a fine question and answer piece on the more contentious aspects of it. More or less he convinces me that the award as it stands is valid and

workable, and I was previously one of its greatest opponents in its present form. I'd still like to see it expanded to cover individual facets of fannish achievement, such as Best Writer, Artist, etc, but I'm not unwilling to concede that that may be somewhat unwieldy. Though something like the CHECKPOINT Fan Poll should be conducted on a larger and more exhaustive scale.

The bulk of the fanzine is Boak's own writing. Whilst he hasn't quite got the actual Creative Spark of Malcolm Edwards he's without a doubt the best writer when talking about fans, fanning, and fandom itself. Maybe it's because fandom seems to be something more than a transient phase with Boak (as it appears to be with Wlan Williams), or merely an interesting adjunct to his main sphere of interest (as it seems with Edwards), but to Boak it's the Real Thing. Something more than rubbish, definately. I've lost count of the number of telling and practical points made by Boak in these pages; all of them about fans and fandom, no wandering or irrelevance. Level, controlled, literate, no great excess of style or emotion or lunacy, all solid taking care of business. It's a great thing to see a man take his fanning seriously.

And the remainder, of course, is the letter-column. Oddly controlled by fringe fans, but easy and interesting for all that. Like Boak's writing there's no excess of anything, but it somehow doesn't demean this fanzine into bland tedium the way it would EGG for instance. There are some fanzines which by simple virtue of their total commitment can make off with the laurels without any spectacle or flourishing.

All this fanzine lacks is frequency.

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SIDDHARTHA 3 ; from IAN WILLIAMS, 6 Greta Terrace, Chester Road,
Sunderland, Co. Durham SR4 7 RD

There's something bloody repellent about this fanzine. Maybe it's because the little cunt had the gall to write "This is the last ish you'll get unless you do something that impinges on my fan life" on the copy he finally got round to sending me, or whether the format of this magazine (this one, dolts!) has set me up in unwanted competition with SIDDHARTHA, but there's something I don't entirely like going on here.

No doubt, Williams is a good writer. I mean, he's won the CHECKPOINT Fan Poll and all that. Fluent, he expresses himself well and precisely. He's sincere, meaningful, soul-searching, introspective, outgoing, even kind of fannish sometimes. But fuck it, I think this is a lot of conceited bullshit and it all truth it pisses me off more than somewhat. It's like watching someone flashing 'his cock' in a sort of 'looka me I can show everybody something' spate, and shit, so what if it's longer than everyone else's, the whole thing has been a bit ludicrous and probably embarrassing also.

All this is too sincere, meaningful, honest, and all that. It's like some kind of intellectual game, some crummy fucking mental purge trip. A little game game of playing fannish and being John the Revelator and being honest (man) and all that shit and I begin to wonder.

OK. I'm fully aware that once you start to look askance at the 'personal' style of fanning all kinds of doubts and shames are going to be dragged out. How should anyone be expected to take what I'm writing in this fanzine seriously if they can't also be

reasonably expected to accord much the same open eyes to SIDDHARTHA? Why should they care? This is a line of thinking which, if taken too far, would throw the whole concept of fanning right away, so I'll not pursue too closely, but instead try to see what it is about this particular aspect of fanwriting there is that turns me off.

And, of course, in my simple little fashion all I can contribute is what I've already said. That Williams is too blatant about everything. Not necessarily over-emotional, more to the point cold and clinical about his formal overemotionality. This writing isn't rubbish; it's got all the components of good fannish work - personal involvement, references to well-known people and events and things, everything you need - but it's all kind of mechanical. Which is the absolute kiss of death for anything like a personalzine, which is what this aspires to be.

Christ, I dunno. This is all perfectly readable when you shut your brain off, but I always come away with the feeling that I've somehow been trapped into watching someone masturbating. All I can say is that I hope this feeling isn't envy. I really do.

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MALFUNCTION 4 ; both from PETER PRESFORD, 10 Dalkeith Road, South Reddish,
MADCAP 3 Stockport, SK5 7EY

Ya know kids, it's a hard thing to admit that there might be an up and coming fanzine which can take over the essential mantle of FOULER and maybe even become a kind of focal point of fandom - but it's an even harder thing to do when the editor of this likely fanzine must be revealed as one Peter E. Presford, hitherto known only as the True Illiterate of Fandom (since the departure of Ken Eadie and Audrey Walton at least) and also the publisher of the fanzine with the most misplaced sense of literature and culture this side of VIRIDIANA. However, much as PEP may be sneered at for his sad lack of the fundamentals of written English and his pitiable faith in 'poetry' that lacks even the risible qualities of the output of William MacGonagle, he is to all intents and purposes producing a fanzine which just about could become a major fannish force. Despite the fact he claims it to be a repository for all the 'crud' MADCAP is too good to print MALFUNCTION is in fact one of the more entertaining and alive British fanzines. Not at all the best, as Presford's total lack of critical faculties allows far too many sillinesses, patently outplayed jests, flat quips and outright cretinacy to creep in unstopped. But, and this is it, moving through the shit you'll find a real irreverence, a wild capability for tilting at various fannish windmills - irrespective of the rights, wrongs, facts or fictions of whatever the issue is - and, dammit all, genuine evidence of true interest in fandom and some concern as to its future.

Seriously, fokes. I read this fanzine eight or ten times right through when I first got it. I admit it was a pretty boring afternoon at work, but shit, I've gone through it many times since and it's still a nice one. I haven't seen such potential in years, and I can hardly wait to see how Presford goes about wasting it. Either he'll sink all his time and energy into the miserable MADCAP, or he'll get the wrong end of reality and carry on with his present "crud for crud's sake" tack.

The hell of it is that the rest of fandom isn't quite in the mood to take up this interesting challenge. People are too ready to dismiss Presford as a harmless dolt and his fanzine as irrelevant bin-lining. LoCs are a rare event in MALFUNCTION, and actual

articles by anyone other than the prime perpetrator are as rare as free cunts at a con. Pity.

Anyway, maybe he doesn't want to be the editor of the FOULER of the midseventies - and I for one wouldn't blame him if he declined that doubtful privilege. Maybe there isn't a need for one - though it seems to me that in a remarkably short time this 'new revived refurbished and revolutionary' fandom of ours has erected a startling number of its own idols, which to my mind have more or less the same proportion of clay as any that recent attempts were made to remove. Most fanzines these days seem to have a place in them where fandom is looked at askance, and people today seem to have greater readiness to be nasty in just cause than in previous times. So all that taken for granted there might not be any reason for a solitary stonefisted attempt to crack whatever facades fandom erects. In all truth I'd love to see one, though, but for warped and twisted reasons (permutations of things in this paragraph) most fans don't seem to want to get behind it in the way they did those many years ago with FOULER. Not that that'll stop Presford if he wants to do it, as any man who'll carry on MADCAP in the face of such overwhelming scorn can do anything.

Ah, MADCAP. A horrific fanzine. All the stupid pretensions of ISEULT, WADEZINE, FREE ORBIT, VIRIDIANA, MACROCOSM, and every other 'literary' fanzine you've ever seen all bodged into one icky mass, presided over by a pair of lackwits, at least one of whom is old enough not to be so idealistic.

I find it hard to believe that Presford and Peter Colley (coeditor of this rubbish) believe they have the right to continue publishing this shit. Damn it, it's one thing to think you're a poet, every sensitive little punk thinks that sometime, but at least try to get some sense off quality or self-criticism before smearing your work all over the fanzine. Jesus Christ, how many fans give a good goddam about poetry anyway, and how many of them want to see it in fanzines.

Not that this is totally a poetry mag; just that Presford's staunch defence of his rights to publish it - he almost makes it sound as though he's providing a public service by printing the stuff, whilst in fact the service would be best provided by rejecting it - colours the whole thing. Fiction fanzines are good when handled right; MAC was more or less excellent (MADCAP does share in some measure MAC's good appearance) for being edited like a prozine; but it seems that for MADCAP the only criterion is naive faith and conviction and starry-eyed aspiration, and silly old things like sense, good writing, perception and originality play no part at all.

Put it this way; all the poetry is derivative, shallow, simple in treatment, the language obvious, the effect odious; all the fiction is short, pointless, unfunny, unoriginal. The same fanzine stories you've read a hundred times before. The articles and book reviews and record reviews are as boring and monotonous as all articles which aren't based on personal experience and offer something other than that which can be readily found in any printed text always are. Aw fuck it, Presford. Pack it in.

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Some fans may be delighted to learn that a guest EYEBALL appears in ZIMRI 6, out around Eastercon time. Reviewed will be ISEULT, LURK, QWERTYUIOP, BATON PILOTE, LES SPINGE, all else that appears in time.

a newszine for British Fandom
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AND THE BIG NEWS THIS ISSUE

is that Peter James Roberts intends to close down production of CHECKPOINT is the very near future. This is due to general disenchantment with producing a newszine without any news and a desire to concentrate more on a monthly EGG. CHECKPOINT should continue until issue 50 - which was sheduled to appear around Eastercon time with the results of the 1974 CHECKPOINT Fan Poll, but as Roberts has been going through a non-fanning phase at the moment (quite apart from grappling with the problem of producing a fanzine without a typewriter) this schedule has been a little disrupted. However, whenever it happens CHECKPOINT is definately to close, and GRIM NEWS is now available in its place. Any news, information, general gossip about British fandom should be sent in to the address given on RITBLAT's credit page.

FANZINE SHIT

Fans with some appreciation of quality will be delighted to hear that Graham Charnock is seriously contemplating renewing his fanzine publishing activities. After a lot of persuasion he has finally come around to admitting he'd like to get a fanzine out again, and as his amazin' wife Pat seems equally interested something might appear sometime. Nice one. Charnock was, as you should know, a Master of Fandom some years ago, primarily for his excellent fanzine PHILE. Rob Holdstock, having finished his Gollancz SF novel competition entry is now busy finding excuses not to issue MACROCOSM FOUR two years late. Roy Kettle's TRUE RAT seems to have disappeared altogether, victim of non-response.

SILLY PEOPLE

The first ROMPA Mailing appeared in the first week of February, carrying material by Rob Jackson, Ian Maule, Ian Williams, Keith Walker, Gray Boak, Peter RPresford and Lisa Conesa (all British); Brian Lombard and Nick Shears (South Africa); and Frank Balazs (USA). Also listed as members are Ian Butterworth, John Hall, John Piggot, Greg Pickersgill (Britain); Rune Forsgren (Sweden); and Chris Hulse (USA). The mailing totalled 72 pages, and in my opinion wasn't a very good start to what strikes me as a cretinous idea from the beginning. Info on ROMPA - the supposed 'Rival' to OMPA - from Ian Maule, 13 Weardale Avenue, Forest Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 9NT.

ALIEN INFLUENCES

The appalling NEL tax-write-off SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY has begun to wreak its effect on fandom. Following a notice in the first issue (which appeared in the first week of February) the February Globe meeting was overrun with a peculiar mixture of drunken cretins and sf freaks (who were not disappointed as John Brunner showed up from the Depths of Devon to prove to them science fiction writers really are other than human after all). The second issue of the magazine carried a listing of fanzines, including SPECULATION, ZIMRI, and CHECKPOINT, with the injunction that anyone interested in science fiction might like to see copies.

As a result Peter Roberts has recieved several letters, some of which are not as ridden by dullardry as one might expect. Roberts has concluded that there might be potential fannish fare lurking within the ranks of these anonymous applicants, and favours a plan of some form of subtle indoctrination. He intends to compile a list from all three fanzines mentioned and see if anyone responds to material sent back; starting with hard sf stuff like SPEC. and VECTOR, shading casually into the real stuff in time. It seems realistic to suppose that every sf reader is a potential fan until he's been proven otherwise.

ALMOST LIKE IT, NOT QUITE

London fandom is hardly seething with worry about the future of the Globe meeting place, but there does appear to be the need to find somewhere just in case the Hatton Gardens den is demolished sooner than anyone believes. Thus far the only place seriously tested has been the White Horse nearby (a new refurbished place which may or may not be on the site of the original fandom meeting place). Our man Rob Holdstock was in the expedition that sampled the delights of the White Horse some Globes past; his report was that it was a small, flashy, rather uncongenial place. Not promising at all.

The White Horse sounds rather like The Fountains, a pub in the dead area between Lancaster Gate and Marble Arch which little old fan Frank Arnold has tried to make into an Alternative Globe venue on the third Friday of each month. A nasty middleclass establishment, its offensive bar-staff cause much disharmony resulting in the only known occasion Ratfandom has been in sympathy with Howard Rosenblum. The Alternate isn't very popular, there are rarely more than fifteen people in, and there is little fannish atmosphere. It may even have collapsed by now; I don't know as no-one I know has been there for the last month or so. There's been a lot of flaccid attempts at organizing a supplementary London fanmeet within the last year, but all have recieved scant support. A pity.

WHERE WERE YOU ON THE NIGHT OF...

Whilst discussing regular fannish meetings it seems odd there is no repository of details of whatever regular meets take place throughout Britain. I'd like to keep an up to date register of such herein; so if you belong to a group which has regular meetings which non-members can attend - either casually or by arrangement - please send in all relevant information.

AND LEADING ON FROM THAT, WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE ANYWAY?

How much interest is there in a Directory of British fandom? What would you like to see included in such a publication? Would you pay money for a copy? Do you have any suggestions, as like a fool, I'm allowing myself to become once more overrun with an idea I've been trying to suppress since 1969.

FIRST WE CONVERT IT INTO THE BRITISH FANDOM ASSOCIATION...

A couple of hard nuts by the names of Malcolm Edwards and Robert Holdstock are in the process of reviving an idea that's been dithering around for years; the British Fandom Annual, containing a complete record of the fannish year (cons, groups, fanzines, awards, personalities, etc) and a selection of the best fanwriting of the year. It is intended to cover the whole spectrum of fannish endeavour, from hard sf criticism to the most blatant fannishness. The future of this venture - which will be quite an ambitious production - depends of the likelihood of a reasonably large guaranteed

sale of the resultant product. Subtle approaches are to be made to the BSFA at the upcoming AGM at the Eastercon, but the organizers would like to know general fannish reaction to this possible publication. Send anything useful either to this magazine or to Rob Holdstock, 99 Roseberry Gardens, London N4 ; which is his new address, and should be noted as such in any event.

TRAVELLIN' FEN

Crazed young junkie John Brosnan departed these shores on the ninth of February last, on a two month trip back to Australia - financed by his ageing and rapidly dissolving father. Despite being paralyzed with terror at the twentyfive hour flight home the Ace Ratfan Master succeeded in reaching his homeland with nothing more drastic happening to him than cutting his finger whilst buttering a bread roll three miles above Greece. From his last note we learnt him to be in a state of priapic despair at discovering the miniskirt is still fashionable in Australia. John is expected to return to the UK in late April or early May, after stopping off in Los Angeles on his way back. There he intends to do some interviews in relation to his current film-book project.

Some people might be interested to learn that one-time fan Ritchie Smith will soon be living in London. Apparently he arrives on April 1 to take up a job as a rate-assessor in the borough of Tower Hamlets. "He doesn't stand a chance" said Shiela Holdstock, once part of the vast Tower Hamlets army, "the West Indians will think he's Irish, and the Irish will think he's West Indian. And they hate each others' guts." Smith and his thick accent are not expected to cause much of a rush in London fandom, though perhaps slightly more than did Dave Douglass, also a one-time Gannet, who now apparently lives somewhere in London, and has been seen on one occasion at a Globe. Wierd.

ODD

Rob Holdstock reports that some ten years ago, on receiving his first ever rejected professional submission, he found in the package a story called 'Blue Theme and Fugue' by Robert Wells, sent to him by mistake. Ten years later that same story is one of the illiterate highlights of SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY No. 2.

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as much an editorial as anything else

Alright. It's a start, it's better than nothing, and it's going to continue for six months anyway. With support we might get somewhere; so anything fannish, any comments on fandom, any short-short fiction (preferably of a fannish nature), any news, letters, fanzines, all the usual shit, even including money if you can't cut it any other way. Just remember the deadline; this is one that'll be kept to. Next month.

INCIDENTALLY, YOU'VE RECEIVED THIS FANZINE BECAUSE

This is the next worst thing to actually meeting me.

Joe Patrizio
'Shirehallon'
37 Gowantrae Drive,
Dunfermline,
FIFE

